

**The Washington Post**

## Senate Democrats shift strategy on imperiled immigration bill

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Senate Democrats shifted strategy Thursday on legislation that would provide a path to citizenship for some people who were brought to the country illegally as children, calling off a vote that was nearly certain to fail and announcing that they are determined to pass a different version later this month.

The House passed its version of the DREAM Act on Wednesday. The procedural vote Majority Leader Harry M. Reid (D-Nev.) had planned for Thursday on the Senate bill was expected to fail but would have allowed Democrats to go on record as supporting it.

Reid abandoned that effort Thursday morning.

Instead, Senate Democrats voted to pull their bill, allowing them to take up a version identical to the House bill. If the Senate were to pass that version, the legislation would go directly to President Obama for his signature, skipping the process of reconciling the two chambers' measures.

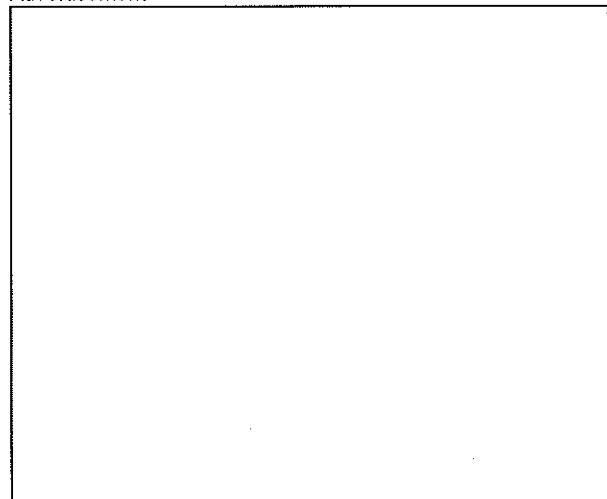
"The DREAM Act is not a symbolic vote," Reid and Assistant Majority Leader Dick Durbin (D-Ill.) said in a statement. "We owe it to the

young men and women whose lives will be affected by this bill, and to the country which needs their service in the military and their skills in building our economy, to honestly address this issue. Members on both sides of the aisle need to ask themselves if we can afford to say to these talented young men and women there is no place in America for you."

In a statement, the White House said it favored the Senate's decision to delay. "Eight Republicans voted together with Democrats to approve this important bill in the House last night. It should get bipartisan support in the Senate as well, and in light of the vote in the House, this is the right way to move forward to get that," the White House said.

Though the legislation's prospect remain uncertain, a Senate vote Thursday would

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have almost certainly failed. Republicans have uniformly said they would act on no legislation until an agreement on extending the George W. Bush administration tax cuts is reached.

The DREAM Act would confer legalized status on undocumented immigrants who were brought to the United States by their parents and have attended two years of college or signed up for the military. Supporters say it would avoid punishing those who had no say in coming to the country illegally and would result in better military readiness.

Opponents - including most Republicans lawmakers and some Democrats - say the measure is overly broad and creates a path to green cards and citizenship not only for those brought to the country as children, but indirectly through them for undocumented caregivers who knowingly broke the law.

It was passed in the House on a 216 to 198 vote. But it has faced an uphill climb in the Senate, where advocates need - and do not seem to have - 60 votes to push the measure through Senate procedures.

The DREAM Act once had bipartisan support in Congress. The stiff headwinds now facing the measure in the Senate are one indicator of the degree to which the debate over illegal immigration has shifted.

Both advocates and critics of immigration believe that any attempt to overhaul the nation's immigration laws will face even an even stiffer fight in the next two years, given the rhetoric being voiced by the incoming Republican majority in the House of Representatives.

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