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Sent: Tue, 27 May 2014 19:45:44 -0400
From: DMCOS <dmcos@who.eop.gov>
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: FW: AP: APNewsBreak: Obama delays DHS deportation review

Sir,

FYSA on the below.

DM

APNewsBreak: Obama delays DHS deportation review

Associated Press // JOSH LEDERMAN

7:39 PM

WASHINGTON (AP) -- President Barack Obama has asked his Homeland Security chief to hold off on completing a review of U.S. deportation policies until the end of the summer, senior White House officials said Tuesday, in a move aimed at salvaging any hopes for Congress to act on immigration this year.

Obama in March directed the government to examine whether deportation practices can be made more humane, seeking to pacify frustrated immigration advocates. But that step emboldened House Republicans to argue they can't trust Obama to enforce the law, and that bypassing lawmakers through executive action would deliver a death knell to the broader immigration overhaul that Obama and Democrats are seeking.

Caught in the middle, Obama is seeking to preserve what the White House sees as a narrow window in June and July in which Congress could conceivably act before Washington's focus becomes consumed by the November midterm elections.

"The president really wants to maximize the opportunity to get a permanent solution enacted, which requires Congress," said Cecilia Munoz, the director of the White House's Domestic Policy Council.

The delay defuses an emerging split among traditional Obama allies that emerged after the president commissioned the deportation review.

Some immigration advocates and Democrats urged Obama to take immediate executive action in the face of congressional procrastination. But others insisted the focus should remain on pressuring House Republicans to act while there's still a chance - however slim - to pass a bill that could provide a path to citizenship for the 11.5 million immigrants in the U.S. illegally.

"We've got maybe a window of two, three months to get the ball rolling in the House of Representatives," Obama said earlier this month.

That window, White House officials said, has opened now that primary elections have wrapped up in many states where Republican incumbents are being challenged by tea party candidates who oppose an immigration overhaul. But a make-or-break deadline comes when lawmakers leave Washington for a month-long August recess to focus on campaigning.

"If they don't pass immigration reform then, the president will have no choice but to act on his own," Sen. Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., said last week.

Obama informed Johnson of his decision to delay the review during a White House meeting last week in which Johnson updated the president on the review's progress, a senior White House official said. Homeland Security will continue working on the review but won't release the results until the window for congressional action has closed, said the official, who wasn't authorized to comment by name and demanded anonymity.

Obama's announcement comes the same day a coalition of groups backing an immigration overhaul asked Obama to hold off in order to "give the House leadership all of the space they may need." Among the groups urging Obama to delay were the National Immigration Forum, the Service Employees International Union and the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

On the congressional front, the Senate last year passed a comprehensive bill with bipartisan support that Obama says meets his criteria for what an immigration fix must include. Republicans have refused to take up that bill, saying they preferred their own piecemeal approach. But House GOP leadership has made no move to bring legislation to a vote. And last week, GOP leaders last week blocked any votes on immigration legislation - including one offered as an amendment by a Republican - in yet another ominous sign for immigration's prospects.

Johnson has offered few details about what potential policy changes he's considering or what the timeline for acting might be. But Obama has previously taken modest executive steps to ease deportation. Two years ago, he offered protection from deportation and extended work permits to some immigrants brought to the U.S. illegally as children. Johnson has said he's reviewing a possible expansion of that program, but he and Obama have both cautioned that the government is constrained in what it can do without Congress.