



Groups Up Pressure for Immigration Reform

By [Jennifer Bendery](#)

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Leaders of 10 immigration reform groups on Wednesday will kick off a new, “politically savvy” national campaign to try to force legislative action on comprehensive immigration reform this year.

The new coalition, which includes the AFL-CIO, the National Council of La Raza and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, is launching the effort to coincide with a White House immigration meeting with Congressional leaders on June 8.

The coalition is also kicking off the campaign as part of a weeklong series of events aimed at sparking action on the issue. Other events include more than 30 local campaign press events in 20 states, a national summit with 700 grass-roots advocates and a national town hall meeting on Capitol Hill on immigration reform.

Leaders of the new Reform Immigration FOR America Campaign said the White House meeting is a sign of momentum for legislative action on immigration this year.

But Congressional leaders have yet to signal whether they will move on the politically explosive issue anytime soon. With a packed legislative calendar in 2009 and the midterm elections in 2010, it remains unclear whether top Democrats have the appetite or the ability to take on immigration reform in the near term.

Still, the issue is gaining some traction in Congress this week.

On Wednesday, the Senate Judiciary Committee is holding a hearing to discuss the Uniting American Families Act, which would allow children and spouses of lawful permanent residents to qualify for a visa.

And Rep. Mike Honda (D-Calif.), the chairman of the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus, is holding a Thursday press conference to introduce his version of that bill, which he is billing as one of the “key components of a comprehensive immigration package, in preparation for President Obama’s reform agenda.”

Among its provisions, Honda’s bill would reunite green card holders with spouses and children, increase the per-country limits of family and employment-based visas from 7 percent to 10 percent, give the attorney general more flexibility to address family separation for permanent residents and their families, exempt the children of World War II Filipino veterans from visa caps, and allow same-sex partners of permanent residents to qualify for a visa.

“The Reuniting Families Act should be at the heart of comprehensive immigration reform, seeking to fix our broken immigration system while taking into account the current economic climate. Our family-based immigration system has not been updated in 20 years, separating spouses, children and their parents, who have played by the rules, for years, often decades,” Honda said in a statement.