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Immigrant groups might accept legalization without automatic path to citizenship

By Pamela Constable

Immigrant advocates, responding to expected GOP overtures on immigration reform, are signaling they may back off on their long-standing insistence that legislation must include a “special path” to citizenship for the country’s estimated 11 million illegal immigrants.

Instead, a variety of immigration advocates this week said they were delighted that House Republicans seem open to finding ways to compromise on the topic, including through reported proposals that would legalize various categories of undocumented immigrants but not necessarily allow them all to become U.S. citizens.

“To see the Republicans moving from self-deportation to legalization is a major shift,” said Clarissa Martinez of the National Council of La Raza in Washington. “There is a big chasm between saying ‘no special path’ and shutting the door to citizenship entirely. It could mean a lot of things. There is no clarity or definition yet, but it is a start and we are definitely encouraged.”

Democrats in Congress and President Obama have signaled a willingness to listen to an emerging House GOP proposal, which would offer limited legal status. At the same time, Richard L. Trumka, president of the AFL-CIO, the nation’s largest labor union, said such a plan would be a “nonstarter” and would not receive union backing.

Frank Sharry, executive director of the immigrant advocacy group America’s Voice, said neither advocates or Democratic legislators would accept proposals that “create a permanent underclass” of noncitizens, but that they might accept legislation that allowed many undocumented immigrants to obtain some form of legal status and “most, if not all” to achieve citizenship through “normal channels.”

“The details matter hugely, and we don’t know what they will be,” Sharry said. But if ideas being discussed among Republicans evolve into concrete proposals, including citizenship for student “Dreamers,” work permits for some adults, and green card sponsorship for spouses and parents of U.S. citizens, he said, “that might meet our demands.”

According to a study released this month by the National Foundation for American Policy in Arlington, between 4.4 million and 6.5 million illegal immigrants — mostly parents of U.S.-

born children — could gain eventual U.S. residency under approaches being discussed informally in the House. The bipartisan Senate bill that passed last year would have allowed about 8 million people to gain residency.

While the new flexibility among House Republicans on immigration reform largely reflects a pragmatic realization that they will need to attract the rapidly growing number of Latinos and immigrant voters, the less adamant insistence on citizenship among immigration advocates reflects a more practical attitude among many undocumented immigrants themselves.

According to a recent study by the Pew Hispanic Center, a majority of Hispanics in the United States believe that being able to live and work in the country legally, without fear of being deported, is more important for illegal immigrants than having a pathway to citizenship. The report said that 59 percent of foreign-born Hispanics expressed fear that they, a relative or close friend might be deported. Pew called these findings a potential “opening for legislative compromise. “

The study found that 55 percent of Hispanics, a group that accounts for three-quarters of unauthorized immigrants in the United States, see legal protection as a higher priority than citizenship. It also noted that many immigrants do not choose to seek citizenship when they have the opportunity, and that only 44 percent of legal Hispanic immigrants have become citizens.

In interviews this week in the Washington area, a variety of undocumented immigrants expressed similar views to the Pew survey, calling citizenship a distant dream that paled in comparison with their urgent desire to be able to work legally and without fear.

“Why do we have all these marches and speeches about citizenship for 10 million people? Why don’t they focus on what we all want, which is to be able to work?” said Jose Joya, 36, a maintenance worker from El Salvador who lives in the District. “If you get a work permit, you can buy a car and pay your taxes and spend money without thinking you could be arrested. What we want is to be legal.”

Adrian Maldonado, 57, an undocumented immigrant from Mexico who was looking for a day-labor job in Annandale, Va., last week, said that he had entered the United States numerous times to do construction work, but that he always returned to his family.

“For me, the absolute priority is to work,” he said. “I know some American people don’t like us being here, but if you are honorable and do not go into the streets and steal and drink, you deserve to be allowed to work. It would be beautiful to be a citizen, but what is more beneficial to me is a work permit. I ask nothing more of this country.”

Immigration advocates said there were a number of ways illegal immigrants could be given legal status that could lead to citizenship under certain circumstances, such as sponsorship by employers or relatives, but that would not automatically offer them that chance. It is the notion of such an automatic offer, or “special path,” that has aroused such ardent opposition among many House Republicans.

Angela Kelley, an immigration expert at the Center for American Progress, said the “palpable political thaw” among Republicans was creating “balmy conditions” for compromise. In a telephone news conference by advocates Wednesday, she described one area of compromise that legislators could pursue.

“Congress could create a program where people who meet certain requirements and qualifications can get work authorization that permits them to be in the U.S. for a period of time, and then renew it, and be protected from deportation,” Kelley said. “It would permit you to travel but not give you status like a green card that you could adjust to naturalize and become a citizen.”

The two other major categories of immigrants who could be legalized through legislative compromise, in many cases by expanding or modifying legal channels that exist, are those who were brought here as children, known as “Dreamers,” and parents or spouses of U.S. citizens.

According to the study by the **National Foundation for American Policy**, between 800,000 and 1.5 million immigrants are Dreamers who came to the United States illegally as children, and at least an additional 4 million are undocumented parents or spouses of U.S. citizens. Congress could conceivably grant such individuals the right to be sponsored for residency by their citizen relatives, and it could remove multi-year legal barriers for them to return to the country if deported.

“If the proposals are generous with the Dreamers, offer people without criminal problems a chance to stay and work, and allow those with close family members or jobs to be sponsored for green cards, then it would be realistic to have a compromise with the Senate position,” said Stuart Anderson, a former federal immigration official and the author of the study.

Obama has ordered a legal amnesty for qualified members of the Dreamer generation who arrived in the United States before they turned 16, but some advocates said it should be expanded to include slightly older people as well.

“If Republicans are saying that citizenship is okay for some people under some conditions but not for everyone, then it raises an immediate question,” said Gustavo Andrade, who works with young immigrants at the advocacy group CASA of Maryland. “If someone now aged 29 can qualify for citizenship, why not someone aged 32?” he asked. “How do you decide who is deserving and who isn’t?”

http://www.washingtonpost.com/local/immigrant-groups-might-accept-legalization-without-automatic-path-to-citizenship/2014/01/30/7d4144cc-8930-11e3-833c-33098f9e5267_story.html

The New York Times

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Republican Ideas on Immigration Could Legalize Up to 6.5 Million, Study Says

By JULIA PRESTON

Between 4.4 million and 6.5 million immigrants illegally in the United States could gain an eventual pathway to citizenship under proposals being discussed by Republicans in the House of Representatives, according to an estimate published Tuesday by the National Foundation for American Policy, a nonpartisan research group in Washington.

