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SENATE CONSERVATIVES OFFER IMMIGRATION PLAN HEAVY ON BORDER SECURITY, QUICK DEPORTATIONS

Package aligns with President Trump's proposal but has uphill battle to 60 votes

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Heading into an open-ended immigration debate, some of the Senate's most conservative members are offering a package heavy with border security and provisions aimed at quickly deporting unauthorized migrants.

The plan also includes cuts to family-based immigration and the elimination of the diversity lottery that would ultimately reduce total legal immigration to the U.S. by about a third. And in a concession by conservatives, it includes a path to citizenship for about 1.8 million young undocumented people brought to the U.S. as children, more than twice the number who now have Obama-era protections.

The package translates a broad framework put forward by President Donald Trump into legislation and will be offered as an amendment during a debate that begins Monday in the Senate, GOP aides said Sunday. It represents a trade: conservatives agree to let the so-called Dreamers stay in the U.S. and even apply for citizenship, but they want a long list of enforcement measures too.

"This legislation is a reasonable approach to shielding children illegally brought to our country through no fault of their own while also taking the meaningful steps to ensure nobody finds themselves in the same situation in the future," said a statement from Sen. Chuck Grassley (R., Iowa), chairman of the Judiciary Committee.

The measure is co-sponsored by Republican Sens. John Cornyn of Texas, Thom Tillis of North Carolina, David Perdue of Georgia, James Lankford of Oklahoma, Tom Cotton of Arkansas and Joni Ernst of Iowa.

The Senate debate will begin Monday with an empty bill, and senators will need to win sufficient support to add provisions to it.

The groups casts its bill as a common-sense compromise, but its backers are among the most conservative lawmakers on the issue of immigration, and few observers believe this measure will win support from the 60 senators needed. The Senate has 51 Republicans.

Backers say this is the only package that is backed by Mr. Trump and can pass the House, and say it is better for senators to vote for this than a version that will never become law.

The package provides a 10-to-12 year path to citizenship for the approximately 1.8 million young people who qualified for the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, or DACA, which Mr. Trump ended. Among the requirements, they must have been in the U.S. continually since at least 2007.

It appropriates \$25 billion for border security including new barriers – walls or fencing – as well as technology and personnel across immigration agencies. The entire sum would be appropriated as part of this bill, a provision aimed at preventing future Congresses from balking at the funding. But the funds would become available for spending in segments over a decade.

It also seeks to speed deportations for children who cross the border alone and family units, both of whom get special treatment under current law. For instance, children from Central America would have their deportation cases quickly decided, as is the case for children from Mexico today. Under current law, unaccompanied minors from noncontiguous countries are allowed to see an immigration judge and are often placed with family while they wait for a court date.

The legislation would also allow family units to be kept in immigration jails while they wait for rulings. It also would allow the jailing of people who the U.S. wants to deport but whose home countries won't accept them.

It also makes several changes to the system of legal immigration, reducing the ability of citizens and green-card holders to bring their families to the U.S.

It would allow U.S. citizens and legal permanent residents to continue sponsoring their spouses and children under age 18 for green cards. But citizens would lose the right to sponsor their parents, adult children and siblings, and permanent residents could no longer sponsor their adult children. Green cards now available to adult children and siblings would be used to clear the existing, significant backlog and sponsors expect it would be a decade before total legal immigration falls.

Parents of citizens, who are now admitted without quotas, would be eligible for renewable five-year visas whereby they could live in the U.S., but not work.

The legislation would eliminate the diversity lottery, which offers about 50,000 green cards to people from countries that are underrepresented in U.S. immigration. Half of these green cards would be used to clear waiting lists in the family queue and the other half from the employment green-card backlog.

The legislation leaves out some key conservative immigration priorities, all of which were left out of the Trump framework as well. Items omitted include changes to the system for winning asylum, a requirement that employers check the immigration status of potential employees, and rules meant to compel that local jurisdictions detain suspected undocumented immigrants until federal officials can arrest them.