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## GOP SEES LIMITS IN EFFORT TO CHALLENGE OBAMA'S IMMIGRATION POLICIES

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Republican lawmakers, bumping up against the limits of their power in the Senate, agreed Thursday to consider legislation tightening border security while continuing to search for a way to resolve a broader immigration fight ahead of a February deadline.

Now in control of both chambers of Congress, Republicans have been eager to challenge President Barack Obama's unilateral decision last year to shelter more than 4 million illegal immigrants from deportation. But they acknowledged that their ranks aren't large enough in the Senate to win approval of an expansive rollback of his policies that the House passed this week. The GOP controls 54 Senate seats, short of the 60 votes that most bills need to clear procedural hurdles.

"We're only going to be able to accomplish as much as the Senate can," said Rep. Charlie Dent (R., Pa.) at House-Senate GOP retreat in Hershey, Pa. "That's not an easy reality for a lot of House members to accept, but it is a fact."

After a strategy session at the retreat, Republicans left unresolved the question of what kind of immigration legislation can pass the Senate and what the House will accept in return.

"What are the chess moves and what are we willing to be able to do and can we coalesce around political reality?" asked Rep. Steve Womack (R., Ark.). "That's what I would like to have a little bit more of."

Many Republicans expressed a desire to offer their own immigration policies, not just bat down Mr. Obama's ideas. Lawmakers said there was broad support for a border security bill that House Homeland Security Committee Chairman Michael McCaul (R., Texas) said Thursday he planned to introduce.

"We all understand the first step is going to be border security," said Rep. Raul Labrador (R., Idaho). Successfully passing border security legislation opens the door to consider other changes to the immigration system, including the guest worker visa system, he said.

Mr. McCaul's legislation, which would analyze threats posed by the border and direct the administration how to boost security, is expected to be considered separately from the current effort to force Mr. Obama to roll back his latest executive action.

On Wednesday the House passed 236-191 a bill funding the Homeland Security Department that also pulled in a handful of measures blocking Mr. Obama's recent executive action on immigration, as well as a 2012 program that offers safe harbor to young people brought to the U.S. illegally as children, and other White House initiatives.

Centrist Democrats have indicated they are unlikely to support the GOP efforts to undo Mr. Obama's plan from November to shield millions of illegal immigrants from deportation, dooming the bill's chances of clearing the Senate. But until recently, Republicans had been unwilling to look beyond its passage in the House.

Sen. John Thune of South Dakota, chairman of the Senate Republican Conference, told reporters at the retreat Thursday that Republicans want a chance to vote on the measure in the Senate, "but we also realize it's going to take 60 votes."

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R., Ky.) said he would bring the House bill up in the Senate. "We're going to try to pass it," he said. "If we are unable to do that, then we'll let you know what comes next."

The underlying, \$39.7 billion bill would keep Homeland Security fully running from Feb. 27, when its current funding expires, through September. GOP leaders split off funding for the agency late last year, when Congress funded the rest of the government through September.

Republicans had hoped to use the agency's funding as leverage, without the threat of shuttering the entire federal government. But GOP lawmakers said that especially in light of last week's shootings at the Charlie Hebdo magazine in Paris, they were reluctant to let the immigration fight jeopardize funding important to national security.

"There are a body of Republicans that think it would be extremely counterproductive, given the fact that Republicans are the security hawks," said Rep. Matt Salmon (R., Ariz.)

Senate Majority Whip John Cornyn (R., Texas) said that letting Homeland Security funding lapse was "off the table." He echoed Mr. McConnell's assurances after the election that a GOP-controlled Congress wouldn't permit any repeats of the partial government shutdown in the fall of 2013. "Under no circumstances will we see any shutdowns," he said.

Democrats have said Republicans' efforts to tie immigration measures to the Homeland Security funding bill demonstrate that they are willing to jeopardize national security in their attempt to undo the administration's immigration policy.

"People expect us to put whatever disagreements we have on issues aside and agree on one issue: keeping them safe," Rep. Steve Israel of New York, a member of House Democratic leadership, said this week. "Republicans have said to those voters we won't even agree on that."