The estimate is based on policy ideas that have been put forward by Representative Robert W. Goodlatte of Virginia, a Republican who is chairman of the House Judiciary Committee. Mr. Goodlatte has said he would not support legislation with a “special” or direct pathway to citizenship for 11.5 million immigrants in the country without legal papers, such as the 13-year pathway in a broad bill the Senate passed last June.

House Republicans have rejected the sweeping approach of that bill and said they would handle immigration in smaller pieces. Speaker John A. Boehner of Ohio has said that Mr. Goodlatte is helping him to prepare principles that will guide House action on this issue this year.

Mr. Goodlatte has said he would instead offer a provisional legal status to illegal immigrants, then allow those who can demonstrate they are eligible to apply for permanent residency — a document known as a green card — through the existing system, based on sponsorship by a family member or an employer. Obtaining a green card is the crucial step toward American citizenship.

The foundation’s report, prepared by Stuart Anderson, its executive director, finds that even without major changes to current immigration law, 3.1 million to 4.4 million immigrants now illegally in the United States would be eligible for green cards because they are parents of American citizens. As many as 600,000 could gain green cards as spouses of citizens and legal residents, and up to 45,000 could receive green cards within two decades as low-skilled workers.

The estimate assumes the House would pass legislation creating new green cards for young undocumented immigrants who came to the United States as children, who call themselves Dreamers. Mr. Anderson calculates that 800,000 to 1.5 million of those immigrants would gain a pathway to citizenship.

Mr. Anderson's calculation, based on figures from the Department of Homeland Security among other sources, is the first effort to put numbers on proposals emerging from House Republicans. On a conference call Tuesday with reporters, Mr. Anderson stressed that the estimates were imprecise because no Republican has so far offered a specific legalization bill.

Under the foundation's projection, at least two million immigrants would have to wait a long time — as much as two decades — before they could apply for naturalization. As many as five million immigrants would remain here with legal status but no prospect of becoming citizens.

The Congressional Budget Office estimated that eight million illegal immigrants would gain a pathway to citizenship under the Senate bill. Many Democrats and immigrant advocates have rejected any legislation that excludes large groups of residents from citizenship.

Tamar Jacoby, a Republican who is president of ImmigrationWorks USA, a small-business organization that supports an overhaul of immigration laws, said on Tuesday that proposals for a bill with no separate path to citizenship for most illegal immigrants were gaining ground among House Republicans, as the basis for negotiations with the Senate. She said Mr. Anderson's estimates were higher than many immigration analysts have predicted.

"The half a loaf is more substantial than many people would have thought," she said.

National Journal

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Draft Principles Show GOP Is Evolving on Immigration

By Fawn Johnson

The one-page set of immigration principles circulated by the House Republican leaders at their annual retreat in Cambridge, Md., on Thursday shows that the GOP is taking a more expansive public view of immigration than their past statements would indicate.

"Public" is the key word there. The opinions of Republican members of Congress on immigration have varied widely for years, but the fear of political retribution for anything other than border security statements has muted those diverse opinions. Now, in theory, those opinions can come out.

The principles are in draft form, and they are meant to solicit individual members' thoughts on how the unwieldy immigration system should change.

The next few weeks will be critical for immigration as lawmakers and lobbyists parse individual House members' reactions to the policy recommendations and constituents. Think of this complex information-gathering system as the softest "whip count" of Republican support in the history of Congress. The more members who say, "No way, no how!" the less likely the principles are to morph into legislation. The more members who say, "Sure, let's look at it," the more likely we are to see actual concrete proposals.

The issue of most importance to immigrant advocates—many of whom are not Republicans—is the potential legalization of the undocumented population. To be more precise, immigrants are most concerned with removing the fear of deportation for people who are here without papers.

House GOP leadership appear willing to do that. The draft of the immigration principles states that immigrants in the U.S. illegally should be able to "live legally and without fear" in the country, but only if they are willing to admit "culpability" and all the punishments that come with that, can prove they aren't criminals, and can support themselves.

But the document outright states that "there will be no special pathway citizenship for individuals who broke our nation's immigration laws."

That doesn't mean they can't become citizens. The principles do not foreclose the opportunity for undocumented immigrants to obtain green cards, and eventually citizenship, through the current methods. People who have been in the country long enough to have young adult children who are U.S. citizens could become citizens in their own right within five years under this concept. People who marry U.S. citizens could also get their green cards relatively quickly. People whose

employers want to sponsor them for green cards could also get in line for green cards and have them within a few years.

The problem for advocates and Democrats, of course, is that not everyone in the undocumented population would be able to get citizenship under these criteria. **The National Foundation for American Policy**, an immigration-related research group, estimates that somewhere between 4.5 million and 6.5 million undocumented immigrants could eventually become citizens under the broad constructs that have been outlined by Republicans. At best, that's only about half of the estimated 11 to 12 million unauthorized immigrants

As more concrete proposals in the House emerge, the question for Democrats, the Senate, and the White House will be whether those proposed changes would accommodate enough people to make it worth their while to bargain with Republicans. Democrats' decisions on that front will be as important as whether Republicans can eventually swallow some form of legalization.

A good example of the mixed reactions from advocates who trend liberal came from Laura Murphy, director of the ACLU's Washington legislative office. "The good news is that the House Republicans are moving forward on much needed immigration reform, but some of their standards are highly problematic." She went on to outline questions about citizenship and detention facilities.

Mixed reactions aside, the principles should allow Republicans some leeway to discuss how they feel about one of the most difficult policy areas in the country. Sen. Marco Rubio, R-Fla., took a beating among tea party conservatives for voicing the opinion last year that undocumented immigrants should be able to stay in the country and earn citizenship. He backed off of immigration in a hurry and started talking about poverty.

Earlier this week, Rubio was happy to discuss immigration again, and happy that House Republicans are thinking about it seriously. He said that his party believes many undocumented immigrants should be able to stay here, but it does not agree on what to do with those people afterwards.

"I think the consensus is that the best way to deal with them begins with ensuring that we never have this problem again and then continue to make consequences for having violated the law—penalties and wait times—and then a process by which they can be able to work and pay taxes in this country," Rubio said. "What happens after that on citizenship and so forth, I don't think there's a consensus."

Even Sen. Jeff Sessions, R-Ala., a staunch opponent of anything touching legalization, said earlier this week that House Republicans may be on the right track in discussing immigration, even if he doesn't think the efforts will come to anything. "I think they've been way too defensive. They need to assert boldly the principles that their constituents believe in," he said. Then he added more dismissively, "Everyone can agree on talking points."

