

Immigration Bills

Sources: Denver Post research and wire services

A look at key elements of the immigration bills passed by the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives.

SENATE BILL

Pathway to citizenship

Illegal immigrants in the country five years or more could continue working and eventually become permanent residents and then citizens after paying fines, back taxes and learning English. Immigrants here for two to five years would have to go to a point of entry and apply to return. Illegal immigrants here less than two years would have to leave, although they could apply to return as guest workers.

Guest workers

A temporary-worker program would allow up to 200,000 new immigrants into the country each year for low-skilled jobs if the president declares it “will strengthen the national security.” The bill also would authorize an estimated 1.5 million agriculture guest workers.

Criminal penalties

Illegal immigrants convicted of a felony or three misdemeanors would be deported. Smuggling immigrants would be illegal, with exceptions for “humanitarian” assistance, such as medical care and emergency housing.

Workplace enforcement

Employers could be fined up to \$20,000 for hiring undocumented workers. Employers would be required to use an electronic ID verification system within 18 months.

Border Patrol

About 2,400 border agents would be added each year through 2011 to the current force of 11,300.

Fencing

The bill calls for construction of 350 miles of border fencing and 500 miles of vehicle barriers on the U.S.-Mexico border.

HOUSE BILL

Pathway to citizenship

Not included.

Guest workers

Not included. (But Rep. Mike Pence, R-Ind., has introduced a separate bill to create a guest-worker program.)

Criminal penalties

Illegal presence in the country, or helping illegal immigrants enter or stay here, would be felonies. All non-Mexicans arrested at ports of entry or at land and sea borders would be detained. The bill also calls for new detention facilities.

Workplace enforcement

Employers would be required to use an electronic ID verification system within six years. Top fines for employers of illegal workers would be \$40,000 per violation.

Border Patrol

The bill calls for hiring additional border agents “as expeditiously as possible.”

Fencing

Fencing, “physical barriers, roads, lighting, cameras and sensors” would be added along 700 miles of the U.S.-Mexico border.

Publication: Denver Post; Date: 2006 May 26; Section: Nation& World; Page Number: 24A; Sources: Denver Post research and wire services