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## House passes immigration Dream Act

**The bill gives young illegal immigrants a path to citizenship if they enroll in college or enlist in the military. Supporters call its passage historic — but Democrats probably don't have enough votes to get it through the Senate.**

By Lisa Mascaro and Kathleen Hennessey

Tribune Washington Bureau

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Reporting from Washington

The House passed a landmark youth immigration bill known as the Dream Act on Wednesday night largely along party lines, but the measure faces a tough test in the Senate as Democrats struggle to pass priority legislation in the waning days of this Congress.

Eight Republicans joined in approving the bill, 216 to 198. Thirty-eight Democrats voted no. The measure offers a path to citizenship for young people who were brought to this country illegally before age 16 and who have enrolled in college or entered the military.

President Obama said the passage was historic. "This vote is not only the right thing to do for a group of talented young people who seek to serve a country they know as their own by continuing their education or serving in the military, but it is the right thing for the United States of America," he said in a statement.

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Obama called on the Senate to follow suit.

The bill could come up there as soon as Thursday but is unlikely to attract the necessary 60 votes to overcome a filibuster. Republican senators have vowed to block all legislation until a stalemate over the George W. Bush-era tax cuts is resolved. Obama and the GOP have reached a deal, but Democrats haven't signed on.

The Dream Act isn't the only Democratic priority at stake.

Earlier in the day, the Senate postponed at least until Thursday a vote on repealing "don't ask, don't tell," the 1993 ban on openly gay personnel in the military.

Democrats worked late into the night trying to strike a deal with the few Republican senators who support lifting the policy but who have asked for more time to debate it.

The lame-duck congressional session offers Democrats their best chance to pass both bills because, in January, Republicans will hold the majority in the House and more seats in the Senate.

The House passed the Dream Act after a late, hastily scheduled vote. Proponents called it the most significant immigration legislation to pass the House in a decade.

"Let's give the dream kids an opportunity. They are American in every way but a piece of paper," said Luis V. Gutierrez (D-Ill.), a leading supporter. "We have come here to support the rule of law, yes, but to change the law when it is unfair."

A handful of Republicans in both chambers criticized the Dream Act as "nightmare" amnesty legislation bound to be abused and easily subject to fraud. They said it would create more competition for work in a recession.

"The American people want us to focus on creating jobs and getting Americans back to work. This will prevent Americans from getting jobs," said Rep. Lamar Smith (R-Texas). "It puts the interest of illegal immigrants ahead of those of law-abiding Americans."

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