House Republicans make one thing clear: they are not accepting the Senate's immigration bill that creates a 13-year path to citizenship for people without papers. But the House GOP

document does back citizenship for DREAMers, children who were brought to the U.S. illegally by their parents.

Let's not forget enforcement, which is a critical part of immigration overhaul from a GOP perspective. House Budget Committee Chairman Paul Ryan said this in an interview with CNN's Jake Tapper immediately following the release of the principles: "The approach that that we want to take is not 'trust but verify' but 'verify and trust,'" he said. That's a not-so-veiled knock on President Obama for flouting the GOP's wishes in any number of areas, including immigration, by acting unilaterally without congressional sign-off.

The GOP immigration principles say the law should ensure that presidents can't "unilaterally stop immigration," alluding to Obama's halting of some deportations under Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, or DACA, program.

The principles call for a "zero tolerance" policy for people who cross the border illegally or stay in the country past the time period allotted under a visa. They say a proposed visa entry/exit system that has been in the works since 2001 should finally be completed. They say the country should "fully implement" an electronic work-authorization verification system for employers when they hire new workers.

Within minutes of the draft leaking, its content received both push-back and support. Business Roundtable called it "a positive step forward on the path to fixing America's broken immigration system." The AFL-CIO shot it down because it lacks a pathway to citizenship, with President Richard Trumka calling it "a flimsy document that only serves to underscore the callous attitude Republicans have toward our nation's immigrants." Heritage Action spokesman Dan Holler called the principles "a full embrace of amnesty."

Democratic Rep. Luis Gutierrez, a longtime immigration reform advocate who continues having private conversations with House Republicans, sounded cautiously optimistic. "The details really matter and I have not seen anything concrete from the Republicans so I am not in a position to say 'yes' or 'no' to anything," he said in a statement. "There is a long way to go and we all need to carefully evaluate actual legislation, but the principles are a first step."

See the text of the draft document below:

PREAMBLE

Our nation's immigration system is broken and our laws are not being enforced. Washington's failure to fix them is hurting our economy and jeopardizing our national security. The overriding purpose of our immigration system is to promote and further America's national interests and that is not the case today. The serious problems in our immigration system must be solved, and we are committed to working in a bipartisan manner to solve them. But they cannot be solved with a single, massive piece of legislation that few have read and even fewer understand, and therefore, we will not go to a conference with the Senate's immigration bill. The problems in our immigration system must be solved through a step-by-step, common-sense approach that starts

with securing our country's borders, enforcing our laws, and implementing robust enforcement measures. These are the principals guiding us in that effort.

Border Security and Interior Enforcement Must Come First

It is the fundamental duty of any government to secure its borders, and the United States is failing in this mission. We must secure our borders now and verify that they are secure. In addition, we must ensure now that when immigration reform is enacted, there will be a zero tolerance policy for those who cross the border illegally or overstay their visas in the future. Faced with a consistent pattern of administrations of both parties only selectively enforcing our nation's immigration laws, we must enact reform that ensures that a President cannot unilaterally stop immigration enforcement.

Implement Entry-Exit Visa Tracking System

A fully functioning Entry-Exit system has been mandated by eight separate statutes over the last 17 years. At least three of these laws call for this system to be biometric, using technology to verify identity and prevent fraud. We must implement this system so we can identify and track down visitors who abuse our laws.

Employment Verification and Workplace Enforcement

In the 21st century it is unacceptable that the majority of employees have their work eligibility verified through a paper based system wrought with fraud. It is past time for this country to fully implement a workable electronic employment verification system.

Reforms to the Legal Immigration System

For far too long, the United States has emphasized extended family members and pure luck over employment-based immigration. This is inconsistent with nearly every other developed country. Every year thousands of foreign nationals pursue degrees at America's colleges and universities, particularly in high skilled fields. Many of them want to use their expertise in U.S. industries that will spur economic growth and create jobs for Americans. When visas aren't available, we end up exporting this labor and ingenuity to other countries. Visa and green card allocations need to reflect the needs of employers and the desire for these exceptional individuals to help grow our economy.

The goal of any temporary worker program should be to address the economic needs of the country and to strengthen our national security by allowing for realistic, enforceable, usable, legal paths for entry into the United States. Of particular concern are the needs of the agricultural industry, among others. It is imperative that these temporary workers are able to meet the economic needs of the country and do not displace or disadvantage American workers.

Youth

One of the great founding principles of our country was that children would not be punished for the mistakes of their parents. It is time to provide an opportunity for legal residence and citizenship for those who were brought to this country as children through no fault of their own, those who know no other place as home. For those who meet certain eligibility standards, and serve honorably in our military or attain a college degree, we will do just that.

Individuals Living Outside the Rule of Law

Our national and economic security depend on requiring people who are living and working here illegally to come forward and get right with the law. There will be no special path to citizenship for individuals who broke our nation's immigration laws – that would be unfair to those immigrants who have played by the rules and harmful to promoting the rule of law. Rather, these persons could live legally and without fear in the U.S., but only if they were willing to admit their culpability, pass rigorous background checks, pay significant fines and back taxes, develop proficiency in English and American civics, and be able to support themselves and their families (without access to public benefits). Criminal aliens, gang members, and sex offenders and those who do not meet the above requirements will not be eligible for this program. Finally, none of this can happen before specific enforcement triggers have been implemented to fulfill our promise to the American people that from here on, our immigration laws will indeed be enforced.

Elahe Izadi contributed to this article.

<http://www.nationaljournal.com/congress/draft-principles-show-gop-is-evolving-on-immigration-20140130>

Arizona Republic

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House Republicans to offer own immigration reform plan

Immigration advocates waiting to see if pathway to citizenship will be included

By Dan Nowicki and Daniel González

House Republican leaders plan to unveil their principles and outline their priorities on the politically potent issue of immigration reform this week, as President Barack Obama revisits the issue in his State of the Union address.

House Speaker John Boehner, R-Ohio, expects the outline will help gauge which pieces of reform — increased border security, changes to the visa system, a pathway to citizenship and others — can win support from his House Republican Conference. Boehner intends to consider a series of immigration bills rather than the comprehensive legislation passed by the Democrat-controlled Senate last summer.

Immigrant advocates are watching the process closely, hoping it leads to a breakthrough after years of disappointment.

But activists, like the Republicans, are also taking another hard look at the issue to see if they can live with whatever compromise emerges. And they are increasingly divided over whether they will continue to demand a bill that includes a pathway to citizenship for the millions of immigrants in the United States illegally or will settle for something short of that goal.

A House GOP plan almost certainly won't go as far as the 13-year "special pathway" to citizenship in the Senate bill. For many Democrats and immigration activists, the exclusion of a pathway to citizenship could be a deal-breaker.

