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REPUBLICANS CHEER HALT OF OBAMA IMMIGRATION ACTION

By Kristina Peterson
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Congressional Republicans Tuesday applauded a federal judge in Texas's order late Monday temporarily blocking implementation of President Barack Obama's decision last year to shield millions of illegal immigrants from deportation.

Top Republicans said the Texas injunction validated their concerns that Mr. Obama's executive action on immigration overstepped his legal bounds. GOP lawmakers have made overturning the immigration action one of their top priorities and have said they won't extend funding for the Homeland Security Department, which oversees immigration, unless it is reversed.

"The president said 22 times he did not have the authority to take the very action on immigration he eventually did, so it is no surprise that at least one court has agreed," House Speaker John Boehner (R., Ohio) said in a statement Tuesday closely mirrored by one from Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R., Ky.). "Hopefully, Senate Democrats who claim to oppose this executive overreach will now let the Senate begin debate on a bill to fund the Homeland Security department."

Funding for Homeland Security expires on Feb. 27 and lawmakers have been gridlocked for weeks about how to extend it. The House last month passed a bill keeping the agency running through September that rolls back several of Mr. Obama's immigration policies, including his November executive action.

Senate Democrats who object to the effort to thwart the president's immigration moves have blocked the House bill in repeated procedural votes. Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid (D., Nev.) has said Democrats will only support a funding bill without contentious immigration provisions.

"There is no good legal case to be made by the President's opponents and legislation the hardliners are putting forward in Washington is going nowhere," Rep. Luis Gutierrez (D., Ill.) said in a statement Tuesday. "Politically and practically the idea of deporting or driving out 11 million people and their families is absurd."

Late Monday, U.S. District Judge Andrew Hanen of Brownsville, Texas, who was nominated by former Republican President George W. Bush, sided with roughly two dozen states that sued to challenge a program backed by President Barack Obama, claiming it exceeded his authority and violated the Constitution.

"This ruling underscores the importance and urgency of Congress defunding President Obama's executive overreach on immigration," House Judiciary Committee Chairman Bob Goodlatte (R., Va.) said in a written statement Tuesday. "Now that the legality of the President's executive decrees has been questioned by both the legislative and judicial branches, Senate Democrats should stop their obstructionism and allow debate on the House-passed bill that would defund President Obama's effective rewriting of our nation's immigration laws."

In a statement early Tuesday, the White House defended the executive orders issued in November as within the president's legal authority, saying the U.S. Supreme Court and Congress have said federal officials can establish priorities in enforcing immigration laws.

"The district court's decision wrongly prevents these lawful, common-sense policies from taking effect and the Department of Justice has indicated that it will appeal that decision," the White House statement said.

Mr. Boehner has told Republicans he plans to take legal action against the White House over its immigration policies. It is not yet clear if he will file a lawsuit aimed at challenging Mr. Obama's executive action or join the states' lawsuit asking that the president's policy changes be declared illegal and blocked.