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## HOUSE PANEL TO WEIGH CITIZENSHIP FOR YOUNG IMMIGRANTS

By Kristina Peterson  
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WASHINGTON—House Republican leaders will test this week whether rank-and-file GOP lawmakers are willing to rally around creating a path to citizenship for a subset of people in the U.S. illegally: those brought to the country as children.

In general, House Republicans have been wary of any broad effort to offer a path to citizenship or legal status to illegal immigrants, arguing such a move would reward people who broke the law. But many GOP leaders have voiced support for making an exception for those who immigrated illegally as children.

On Tuesday, a House panel is set to debate a measure aimed at such young immigrants, the first public airing of where the party's rank-and-file stands on the issue. The proposal—drafted by House Majority Leader Eric Cantor and Judiciary Chairman Bob Goodlatte, both Virginia Republicans—fits into the party's promised piecemeal approach to changing immigration laws.

The legislation has been criticized by Democrats, who favor a broader approach, as well as some conservative groups that worry such a bill would lead Republicans to a slippery slope of granting legal status to other illegal immigrants.

House Republicans, meanwhile, have maintained that they intend to pass immigration legislation only if it is supported by a majority of their caucus. Republicans have rejected the approach taken in the Democratic-controlled Senate, which in June approved a broad package with a bipartisan vote.

"We have a broken immigration system," House Speaker John Boehner (R., Ohio) said in an interview aired Sunday on CBS, calling the Senate approach overly sweeping and lacking in sufficient border controls. "We want to deal with this in chunks—chunks that the members can deal with and grapple with and, frankly, chunks that the American people can get their arms around."

House Republicans—sensitive to anything resembling "amnesty," a reference to a 1986 law that legalized many illegal immigrants—have so far shied away from producing a bill providing a path to legalization or citizenship for the roughly 11 million illegal immigrants in the U.S.

"Those who are in the country unlawfully are not a homogenous group. One of the clearest examples is those who were brought here as children who did not knowingly break our laws," said Rep. Trey Gowdy (R., S.C.), chairman of the Judiciary Committee's immigration panel. "There is growing consensus in our conference to provide a solution for these children."

The House GOP bill is expected to be narrower in scope than the Dream Act. Democrats have long backed versions of that legislation, introduced in 2001, which would have provided legal residency and eventually citizenship to some undocumented children who attended college or served in the military. The GOP measure could have other provisions

added later in the process. A separate bill from Rep. Jeff Denham (R., Calif.) would allow illegal immigrants brought to the country before they were 15 years old to enlist in the military and become legal permanent residents on an expedited path to citizenship.

Some conservative groups are worried that the proposal from Messrs. Cantor and Goodlatte could be "the bill the House Republican leadership is looking to move to get their members comfortable voting with some sort of legalization," said Dan Holler, spokesman for Heritage Action for America, the political arm of the Heritage Foundation, a conservative think tank.

Some GOP lawmakers are also concerned that passing a narrow House bill could lead to an expanded immigration plan later during negotiations with the Senate. The Senate bill includes a 13-year path to citizenship for illegal immigrants, as well as tougher border-security provisions and an expanded visa program for guest workers.

Some lawmakers are also concerned about possible difficulties in implementing the plan.

"I agree that children who have been brought here through no fault of their own ought not be penalized," said Rep. Lou Barletta (R., Pa.). But he voiced concern over verifying arrival timing in the U.S. "That's the question: which are the innocent children and which are the bad actors?"

Republicans trying to build support for the bill won't be able to count on help from Democrats, who criticized the measure for offering citizenship only to young immigrants while leaving others, such as their parents, stranded in legal limbo. "There is no reason why Democrats should be part of this political game that Republicans are playing," said Rep. Xavier Becerra (D. Calif.), who is working with a bipartisan group of six other House lawmakers on a broader immigration bill. "The American people aren't telling us tear apart families to fix the broken immigration system," he said.