But others, including some "dreamers" — immigrants who as children were brought into the United States without authorization — are willing to embrace proposals that would end the constant threat of deportation of family members.

One widely discussed idea would offer probationary status to undocumented immigrants, then allow them to pursue citizenship through existing channels, such as by having relatives or employers sponsor them.

An analysis released this month by the nonpartisan National Foundation for American Policy said such a plan could legalize 4.4 million to 6.5 million undocumented immigrants, compared with the 8 million who would be eligible under the Senate's approach.

Rep. Ed Pastor, D-Ariz., said he also has heard that some Republicans are exploring whether to allow dreamers to become citizens while requiring their parents' generation to settle for legal status.

"I posed that question to parents of dreamers and, interestingly enough, some of the parents have said, 'Hey, as long as I can stay here and my family's not going to be broken up, maybe it's something I can live with, but I would hope that my children would have the ability to become citizens,' " said Pastor, a longtime immigration-reform supporter.

Rep. Raúl Grijalva, D-Ariz., a proponent of immigration reform, said he remains committed to passing a bill that includes a pathway to citizenship but is open to discussing a compromise that would allow undocumented immigrants to become citizens through existing channels.

He said he would not vote for a bill that allows undocumented immigrants to gain legal status but prohibits them from becoming citizens, even if that means not passing a bill this year. "That's a key word for me: prohibition," Grijalva said.

Barring legalized immigrants from ever becoming citizens would set a troubling precedent, he said.

"I can't think of a time ... where there was an outright prohibition on a group of people" where the law said "you can stay here, you can have legal status, you can work, you won't be deported, but you will never reach a state of citizenship."

Pursuing compromise

Without the text of the House GOP principles, let alone an actual legalization bill, some reform supporters say it is premature to get worked up over hypothetical scenarios.

Pro-reform Republicans are in a tricky position because they must craft bills that could win the support of a majority of the GOP caucus as well as attract enough Democratic votes to win House passage. Then they would have to come to terms with Senate Democrats on legislation that Obama could sign.

House Republicans are expected to hold a deeper discussion on the principles at a three-day retreat this week in Cambridge, Md.

Likewise, Democrats inevitably will have to make some concessions to the GOP-run House in order to get any results this year.

Election-year partisanship also could complicate the immigration-reform push.

“I’m sure we’re going to have disagreements on the substance, once the principles are unveiled, and that’s OK,” said Marshall Fitz, director of immigration policy at the left-leaning Center for American Progress. “That’s what legislating in divided government is all about: negotiation, compromise and the art of the possible. But even when the principles are released, the truth is we’re not going to be able to seriously evaluate the substance of the Republican positions until they’ve been translated into legislation. This is truly a case when the devil is in the details.”

Still, the divide among immigrant activists who spoke with *The Arizona Republic* last week was already apparent.

Some advocates said they will only support a bill that includes a pathway to citizenship.

“Our families are telling us they have been fighting for a pathway to citizenship, that just getting legalization for them to work here does not provide a pathway to a dignified life,” said Petra Falcon, executive director of Promise Arizona, an advocacy group.

Other immigration-reform advocates, however, say they may be willing to compromise as long as a bill is passed this year.

“What I will not take and what I will not settle for is nothing,” said Reyna Montoya, 23, of the Arizona Dream Act Coalition.

Montoya said the more time that passes without an immigration-reform bill, the more people are deported.

She and other immigration-reform advocates have been trying to put pressure on the Obama administration to stop deporting immigrants who might qualify for legal status under a reform bill.

In fiscal 2013, the government deported 368,644 people, including 34,868 deported by the Phoenix office of Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

Montoya is an undocumented immigrant from Mexico who was brought to the U.S. illegally when she was 13. Both of her parents are undocumented, and her father is in deportation proceedings after being held in a detention facility for eight months.

Montoya said she is frustrated with Republicans for being unwilling to move immigration reform forward, but she is also angry with some Democrats in Congress who she believes are trying to use immigration reform for political gain by refusing to compromise on a pathway to citizenship. That way, if no bill passes, they can blame Republicans to score points with Latino voters, she said.

“The reality is that some Democrats would be willing to not pass immigration reform just for political gain and some Republicans don’t have the will to do it, so where does that leave the community (of undocumented immigrants)?” she said.

Montoya said she would be willing to accept a compromise bill that allowed undocumented immigrants to live and work in the U.S. with legal status even if it didn't include a direct pathway to citizenship. However, she said she would not accept a bill that permanently barred undocumented immigrants who received legal status from ever becoming citizens.

"To block citizenship permanently, that is problematic," she said.

Divisions over citizenship

Nora Realoza, an undocumented immigrant from Mexico who works for Promise Arizona, said she is torn because she wants to see immigration reform pass this year, but also has been fighting for a bill that includes a pathway to citizenship.

Some Republicans have floated proposals that would allow undocumented immigrants to gain legal status but require a relative or employer to sponsor them to become citizens. The Senate bill would allow them to first apply for provisional visas, then green cards and eventually citizenship.

Allowing undocumented immigrants to get legal status but not citizenship would create a two-tiered society that would relegate them to second-class status, Realoza said.

"What's more important is a pathway to citizenship, but if there is a bill that only includes legalization, then of course I would have to accept that," she said.

She is concerned that a legalization program that requires immigrants to apply for citizenship through existing channels would still block many from ever becoming citizens. Many undocumented immigrants don't have any legal relatives who could petition for them for citizenship, which is why they have remained undocumented in the first place.

"The truth of the matter is that there are a lot of people who don't have any family to request (papers) for them," she said.

The growing disagreement among reform advocates could give opponents of a pathway to citizenship a stronger negotiating position in 2014 after the immigration debate stalled in 2013.

A recent survey by the nonpartisan Pew Research Center released in December showed 55 percent of Hispanics and 49 percent of Asian-Americans think allowing undocumented immigrants to live and work legally without the threat of deportation is more important than giving them a pathway to citizenship. The survey found 35 percent of Hispanics and 44 percent of Asian-Americans think the reverse is more important.

The same survey found that if immigration reform fails, 43 percent of Hispanics and 48 percent of Asian-Americans would blame Republicans, while 34 percent of Hispanics and 29 percent of Asian-Americans would blame Democrats.

One top national immigration-reform advocate called the preliminary disagreements within the movement “a minor tactical difference.” Frank Sharry, executive director of America’s Voice, a Washington, D.C.-based organization seeking passage of comprehensive immigration reform, said everybody is on the same page when it comes to wanting to halt deportations and give undocumented immigrants legal status and a chance for citizenship.

