

Senator Chuck Grassley
Responses to Questions for the Record
Hearing on “The Border Security, Economic Opportunity, and Immigration
Modernization Act S.744” on April 22, 2013
Dr. Steven Camarota, Director of Research, Center for Immigration Studies

1. At the April 22, 2013 hearing, we heard many perspectives on comprehensive immigration reform. Was there any testimony offered by other witnesses that you found problematic, and how would you respond to it? Do you have any additional comments on issues that were discussed at the hearing?

Grover Norquist’s testimony was the most odd. He seems entirely unaware of how our welfare system and income support system actually work. Moreover, he seems unaware of the actual welfare use rates of immigrants, especially less-educated immigrants. His argument that past immigration was not a problem, so today’s immigration is not a problem is entirely out of touch with current realities. For example, in 1900, during the last great wave of immigration, government expenditures (at all levels) equaled only about 5% of GDP, today it is roughly 35%. Today, each individual has to be able on average to pay a good deal in taxes to cover their consumption of services, direct and indirect. This means the arrival of less-educated immigrants who often earn low incomes has enormous negative implications for public coffers. Mr. Norquist does not seem aware of any of this. He simply wishes to state platitudes as a basis for policy.

2. As you know, Department of Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano testified before the Judiciary Committee on April 23, 2013. Much of her testimony focused on the issue of border security and the discretion that the proposed bill gives to the DHS Secretary. Do you agree with Secretary Napolitano’s assessment that this legislation should be enacted largely as it is currently written? What do you believe comprehensive immigration reform must include so that it avoids the problems that followed the 1986 reform?

There are too many problems with the bill to explore here. But let me touch on just a few.

1) Employers are not required to start verifying the legal status of new workers for five years.

2) Employment verification never covers existing workers only new hirers, even after it is implemented in five years.

3) The bill actually scraps the existing employment verification system (called E-verify), and creates a whole new system that will almost certainly take years to get up and running.

4) Only 3 of 9 border sectors are required to be 90% secure.

5) DHS only has to submit a border control “plan” before amnesty goes into effect. Since the administration already considers the border controlled, this “requirement” means very little.

6) *No in-personal interview is required to verify identity; amnesty applications can all be done by mail.*

7) *The information amnesty applicants provide can never be used in an enforcement action. If, for example, if a previously deported murderer applies under a false name and is discovered, agents are prohibited from using the address or place of work he provided in his application to pick him up. Confidentiality also means that if someone has been using a stolen identity, USCIS cannot inform the person whose identity has been stolen. Further, the illegal alien is given an amnesty for having stolen an identity.*

8) *Illegal immigrants are not required to pay back taxes (no matter how much is owed), even though prior to the bill's release there was the belief that it would include such a provision.*

9) *Illegal immigrants receive amnesty without any English language requirement. In ten years when illegal immigrants begin to apply for green cards (permanent residence) they only have to state that they are signed up for an English class.*

10) *Illegal immigrants with two drunk driving convictions can still receive amnesty.*

11) *There is no mechanism to detain and deport those who apply for amnesty, but are found ineligible. There is no requirement that DHS make any effort to locate and remove these individuals. The bill could have required applicants to receive approval in person, and those found ineligible could then be arrested. But there is no such provision. This fact, coupled with the probation on using information in the application for enforcement, means that the S744 will not be weeding out criminals, terrorists, and other bad actors.*

3. In your opinion, how should comprehensive immigration reform strike a balance between family-based and merit-based immigration? There are many way to think about this question but consider this as a starting point.

If one thinks immigration is supposed to benefit the United States, then selecting as few immigrants as possible based on the family relations is best. In my view family immigration should be limited to the spouses and minor children of U.S.-citizens.

4. In your opinion, will the bill's legalization provisions create a burden on the national economy or public programs?

As I made clear in my testimony, immigration makes the economy larger but not richer. Its primary effect is to redistribute income, reducing the wages of some workers (those in competition with immigrants), who are often the least-educated, while increasing profits for business and the wages of those workers not in competition with immigrants. There are no large net gains for natives. Second the fiscal impact (taxes paid minus services used) of immigrant household or families is almost certainly negative. In other words, they use more in services than they pay in taxes.

As I indicated in my testimony, the National Research Council found that immigrant households overall were a net fiscal drain in 1996 of \$11 to \$20 billion annually. The illegal population is overwhelmingly less-educated, averaging only 10 years of schooling. Allowing them to stay is very costly; giving them legal status will increase the costs further.

5. In what ways, if any, does this bill use immigration reform to strengthen the national economy?

The provisions allowing in more skilled immigrants could have a positive impact economically and fiscally. However, the amnesty provisions, the increase in immigration for family members, and the new guest worker program for the less-skilled immigrants all have negative fiscal implications in particular.

Senator Jeff Sessions

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1. If S. 744 were to become law, do you believe that the Department of Homeland Security would deport those who enter the country illegally or overstay their visas after the bill's enactment?

There is nothing in the bill to mandate this. Thus those found ineligible for the amnesty will continue to live and work in the United States. It must be remembered that border enforcement and an enter/exit system will have no impact on those turned down for the amnesty. Further, the E-verify system is not implemented for 5 years and never applies to existing workers. All of this means that those who do not qualify can and will continue to live in the United States.

2. If S. 744 were to become law, how many total new immigrants, including those currently here illegally who would be granted some form of legal status and those who would be admitted to the country under all categories of chain migration, would be added to the United States over a ten-year period following the date of enactment and over a fifteen-year period following the date of enactment?

I am not sure of the number. However, Numbersusa has estimated that it roughly doubles the number of green cards each year to 2 million. Their findings is consistent with my reading of the bill.