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## RUBIO OFFERS FULL-THROATED SUPPORT FOR IMMIGRATION BILL

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Senator Marco Rubio offered an extraordinary endorsement of legislation to overhaul the nation's badly strained immigration system on Sunday when, after holding back for weeks, he appeared on no fewer than seven television talk shows to explain and defend a plan that he said would be "a net positive for the country, now and in the future."

As Mr. Rubio, a Florida Republican who is a member of a bipartisan group of eight senators preparing to unveil their immigration legislation on Tuesday, pressed his case again and again on the airwaves, new details of the bill emerged. Prominent among them was a proposed fee of roughly \$2,000 that illegal immigrants would have to pay before they could earn legal status.

As part of that plan, which was still being completed on Sunday, these immigrants would have to pay \$500 when they apply for a temporary work permit, and would have the next 10 years to pay the remaining \$1,500 or so, a person familiar with the negotiations said.

Republicans in particular have insisted that the 11 million illegal immigrants already in the country should face a tough path — including paying a fee, getting in line behind those seeking citizenship but who have not lived in the country illegally, and learning English — before they could apply for citizenship.

A Senate aide described the \$2,000 figure as "significant but not impossible, punitive but not unreasonable." Democrats and immigration advocates had originally pushed for a lower amount.

Mr. Rubio's one-man media blitz on Sunday was a striking show of confidence for a lawmaker who only weeks ago had been a voice of caution, a counterweight to the optimism being expressed by others in the group.

On Sunday, by discussing the plan on the five major network talk shows and on the Spanish-language networks Telemundo and Univision, he was clearly signaling that the plan was ready for scrutiny by the public and by Congress, and that he was prepared to throw his full weight behind it — perhaps, at the same time, risking his own prospects for a widely expected presidential run in 2016.

His tone seemed to reflect those high stakes.

In each appearance he spoke with a sense of urgency, arguing that the plan did not constitute amnesty for illegal immigrants. He said that they would receive no federal benefits during the 13 or so years it would take them to qualify for full citizenship and that the plan depended on tougher border security and better systems for verifying the employment and legal standing of people already in the country.

The new plan would also include a path to citizenship for an additional 500,000 or more people who are currently in "limbo" status — including refugees; people who face persecution in their home countries; and people with visas specifically designated for trading and investing with countries with which the United States has signed treaties of commerce and navigation, another person familiar with the bill said.

Mr. Rubio's status as a Tea Party member, a prominent young Latino and a rising star in the Republican Party means his imprimatur on the legislation will carry weight. One leading Republican, Senator Lindsey Graham of South Carolina, praised Mr. Rubio last week as "indispensable" and "a game changer."

The timing of the plan's formal introduction remained unclear, though the group was hoping to go public with its bill on Tuesday. Mr. Rubio would say only that it would come "as early as this week." But a Democrat in the bipartisan group, Senator Charles E. Schumer of New York, said that all remaining hurdles had been removed.

"I see nothing in the way," Mr. Schumer said on the ABC News program "This Week," "and I think you'll see a major agreement that's balanced, that's fair, that will have the widespread support of the American people on Tuesday."

Ultimate passage is far from guaranteed. But Republicans are deeply concerned about attracting Latino voters — Mr. Obama won 70 percent of their votes last year — and the measure is seen as the major element of the president's second-term agenda that has the best prospects.

The Senate group's push for an immigration overhaul was also being greeted on Sunday as an example of the sort of productive bipartisan cooperation that has become exceedingly rare in Washington.

"The eight of us have met in the middle, and I think that's where the American people are," Mr. Schumer said. He had only praise for Mr. Rubio, whom he called "a tremendous asset here."

Even Karl Rove, the former political adviser to President George W. Bush who is known as a hard-nosed partisan strategist, welcomed the cooperation on immigration.

"The Democrats and Republicans here have tried to cobble together a bill that is thoughtful, sensitive, tough, and with an eye toward getting something done," Mr. Rove said on "Fox News Sunday."

Whatever the outcome, he said, it showed leadership on Mr. Rubio's part. Concerning the presidential race in 2016, he added, "I think it helps him."