Bipartisan breakthrough?

Within the immigration-reform community, the drama surrounding the forthcoming Republican principles is overshadowing anticipation of Obama’s State of the Union address on Tuesday, which will lay out his agenda for 2014.

Advocates are expecting Obama to bring up immigration reform but predict he will keep his distance from the House GOP discussions to give the Republicans space to come up with a strategy.

“We all know he supports it and he wants it. The real question is whether House Republicans can organize their way to present a proposal that could lead to a bipartisan breakthrough,” Sharry said. “In some ways, the more interesting development is not the State of the Union address, but the Republican retreat.”

Tamar Jacoby, president of the pro-reform ImmigrationWorks USA, is optimistic about the House direction but cautioned that it’s just the beginning. She predicted the Republican reaction to the principles will be more positive than some skeptics are anticipating, but said many GOP lawmakers still will need some persuasion to go along.

“It’s going to be historic, really, if it turns out that these principles do indeed put House leadership on record saying that we should have legal status for millions of unauthorized immigrants,” said Jacoby, whose organization is a national coalition of business groups. “That’s a game-changer for leadership to be saying that.”

During a recent visit to Arizona, Sen. Rand Paul, R-Ky., said immigration reform’s fate is in the hands of the Democrats and their willingness to deal with House Republicans, who he said appear to be making considerable strides on the issue.

“My feeling is that the compromise that the House would accept would include expanded work visas but not citizenship,” said Paul, a potential 2016 presidential candidate who voted against last year’s Senate bill because he felt the ceilings on visas for foreign workers were too low. “If the Democrats are willing to do that, then that’s a big step forward.”

Lorella Praeli, the national group United We Dream’s advocacy and policy director, said activists plan to hold both parties “accountable” for “political games” and a lack of action.

“We understand that this is politics for many people in Washington, but this is not politics for us,” Praeli said on a recent media conference call. “For Republicans and Democrats, they must

be on notice that our community is tired of being played with, tired of empty promises and that those days are over.”

<http://www.azcentral.com/news/politics/articles/20140123house-republicans-immigration-reform-plan.html>

Wall Street Journal

January 25, 2014

House GOP Sets New Push to Overhaul Immigration

Leadership's Broad Principles Will Include a Call to Grant Legal Status to Millions

By Laura Meckler



Immigrants arrive for a naturalization ceremony held at the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services office last week in New York City. Getty Images

WASHINGTON—An effort by House lawmakers to overhaul immigration policy, which seemed all but dead for much of last year, is about to be revived and take center stage in Congress, with a new push by House Republican leaders and a fresh pitch by President Barack Obama in his State of the Union address Tuesday.

House GOP leaders are expected to release broad principles to guide the chamber's immigration debate as soon as the coming week. They will include a call to grant legal status to millions of people now in the country illegally, people familiar with the plans say, a step that many in the GOP oppose as a reward for people who broke U.S. law.

Behind the scenes, Republican lawmakers already are writing detailed legislation, with the encouragement of House GOP leaders, that would also offer the chance at citizenship for many here illegally, as Republicans work to find a mix of proposals that can pass the chamber.

Mr. Obama, in his address Tuesday to a joint session of Congress and the nation, is expected to again call on lawmakers to pass an overhaul of immigration laws, building on the comprehensive bill that won bipartisan approval last year in the Senate.

Many Republicans have warned that the GOP faces political peril if it doesn't overcome the resistance of many in the party to new immigration laws. If the legislative effort fails, Democrats and their allies are prepared to use the issue to attack GOP candidates in this fall's elections and the 2016 presidential race.

In the House, the immigration principles—expected to be a one-page sheet—likely will be released in time for debate at a House Republican retreat late in the week in Cambridge, Md., to discuss the year's agenda. That will help House Speaker John Boehner (R., Ohio) figure out if there is enough support among his members to move forward.

The GOP principles will embrace legal status for many of the nation's 11.5 million illegal immigrants, people close to the process said, knowing that Democrats likely will insist on such a plan in return for support needed to pass legislation. They will also offer citizenship for people brought to the U.S. as children, new enforcement provisions and fixes to the legal immigration system, these people said.

Still, the legislation faces a long road. It will be challenging for House leaders to win over enough Democrats without losing a substantial number of Republicans. Even if the House manages to pass a series of immigration bills, they still would need to be reconciled with the Senate's broad legislation, and Mr. Boehner has said he won't work off the sweeping bill that passed that chamber.

In a sign that the debate is imminent, opponents of an immigration overhaul have begun to organize. Staff members from about 15 House offices met Thursday with the staff of Sen. Jeff Sessions (R., Ala.), a leading opponent of the Senate overhaul bill, to discuss their best arguments, an aide to Mr. Sessions said.

House leaders hope to bring legislation to the floor as early as April, the people close to the process said, after the deadline has passed in many states for challengers to file paperwork needed to run for Congress. Republican leaders hope that would diminish chances that a lawmaker's support for immigration bills winds up sparking a primary-election fight.

Supporters of new immigration laws said Friday that they were stepping up their activism. On Friday, the Partnership for a New American Economy, a group backed by former New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg, announced a campaign to urge entrepreneurs, farmers and students to press for the overhaul. That campaign was alongside the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and Republican Gov. Rick Snyder of Michigan.

Legislation being drafted would reject a "special path" to citizenship for illegal immigrants, which was included in the Senate bill, the people familiar with the process said. But it would grant legal status for all illegal immigrants who meet qualifications, allowing them to work and travel without fear of deportation.

The legislation under development also would allow this group to tap into existing paths, available to any newcomer, to gain permanent legal residence, also known as a green card. Once someone has a green card, they are eligible to apply for citizenship.

At the same time, the legislation would make substantial changes to immigration law to clear impediments from those existing paths. Without those changes, illegal immigrants would face big backlogs and requirements that they return to their home countries before applying for a green card.

For instance, it may ease quotas that have created backlogs in certain types of green-card applications. Legislation may also change existing law that requires most people in the country illegally for more than six months to leave the U.S. for three years before becoming eligible for a green card. Those in the country for longer than a year must leave for 10 years before they are eligible to apply.

One conservative research group, the **National Foundation for American Policy**, estimated that between 4.4 million and 6.5 million people qualify under a system like this, compared with eight million people under the Senate bill.

While the principles won't open a new pathway to citizenship, lawmakers and aides note that existing law allows anyone with a green card to apply for citizenship after five years.

"Good policy will get us the support we need in the House," said Rep. Mario Diaz-Balart (R., Fla.), who is drafting legislation with the encouragement of House leaders. "I'm more optimistic now that I have ever been in my years in Congress."

