

(Washington DC) After the Senate finished consideration and passed their Immigration bill (S. 2611,) Congressman Charlie Gonzalez, Chair of Congressional Hispanic Caucus Civil Rights Task Force, issued the following statement:

"While I was encouraged that the Senate proceeded in a far more bipartisan manner than the House did when considering its immigration bill, I am concerned that a number of amendments offered were designed to appease fringe constituencies and possibly derail the bill. Moreover, some provisions have nothing to do with immigration law reform and could be detrimental to communities with large Hispanic populations who are citizens of this country.

This bill is not as balanced as I would have liked, but I commend the Senate Leadership, particularly Senators Reid and Specter, for their persistence in stewarding this bill through the Senate. I am pleased that a path to earned citizenship is included in the Senate immigration bill because it is not reasonable to expect that we will deport 12 millions workers and their families.

At first glance, the Senate bill seems much more comprehensive. Still, we will need time to study the final bill and determine the long-term consequences before moving forward. Of course, any legislation that reaches the President must come from a conference committee and the enforcement-only bill the House passed in December is significantly different than the more comprehensive Senate bill. It is my hope that a genuine dialog will occur that engages both Republicans and Democrats so we can enact a bill that is designed to honestly address the problem of undocumented workers and promotes both our country's economic wellbeing and respect for our laws."

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