

Democrats outline anti-immigrant proposal

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The Obama administration and the Democratic Party are consciously exploiting public anger surrounding the passage of the anti-immigrant bill in Arizona to promote their own right-wing measures.

On Thursday, top Senate Democrats—including Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, Chairman of the Senate Subcommittee on Immigration Charles Schumer, and Senator Robert Menendez—released a plan for an overhaul of immigration that focuses on the further militarization of the border and vast increases in state control of the population.

Obama immediately endorsed the proposal, calling it an “important step,” counterpoising it to the Arizona law, which he said was “misguided.”

As the debate moves forward, the proposals will only shift further to the right. The proposal by the Democrats is similar to an earlier outline advanced by Schumer and Republican Senator Lindsay Graham, but with an even more strident focus on “border security.”

Reid made clear that he was prepared to offer further concessions to the Republican Party: “We’re offering this framework as an invitation, an invitation to our Republican colleagues to work with us to solve this problem that has plagued our country for too long.”

The new proposal declares that all steps toward a “legalization program” for undocumented immigrants would be delayed until eight benchmarks were met, including increasing Border Patrol officers, increasing Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents, adding funding for immigration courts to speed up deportation proceedings, and augmenting technology and resources along the border.

The proposal calls for “further fortifications of our border enforcement capacities,” including “the installation of high-tech ground sensors throughout the southern border,” the “use of Department of Defense equipment at the border” and “increases in the number of sport utility vehicles, helicopters, power boats, river bats, portable computers to track illegal immigrants and drug smugglers while inside of a border patrol vehicle, vision equipment, Unmanned Aircraft Systems, Remote Video Surveillance Systems, scope trucks, and Mobile Surveillance Systems.”

These measures would involve the transformation of US borders—and, by extension, much of the US itself—into military zones, policed by the same aerial drones (Unmanned Aircraft Systems) employed in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

The proposal would also give the Secretary of Homeland Security authority to deploy National Guard personnel (that is, military forces) along the border at will.

Border agents would be equipped with “high-quality body armor” and “weapons, including non-lethal intermediate force weapons” (likely Tasers).

The plan would establish a bipartisan commission to offer recommendations for Congress to ensure “complete operational control of the southern and northern borders” within 12 months.

The measure would also beef up procedures for deporting anyone in the country without documents and would implement an “entry-exit system that permits us to know whether foreign nationals have overstayed their visas and will permit us to apprehend and expeditiously remove these individuals.” It would fully

implement the inaccurate and anti-democratic US-VISIT system for screening people entering the country.

The measure contains a laundry list of punitive and police-state measures targeting immigrants, and, ultimately, the entire population. “All foreign nationals will be required to provide the United States government with biometric information, and will be refused admission or deported for non-compliance,” it notes.

Among the most anti-democratic of the proposals is for what amounts to a National ID card. All legal residents would have to obtain a “biometric social security cards” with a photograph and “electronically coded micro-processing chip which possesses a unique biometric identifier [e.g., fingerprint] for the authorized card-bearer.” This will serve as a means of potentially denying employment to all workers, not just immigrants, since the cards could potentially include records of participating in workplace struggles or political activity.

“Within five (5) years of the date of enactment,” the proposal states, “the fraud-proof social security card will serve as the sole acceptable document to be produced by an employee to an employer for employment verification purposes.”

The proposal outlines changes in the legal immigration system designed to “maximize American economic prosperity”—i.e., corporate profitability. This includes expedited entry for immigrants with advanced degrees. Low-skilled workers will be allowed in on the condition that “businesses only obtain foreign workers when American workers are unavailable.”

Under the headline, “Mandatory Registration, acceptance of responsibility, and administration of punishment for unauthorized aliens presently in the United States,” the proposal outlines a vindictive and Kafkaesque process for undocumented immigrants to gain legal residence.

In the first stage, eligible applicants for the program would be “registered, fingerprinted, screened and

considered for an interim ‘Lawful Prospective Immigrant’ (LPI) status.” If approved, these individuals would be allowed to work, and could, *after a period of eight years*, apply for a visa.

To apply for LPI status, immigrants would have to submit biometric information, pass security checks and “pay all applicable fees, civil penalties, and taxes.” LPI status can only be obtained by immigrants who are in the US prior to the enactment of the law.

In order to qualify for legal permanent residence after eight years, anyone who qualifies for LPI status would have to pass a series of tests, including demonstrating proficiency in the English language. This would be a step toward instituting English as a national language, long-desired by right-wing nationalists in the US.



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