Other House Republicans are working on legalization bills, as well, including Rep. Raúl Labrador of Idaho. But House leadership has offered particular encouragement to Mr. Diaz-Balart's work.

Even as Republican leaders have said they won't pass a single, comprehensive bill, some of their pieces would interact with one another. For example, Mr. Diaz-Balart is planning to combine border security and legalization into one bill, people familiar with his work said. That is necessary because the legalization process wouldn't be allowed to proceed unless enforcement

measures are met. That approach also has political benefits—Republicans are unlikely to support legalization if they are not assured that law enforcement is strengthened, too.

Another proposal that could draw GOP votes would strip legal status from people who have gained it—returning them to illegal status—if an employment-verification system called eVerify isn't up and running under designated timelines.

The House is also considering giving state and local governments the authority to write immigration-enforcement laws, an idea that Democrats are likely to resist.

In addition, Republicans envision an adjudication process of sorts whereby illegal immigrants are required to admit guilt and "get right with the law" before they can access any of the law's benefits.

Mr. Obama said last year that he could accept a House approach of breaking the immigration issue into pieces of legislation, as long as the pieces he deems critical are there. In his speech Tuesday, he will argue that the two parties both hold an interest in passing an overhaul, according to a person who attended a recent White House briefing on the speech.

Mr. Obama has moved carefully on immigration. Members of both parties in Congress have told him that pushing too hard could make Republicans less likely to act, for fear of being seen as allied with him.

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The Wall Street Journal

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GOP Leaders Set to Embrace Legal Status for Immigrants

Principles for Immigration Overhaul Would Stop Short of Path to Citizenship

By Laura Meckler and Kristina Peterson

WASHINGTON—House Republican leaders are preparing for the first time to endorse legal status for many of the 11 million people living in the U.S. illegally, a step that could jump-start the moribund immigration debate.

As early as next week, House Speaker [John Boehner](#) (R., Ohio) and other GOP leaders will release a one-page set of principles outlining how they hope to overhaul the immigration system, people familiar with their plans say. It will stop short of offering the sort of path to citizenship endorsed by the Senate, but represents a major step toward what immigration advocates and Democrats have long sought.

The issue has divided Republicans, forcing House leaders to navigate between GOP forces that oppose anything that looks like amnesty, and others who believe it is both unrealistic and politically foolish to expect illegal immigrants to go home.

House Speaker John Boehner will release plans as early as next week. Getty Images

Mr. Boehner and his team plan to circulate the principles in hopes of building support among rank-and-file lawmakers, according to people familiar with the plans. The speaker aims to release the document publicly ahead of the State of the Union speech on Jan. 28, when President [Barack Obama](#) is expected to renew his call for Congress to pass immigration legislation.

Rep. Lee Terry (R., Neb.), one of many Republicans leaders aim to win over, said House leaders' approach might help win GOP support for an overhaul.

"If it doesn't lead to a pathway to citizenship, I think you will get more people to at least embrace that or be OK with that," he said. But he added: "It will still be a very difficult sell."

It is unclear when Republicans plan to translate their ideas into legislation, or when bills will be put on the floor for votes.

The new move comes as immigration advocates and Republican donors alike have grown frustrated over the House's monthslong delay in addressing the issue. After the 2012 election, Republicans including Mr. Boehner said they supported a broad immigration overhaul, partly in hopes of making the party more attractive to the growing number of Hispanic voters. The Senate passed a bipartisan bill in June, but the House has yet to hold a vote.

The new principles will envision a legal process by which illegal immigrants can admit guilt and pay fines and any back taxes, and then gain the right to live and work in the U.S. and travel abroad. It will insist that no legalization provisions take effect until border security and other enforcement measures are in place, people familiar with the draft said.

Unlike under the Senate bill, they will not automatically qualify for citizenship—what detractors call a "special path." But legislation being crafted by Republican lawmakers with the support of House leaders would let newly legalized immigrants apply for legal permanent residence, also known as a green card, using the pathways available to anyone else. Once someone has a green card, he or she is eligible to apply for citizenship.

Judiciary Committee Chairman Bob Goodlatte (R., Va.) has voiced support for such an approach for months. He signaled openness to legalization again in an interview that aired on Telemundo on Sunday. He said that if enforcement measures are in place, he sees "no reason" why illegal immigrants couldn't gain legal status.

Many Republicans have long resisted legalization, and many are expected to continue to oppose it, though it isn't clear how many. "Illegal immigration is a crime and ought to be treated that way," Rep. Tom McClintock (R., Calif.) said Thursday.

The emerging GOP approach also presents a challenge to Democrats, who have said anything short of citizenship is an unacceptable second-class status. On Thursday, several were cautiously optimistic.

Rep. Luis Gutierrez (D., Ill.) called the GOP move "a very important moment." He said that citizenship is crucial, but "part of the problem here is that the debate has been framed [as] 'Either it's citizenship for all or it's justice for no one.'" He said that he wasn't endorsing the GOP approach but that it might be preferable to the status quo, where thousands of people are being deported each week.

"Any movement in the House is movement I like," Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D., Nev.) told reporters.

An estimate of the new House approach by the National Foundation for American Policy, a conservative research group, concludes that between 4.4 million and 6.5 million of illegal immigrants would qualify for green cards and thus have a chance at citizenship. That compares with 8 million under the Senate bill.

The GOP principles will outline support for other pieces of immigration policy such as increased border security, stepped up employment verification, a temporary worker program for low-skilled workers, more visas for high-technology workers and a path to citizenship for people brought to the U.S. illegally as children, according to two people who have seen a draft.

These measures would be considered as individual pieces of legislation, not as one big bill, though some pieces might be combined—such as enforcement and legalization.

And Republicans involved said the document will restate their resolve not to compromise any legislation they pass by going to a conference with the Senate, which would be the normal process for resolving differences between legislation passed by the two chambers. It was unclear how the House envisions the process moving forward after it moves its own legislation.

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Fox News Latino

Matthew Kolken: A Special Path To Citizenship Is Not Necessary

By [Matthew Kolken](#)

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Fox News Latino

The Republican immigration reform principles are finally out. They focus on border security and interior enforcement, including an entry-exit visa tracking system, employment verification and workplace enforcement, followed by a shift to a system that spurs economic growth creating jobs for Americans as well as immigrants. No surprises there.

