

# Senate Immigration Debate Stalls

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The Senate debate on immigration appears to have ended—at least for now—with Senators unable to reach agreement on how to proceed on the so-called "Hagel/Martinez compromise." That compromise agreement, reached just 24 hours ago, would have made changes to the provisions of the Senate Judiciary Committee's bill that provided a path to citizenship for the undocumented population and a temporary guestworker program for future flows. Those changes had apparently rendered the bill acceptable to certain Republicans who had opposed the initial Committee-passed version.

While there seemed to be a consensus on substance, the deal apparently broke down over process. Senate Majority Leader Frist and Minority Leader Reid tried to agree on a plan that would have limited the consideration of amendments to 3 from each party, but Senator Frist was unable to deliver that deal, reportedly due to opposition from Senator Sessions and others who opposed the compromise. Those Senators insisted on being able to offer 20 or 30 or more of the 400 amendments they had filed to date.

Senator Reid also had requested that Senator Frist provide assurances that all members of the Senate Judiciary Committee be appointed as Senate conferees on the bill in the hope that they would be able to prevent House conferees from gutting the legislation's legalization provisions.

Republicans defeated the attempt to invoke cloture, or limit debate, on the Hagel/Martinez compromise proposal by a vote of 38-60. Even those Republicans who supported the underlying substance of the compromise voted against the cloture motion because they felt their colleagues should have been allowed to bring amendments to the floor for a vote. Democrats then blocked Republican efforts to end debate and proceed to a vote on the underlying Frist border security bill (S. 2454) on a 36-62 vote (36 Senators voted in favor of proceeding with the enforcement-only bill).

The Senate now leaves for a two-week recess, and it remains to be seen whether immigration reform will be placed back on the Senate's agenda when lawmakers return on April 24th. Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Arlen Specter (R-PA) reportedly stated that his committee would take the issue back up shortly after the Senate's return. We encourage you to meet with your Senators in their district offices during the next two weeks and urge them to support a bipartisan, comprehensive immigration reform bill that provides a path to permanent status for the current undocumented population.

There will be much "finger pointing" about who is to blame for the impasse. At the end of the day, it is clear that neither party alone has the votes necessary to pass comprehensive immigration reform, and the bipartisan agreements that were needed to get the work done were not possible given the combination of opposition and

complicated Senate procedural rules that require "Unanimous Consent" for certain things to happen.

We will provide additional updates as more information becomes available. Thank you for all your good work thus far.