

# American Immigration Lawyers Association

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## **Senate Begins Debate Anew on Comprehensive Immigration Reform; Action Expected Before Memorial Day Recess**

The Senate began debate again this afternoon on S. 2611, the so-called Hagel-Martinez compromise immigration bill. There were no votes scheduled today, but amendments will be offered and debated over the course of the next several days, with debate expected to conclude some time next week, no later than the Memorial Day recess.

While the process is still very much in flux, immigration advocates are working very hard to get the needed fixes in the bill that would make the legalization program workable, and are also pressing for additional improvements. We will keep you posted about amendments as information becomes available. Most offices appear to still be working out their amendment strategies, and both Republicans and Democrats are prioritizing their list of amendments.

Several Senators took to the Senate floor to discuss the bill and/or amendments that they proposed to offer, including Senators Frist, Reid, Cornyn, Leahy, Kennedy, Byrd, Dorgan and Sessions. Senator Cornyn offered amendment no. 3961 on behalf of Senator Isakson, which provides that, until the secretary of Homeland Security certifies to the president and Congress that the border security provisions contained in the bill have been implemented, no other provisions in the bill shall be in effect. He then attempted to set that amendment aside and introduce an amendment on behalf of himself and Senator Kyl, but Senator Leahy objected on the grounds that introducing the amendment at that point in time wasn't within the confines of the procedural agreement the two sides had worked out.

President Bush is giving a nationally-broadcast speech tonight. He reportedly will speak about deploying the National Guard in a "support role" at the borders, and will address the need for comprehensive immigration reform. The address will air at 8 p.m. eastern time.

AILA President Deborah Notkin is doing a number of radio appearances today and later this week, and Ben Johnson of the AILF Immigration Policy Center has done several media spots today as well.

AILA's Executive Director, Jeanne Butterfield, stated that "[t]he compromise bill pending on the Senate floor is far from perfect but it is a good-faith effort to move the process forward, and it would bring incredibly important relief to millions of undocumented persons currently working in the U.S. and contributing to our economy. The Senate bill would also eliminate existing family backlogs, provide much needed reforms of our agricultural worker program, allow undocumented high school students to pursue their dreams, provide a new temporary worker program for the future with good labor protections, and bring family and employment-based immigration quotas in line with U.S. needs and priorities. The bill would increase our nation's security by mandating smart border and interior enforcement and by making legality the norm."

AILA urges the Senate to ensure that S. 2611 actually accomplishes these laudable objectives by fixing those provisions that would prevent the proposed reforms and new programs from actually

working. Equally important, we call on Senators from both sides of the aisle to strike or amend those sections in the bill that undermine this country's fundamental commitment to the twin principles of fair rules and due process.

We will continue to update you as the process unfolds.

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