What is surprising is both Republicans and Democrats agree DREAMers, individuals brought here as children, should be given legal status and a path to citizenship. The other major shift recognizes that the estimated 11 million undocumented people in this country must be provided a way out of the shadows that doesn't end in deportation. There will be flaming hoops to jump through: the admission of culpability, rigorous background checks, significant fines, payment of back taxes, proficiency in English and American civics, and proving the ability to support yourself and your family without receiving public benefits. Individuals with serious criminal convictions, gang members, and sex offenders need not apply. Most significantly, no "special" path to citizenship will be created except for DREAMers. Period.

Predictably, some Democrats have gone on offense. Nancy Pelosi has drawn a hard line in the sand, reportedly calling for citizenship or nothing. Other resistance comes from AFL-CIO President Richard L. Trumka, who dismissed Republican principles as 'fool's gold' and a "nonstarter" because they lack a new special path to citizenship. However, noted immigration lawyer Greg Siskind pushed back, commenting on his blog that "the AFL-CIO's biggest problem with immigration reform is opposition to guest workers," and not the GOP's failure to forge a new special path to citizenship for all. Mr. Siskind, a self-described loyal Democrat, is right.

The talking point that the Republican solution creates a permanent underclass is a *non sequitur*. While their principles don't forge a new special path to citizenship for all, it does not appear that they will permanently block the undocumented population from citizenship either. They simply believe that it is inadvisable to reward past immigration law violations with the creation of a new special path. It's a fair point.

Stuart Anderson of the **National Foundation for American Policy** explains that the term "path to citizenship" is a "misnomer" that needs to be retired from the immigration reform lexicon. What matters, he observes, is whether undocumented immigrants may ultimately qualify to apply for lawful permanent residency, commonly referred to as "getting a green card," because becoming a lawful resident is the path to citizenship. There is no need to create a new "special" path, because the process already exists, and may be expanded during negotiations.

For example, if you marry a United States citizen your spouse is required to sponsor you for lawful permanent residency. After getting your green card, you must then wait a period of years before becoming eligible to apply for U.S. citizenship. It doesn't happen automatically, and you can't skip the first step.

The Republicans suggest a willingness to permit individuals to take advantage of the existing process, while also providing them with legal status and the ability to work and travel while they wait for a family member or employer to sponsor them. It is a reasonable compromise, and is the first real progress I've seen since we started this stab at immigration reform, representing movement toward the middle.

I'm not the only one that thinks so. President Obama commented that "if the Speaker proposes something that says right away, 'folks aren't being deported, families aren't being separated, we're able to attract top young students to provide the skills or start businesses here, and then there's a regular process of citizenship,' I'm not sure how wide the divide ends up being."

Leading immigration reform Congressman Luis Gutierrez is also "delighted," stating his willingness to work with House Republicans to forge a viable compromise that stops the record deportations in their tracks. These words are encouraging and leave room for cautious optimism. The biggest threat to immigration reform, however, is those in both parties taking an all or nothing approach, as a compromise is the only way a deal gets done.

So here is to the first steps down the immigration path less traveled: the one in the middle.

Bloomberg

Boehner Stalls on Immigration With Focus on Obamacare

By Michael C. Bender - Feb 7, 2014

The House's chances of passing a revamp of U.S. immigration policy this year are fading as Republicans say they want to avoid distractions from their focus on blaming Democrats for Obamacare.

House Speaker [John Boehner](#), who said a week ago it was "time to deal with" U.S. immigration policy, said yesterday it will be difficult to pass a bill this year because fellow Republicans don't trust President [Barack Obama](#), whose term ends in 2017, to enforce the changes.

"There's widespread doubt about whether this administration can be trusted to enforce our laws," Boehner told reporters in [Washington](#). "It's going to be difficult to move any immigration legislation until that changes."

[U.S. Immigration Reform Takes a Detour on the Hill](#)

A revision of immigration law is a priority for businesses, including the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, which says changes are needed to boost economic growth. It's also a major recommendation by the [Republican National Committee](#), which wants to improve the party's standing among minorities. Just 27 percent of Hispanic voters backed Republican presidential nominee [Mitt Romney](#) in 2012.

Republican leaders in the House, where lawmakers have scheduled just 82 working days before the Nov. 4 election, are lowering expectations for finishing almost any broad legislation this year.

Debt Limit

House Republicans still must find the votes to raise the U.S. debt ceiling. A suspension of the borrowing limit, enacted by Congress in October, is scheduled to expire today.

Treasury Secretary Jacob J. Lew has urged lawmakers to act quickly to raise the cap, saying the government's ability to meet its obligations will run out before the end of this month.

While Boehner yesterday blamed Obama for a delay on immigration legislation, many [House Republicans](#) disagree on what to propose and are wary of a debate that divides the party before the November congressional elections. Republicans need a net gain of six seats this year to win the Senate majority.

“There is no good time to do this,” Representative Mike Simpson, an Idaho Republican and Boehner ally, said about advancing immigration in a Feb. 5 interview. “So Obama’s president. You going to wait three years to do this? Doesn’t make sense.”

Simpson, first elected in 1998, said he could be persuaded to wait on immigration legislation until next year to see if Republicans can capture the Senate majority.

“I could maybe understand that argument,” Simpson said.

Boehner’s Framework

Boehner last week released a [framework](#) for immigration revisions that raised expectations Congress could reach agreement this year. The plan offered legal status to many of the 12 million undocumented immigrants in the U.S. without authorizing a new path to citizenship.

An immigration measure that passed the Senate with bipartisan support last year included a path to citizenship.

Boehner’s approach would permit 4.4 million to 6.5 million undocumented immigrants to gain lawful residence, **according to a National Foundation for American Policy report**. The Senate bill would make citizenship available to about 8 million immigrants, according to the [Congressional Budget Office](#).

The framework was welcomed by Obama and Senator [Charles Schumer](#), the chamber’s No. 3 Democrat, though it dropped a number of the Senate bill’s provisions.

The loudest opposition has come from Boehner’s fellow Republicans.

‘Irresolvable Conflict’

Senate Minority Leader [Mitch McConnell](#), a Kentucky Republican facing a primary challenge, said this week there was an “irresolvable conflict” on immigration. Representative Raul Labrador, an Idaho Republican aligned with the Tea Party movement, said an immigration push this year should cost Boehner his post as speaker.

“It’s a mistake for us to have an internal battle in the [Republican Party](#) this year about immigration reform,” Labrador told reporters Feb. 5, adding that the policy was “one of the first things we should do next year.”

Representative [John Carter](#), a Texas Republican who was a lead negotiator last year in trying to find bipartisan consensus on immigration legislation, said his colleagues should wait until “the battlefield is clear.”

“In the heat of the battle is not the time,” Carter said in an interview.

