

## Schumer, Groups Prepare To Launch Bid For Overhaul Bill

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By [Chris Strohm](#)

Lawmakers and groups seeking to overhaul the nation's immigration laws this year are gearing up for legislative battles beginning as soon as Congress returns from its August recess even as healthcare legislation and other issues threaten to eat up much of the fall schedule.

Senate Judiciary Immigration Subcommittee Chairman Charles Schumer, D-N.Y., intends to introduce his immigration reform proposal around Labor Day, although it may be in the form of a framework, rather than an actual bill, his spokesman said.

Regardless, it is expected to detail a strategy for dealing with the future flow of legal immigration and giving millions of undocumented workers in the country a path to citizenship.

"You have to deal with immigration comprehensively. If you don't do it as a comprehensive bill, any one group could try to block it," Schumer said.

Schumer and his staff have been meeting with various interest groups and now have begun the process of meeting with other lawmakers and staffs to vet their plans.

But no date has been set to mark up a bill. "This is very complicated, but we're making excellent progress on many fronts," Schumer said.

Judiciary Immigration Subcommittee ranking member John Cornyn, R-Texas, said he has "discussed broad outlines of a proposal with Senator Schumer."

"But I have not been involved in the drafting of any legislative text, nor have I been asked by Sen. Schumer to comment on any specific proposals," he added. "I look forward to seeing Sen. Schumer's proposals [and] I will work to ensure that any legislation is consistent with my strong and long-held principles on this complex issue."

Meanwhile, business groups and immigrant advocates are developing their lobbying strategies.

On Wednesday, a broad-based business coalition sent Schumer, Cornyn and other lawmakers a letter urging them to ensure that legislation includes a system to bring foreign workers – both high-skilled and low-skilled – into the country to address current and future employment needs.

"The business community has often felt the limits of the current legal system," said the coalition letter, reflecting the views of such groups as the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, American Farm Bureau and National Association of Manufacturers.

"Any plan to address future immigration should be flexible enough to adapt to changing workforce conditions, including new, emerging industries. And it should be able to respond to the workforce needs of the nation's myriad industry sectors in a timely and accurate fashion," said the coalition, which also wrote to House Judiciary Immigration Subcommittee Chairwoman Zoe Lofgren, D-Calif., and ranking member Steve King, R-Iowa.

But the letter did not address whether an independent commission should be created to set visa levels and determine how many foreign workers should be brought into the country – a proposal backed by immigration reform advocates and labor unions that has created a fissure with business groups, who are skeptical about the idea.

Lofgren said it is unlikely that Congress and the administration would delegate completely to a commission the power to determine future levels of foreign workers to be admitted into the country. But she said a commission or group of experts could play a role in helping to develop rapid responses to changing economic conditions.

Tamar Jacoby, president of ImmigrationWorks USA, a member of the business coalition, said she hopes a compromise can be reached. "Nothing would be more dangerous for comprehensive immigration reform than this to turn into a standoff between business and labor," she said.

She believes Democratic leaders will give their conservative members a pass to oppose an immigration bill. That means they will likely need to pick up 35-40 House Republicans and 8-10 Senate Republicans, Jacoby said.

"This bill is still going to take Republican support," she said. "We could need some serious numbers here."