



U.S. House of Representatives Committee on the Judiciary F. James Sensenbrenner, Jr., Chairman

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News Advisory

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Sensenbrenner Opening Statement at the Judiciary Committee's Immigration Field Hearing in Concord, N.H.

Concord, N.H.- House Judiciary Chairman F. James Sensenbrenner, Jr. made the following statement at today's Judiciary Committee's immigration field hearing in Concord, N.H.

“Welcome to the House Judiciary Committee's third field hearing on the subject of illegal immigration. The purpose of this series of hearings is to examine the challenges our Nation currently faces with regard to illegal immigration and the impact that the Reid-Kennedy bill, passed by the United States Senate, would have on the problem if it were to become law.

Today's hearing will focus on the enormous fiscal costs that illegal immigrants impose on American taxpayers as well as the impact of the Reid-Kennedy amnesty proposal on the rule of law and the concept of fundamental fairness.

The Reid-Kennedy amnesty provides an eventual path to citizenship for millions of individuals who broke our laws to enter or reside in the United States, much like the mass amnesty provided under the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986.

Based on the lessons learned from the 1986 amnesty, we know that the Reid-Kennedy scheme will simply result in a cottage industry of fraudulent documentation that will allow individuals to falsely claim that they have been in the country long enough to get amnesty. Moreover, granting another amnesty provides would-be illegal immigrants outside the United States every incentive to enter illegally in the future, knowing that the U.S. is likely to just provide them amnesty down the road.

Illegal immigrants already account for billions of dollars in costs to hospitals, local schools, and a full range of other state, local, and federal government entities. Relying on data compiled by the National Research Council and the Center for Immigration Studies, it is conceivable that over their lifetimes, the 12 million illegal immigrants residing in the U.S. today will cost American taxpayers over one-half trillion dollars.

From a fiscal standpoint, illegal immigrants who are legalized will become eligible for a full array of state and federal entitlements at an enormous cost to the government, especially after they become citizens. The Congressional Budget Office just released a cost estimate for the Reid-Kennedy bill finding that it will cost taxpayers \$127 billion over a ten-year period. This includes \$48 billion for social programs, such as Social Security, Food Stamps, Medicaid, tax credits, and a host of other benefits. And this ten-year estimate does not even begin to capture the long term costs of the amnesty. Amnestied immigrants will generally have to wait six years to get their green card, and another five years to get citizenship. Therefore, the biggest fiscal drain will not occur until after the ten-year mark, when they become eligible for additional social benefits programs.

The Center for Immigration Studies estimates that illegal immigrant households receiving amnesty under Reid-Kennedy would cost taxpayers \$29 billion a year. Robert Rector from the Heritage Foundation believes the costs could be even higher once amnestied immigrants bring their parents to the U.S. – up to \$50 billion per year.

Aside from the monetary costs of amnesty, we cannot afford to ignore the fact that amnesty is fundamentally unfair to legal immigrants who play by the rules and wait in line. What do we say to the millions of individuals patiently waiting *outside* of the United States for their green cards, some up to 22 years, when we grant amnesty to individuals who have lived for years illegally in the United States? It simply isn't fair to give preference to those who have broken our laws, and would encourage future lawbreaking by rewarding such behavior.

Some argue that because most illegal immigrants' primary motivation for coming to the U.S. is to better their economic conditions, it somehow justifies their disregard for our laws. As a Nation founded on the concept of the rule of law, we cannot forsake our principles by allowing individuals to place themselves above the law, even when they may appear to be acting with noble intentions. Today we must ask whether it is fair to legal immigrants and U.S. citizens, and consistent with our historic tradition of respect for the rule of law, to grant amnesty to millions of illegal immigrants.”

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