The election-year distraction was the “toughest argument” from House Republicans opposed to advancing immigration bills, Representative Mario Diaz-Balart said at a Bloomberg Government breakfast this week. The Florida Republican is a proponent of revising U.S. immigration policy.

Record Low

The Republican Party’s favorability rating fell to a [record-low](#) 28 percent in October during a 16-day partial government shutdown that stemmed from House Republican demands to roll back parts of Obama’s health care law as part of a debt-ceiling increase. The Republicans’ Gallup poll figure was 15 points below Democrats’ 43 percent rating.

Republicans narrowed the gap to [10 points](#) in December, the latest Gallup favorability poll, amid a troubled rollout of Obamacare. A [majority](#) of Americans disapprove of the health-care law, according to a Gallup poll released Feb. 4.

Asked about Boehner’s comments on immigration, White House press secretary [Jay Carney](#) said yesterday that immigration policies “take time.”

“There is a genuine recognition among leaders of the Republican Party that this is the right thing to do for our economy,” Carney said. “There is a strong conservative case to be made for passing comprehensive immigration reform.”

‘Keep Working’

Schumer told reporters he was “not thrown back by Speaker Boehner’s statement.”

“I would urge Speaker Boehner to keep working at it,” Schumer said.

Boehner said Republicans’ distrust for Obama stems from the president’s actions on the 2010 Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, the biggest revision to the U.S. health-care system since the 1960s.

Boehner said Obama could improve relations with the House by urging the Senate to pass a quartet of bills, including two that the president has said he’d veto. The bills would provide flexible hours to working parents, divert taxpayer funds now used for political conventions, provide job training and allow natural gas pipelines. “The president is asking us to move one of the biggest bills of his presidency, and yet he’s shown very little willingness to work with us on the smallest of things,” Boehner said.

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<http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2014-02-06/boehner-stalls-immigration-bill-citing-lack-of-trust.html>

USA Today

January 30, 2014

House GOP unveils immigration 'principles'

Susan Davis and Alan Gomez, USA TODAY

CAMBRIDGE, Md. — House Republican leaders unveiled on Thursday their principles for an overhaul to the nation's immigration laws, which require tighter border security, more interior immigration enforcement and allow the nation's undocumented immigrants to "get right with the law" and stay in the country.

The principles, distributed to Republicans gathered here for a three-day annual retreat, say undocumented immigrants can legally live and work in the country if they register with the federal government and are "willing to admit their culpability." They must also pass a "rigorous" criminal background check, pay "significant" fines and back taxes, learn English and civics and prove they can support themselves without government assistance.

The principles do not make clear whether most undocumented immigrants would ever be able to apply for green cards or become U.S. citizens. But it does say that those brought to the country as children "would not be punished for the mistakes of their parents" and could eventually become U.S. citizens if they meet certain criteria.

"This problem's been around for at least the last 15 years. It's been turned into a political football, I think it's unfair. So I think it's time to deal with it," House Speaker John Boehner, R-Ohio, said Thursday before huddling with his members. "But how we deal with it is critically important."

Boehner has been up front that Republicans continue to favor a step-by-step approach vs. one comprehensive piece of legislation akin to what the Democratic-controlled Senate approved last year. The Senate bill includes a pathway to citizenship for the 12 million undocumented immigrants in the United States.

Senate Democrats were encouraged by what they saw in the one-page set of principles.

"While these standards are certainly not everything we would agree with, they leave a real possibility that Democrats and Republicans, in both the House and Senate, can in some way come together and pass immigration reform that both sides can accept. It is a long, hard road but the door is open," said Sen. Charles Schumer, D-N.Y. in a statement.

The most contentious issue among Republicans is how to address the status of undocumented immigrants.

On the eve of Thursday's GOP retreat, House Budget Chairman Paul Ryan, R-Wis., laid out how undocumented immigrants could reach citizenship.

Ryan told MSNBC that undocumented immigrants could immediately qualify for a "probationary status" and that the government would then have an undetermined amount of time to reach certain security benchmarks, including stronger border security and enhanced interior immigration enforcement.

If those benchmarks are met, then the undocumented immigrants could qualify for a more permanent legal work permit, allowing them to live and work in the country without fear of deportation.

At that point, only those who can qualify for already-existing channels of legal immigration – meaning they're related to a U.S. citizen or are sponsored for a green card by their employer – could get on the road to citizenship, he said.

Under the Senate plan, the vast majority of the nation's undocumented immigrants can apply for U.S. citizenship. It would take them 13 years and they would have to clear several hurdles, including paying fines, back taxes and maintaining a clean criminal record. But they could then apply for citizenship.

Ryan criticized the Senate proposal as a "special pathway to citizenship" that is unfair to people around the world who have been waiting years to apply and legally enter the USA.

"If you want to get in line to get a green card like any other immigrant, you can do that," Ryan said. "You just have to get at the back of the line so that we preference that legal immigrant who did things right in the first place."

The two approaches would have a big effect on who could qualify for citizenship. A [Congressional Budget Office analysis](#) of the Senate plan estimated that about 8 million undocumented immigrants would qualify for green cards and U.S. citizenship. The House approach laid out by Ryan would allow between 4.4 to 6.5 million undocumented to reach that status, **according to a report from the National Foundation for American Policy**, an Arlington, Va.-based think tank.

Rep. Marlin Stutzman, R-Ind., told reporters at the retreat that he was receptive to that alternative. "I think we as Republicans can find a path to legal status that does not include citizenship," he said, dismissing political concerns that taking on immigration could divide the GOP and spark primary challenges in an election year.

"I'm not afraid to deal with anything at anytime," he said, "If we focus on the right policy, the politics will take care of itself."

Democrats have long insisted that they could not negotiate with the House if it presented a plan that forever barred undocumented immigrants from attaining U.S. citizenship. With the new

GOP principles at least providing access to citizenship for many undocumented immigrants, Democrats said it was something they could work with.

"Nobody that I hear from in Congress is talking about immediate citizenship for everyone or mass deportation for everyone," said Rep. Luis Gutierrez, D-Ill., who has led immigration efforts for Democrats for years.

"We can find common ground that allows millions of the undocumented to eventually apply for citizenship, legalizes millions who are working and contributing to the country, and puts our economy, our security, and the legality of America's workforce on solid ground."

House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., told reporters that Boehner has informed her of their intent to put out some guiding principles.

"We'll see what it is, but I believe it is a good-faith effort to find common ground. And we look forward to seeing what they are," Pelosi said.

However, she said any bill that does not ultimately include a path to citizenship is unlikely to garner much support from Democrats. "We need to have that path."

<http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2014/01/30/house-gop-principles-immigration/5052407/>