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## HISPANIC LAWMAKERS URGE OBAMA TO SELL IMMIGRATION BILL

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Hispanic lawmakers urged President Barack Obama to use his megaphone to help pass an immigration bill through the U.S. House, while Mr. Obama assured them he would do what's necessary to enact a measure that is a centerpiece of his domestic agenda, lawmakers said after the meeting.

Mr. Obama and Vice President Joe Biden met privately on Wednesday with the Congressional Hispanic Caucus to discuss ways to push the immigration bill through the Republican-controlled House.

Last month, the Senate voted 68-32 on a bill that would provide a path to citizenship for the 11 million people living in the U.S. illegally.

Mr. Obama took a largely hands-off posture as the bill made its way through the Senate, but some supporters of an immigration overhaul believe he must take a more active stance now that the action has moved to the House.

House Republicans are decidedly less enthusiastic about a sweeping overhaul of the nation's immigration laws, as was clear from a statement released Wednesday by the chamber's GOP leadership. Following a meeting of House Republicans, GOP leaders said in the joint statement that Americans "don't trust a Democratic-controlled Washington, and they're alarmed by the president's ongoing insistence on enacting a single, massive, Obamacare-like bill rather than pursuing a step-by-step, common-sense approach to actually fix the problem."

In their meeting with the president, Latino legislators said they told him they'd like him to help keep attention focused on the immigration issue.

Some urged him to travel around the country and make the case that passing an immigration bill would give the economy a needed boost.

"We believe that the president is giving consideration to going across the country and explaining to the American people the benefits that will come from passage of this legislation and we welcome that," said caucus chairman Ruben Hinojosa (D., Texas). "The members of the CHC requested that, and he said that he would give that consideration."

Rep. Raul Grijalva (D., Ariz.) said in an interview after the meeting, "The presidency is the ultimate pulpit. He made this a singular domestic issue, and I think he can add to the coalition that's needed to pass this."

One Democrat who attended the meeting said there was agreement in the room that House Speaker John Boehner (R., Ohio) faces a dilemma as a result of the public statements he's made about immigration legislation. Mr. Boehner has said he won't bring the bill to the House floor unless a majority of Republicans support it – a difficult standard to meet. Mr.

Obama told the Hispanic caucus he believes Mr. Boehner wants to get something passed on immigration; the question now is what must be done to prod the speaker to move forward on this issue, the Democrat said.

Rep. Michelle Lujan Grisham (D., N.M.) said the president made clear in the meeting that he's relying on the Congressional Hispanic Caucus to help find a pathway for the legislation in the House. And members of the caucus said the White House could be helpful by ensuring that the benefits of the bill – particularly its impact on the deficit – are highlighted.

The Congressional Budget Office has estimated that the Senate legislation would reduce federal deficits by \$197 billion during the first decade after passing Congress and by another \$700 billion during the next decade.

Ms. Lujan Grisham said the conversation with the president helped re-energize lawmakers and convinced her that passing a bill was within the House's grasp.

Mr. Obama "reiterated that this is a priority," she said. "It's a legacy issue. It's something he's been working on since his first term."

In a statement released after the meeting, the White House said that in the coming weeks, members of the president's cabinet and senior administration officials would "call upon the House to do the right thing on immigration."

As for the president, at the meeting he "expressed his willingness to continue working with both parties to make sure that commonsense immigration reform becomes a reality as soon as possible," the statement said.