



PRESIDENT BUSH ANNOUNCES BORDER SECURITY PLAN

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President Bush outlined a plan to slow illegal immigration by sending troops to the U.S. –Mexican border and creating a path to citizenship for illegal immigrants.

In a nationally televised prime-time address Monday, President Bush announced a five-point plan that he hopes will decrease illegal immigration.

The president's plan includes a path to citizenship for illegal immigrants, deployment of National Guard troops to the U.S.–Mexican border, and a "guest worker" program that would allow foreigners to work temporarily in the United States.

His speech follows months of demonstrations by immigrants and their supporters and heated debate within the halls of Congress.

[Path to citizenship](#)

"We must face the reality that millions of illegal immigrants are already here," President Bush said in his speech.

The Border Patrol arrested nearly 1.2 million Mexicans attempting to cross the border in 2005. Five hundred thousand are believed to have evaded the patrol, bringing the total number of illegal immigrants in the United States to between 11.5 and 12 million people, according to the Pew Hispanic Center.

Bush announced a possible path to citizenship that would be a "middle ground" between mass deportation and automatic granting of citizenship, neither of which he said would be acceptable.

A citizenship program would be available to illegal immigrants who have learned English, paid taxes retroactively and worked in the country for many years.

[Critics protest amnesty](#)

Critics like Georgia Republican Representative Tom Price said Bush's citizenship plan was a form of "amnesty" that should not be tolerated.

"While America is a nation of immigrants, we are also a nation of laws, and rewarding those who break our laws not only dishonors the hard work of those who came here legally but does nothing to fix our current situation," Price said, reported the Associated Press.

Mr. Bush said the program is not amnesty. "It is way for those who have broken the law to pay their debt to society, and demonstrate the character that makes a good citizen."

[National Guard deployment](#)

President Bush also called for the deployment of 6,000 Army National Guard troops to assist Border Patrol agents, who are responsible for enforcing the law at the 2,000-mile U.S.–Mexican border that spans California, Arizona, New Mexico and Texas.

Mr. Bush stressed that law enforcement would be left to the patrol agents, and that "the United States is not going to militarize the southern border."

The 400,000-member National Guard has been deployed by the president for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, but it is usually the state governors that activate the guard—for state emergencies.

Some military analysts say the guard is short on personnel and equipment because of participation in wars and should not be used at the border.

"If the administration continues to treat the guard like it's an all-purpose force, it will end up being useless for any purpose," defense analyst Loren Thompson told Reuters.

The deployment plan has even received resistance from Mr. Bush's fellow Republicans, including California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger.

"I am concerned asking National Guard troops to guard our nation's border is a Band-aid solution and not the permanent solution we need," Schwarzenegger said.

[Immigration reform debate](#)

President Bush also is at odds with House Republicans, who support much stricter immigration reform.

The House of Representatives passed a bill in December that opposes a "guest worker" plan and favors deportation.

The House bill would criminalize illegal status and build a border fence.

A Senate bill, under consideration now, is closer to Mr. Bush's vision of immigration reform.

"An immigration reform bill needs to be comprehensive," the president advised Congress in his speech, "because all elements of this problem must be addressed together, or none of them will be solved at all."

-- *Compiled by Adnaan Wasey for NewsHour Extra*

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