



DREAM ACT AND THE POLLS

Posted on December 11, 2010 by Cyrus Mehta

Although the House voted in favor of the DREAM Act on December 8, 2010, with eight Republicans also joining with a yea, the prospects of passage of the bill in the Senate look less hopeful but still possible. This hesitancy is bolstered by the fact that the Republican minority in the Senate on Thursday filibustered a crucial defense bill because it also included a ban on discrimination against gays. The hypocritical "don't ask don't tell policy" if you are gay in the military still stands because of the obstructionism of the Republican minority in the Senate where you need 60 votes to survive a filibuster. http://www.nytimes.com/2010/12/10/opinion/10fri1.html?_r=1&hp. This move by the Republicans is even more surprising since a very recent Gallup poll indicates that 67% of Americans support repealing the "don't ask don't tell policy,"

<http://politicalticker.blogs.cnn.com/2010/12/09/poll-two-out-of-three-say-repeal-dont-ask-dont-tell/>

The DREAM (Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors) Act allows children who were brought into the US illegally or who became illegal (as a result of their parents actions) to legalize their status. They should have entered the country before the age of 16 and lived here for five years. DREAM also requires that they must graduate from high school or obtain a GED and demonstrate good moral character. Qualifying children would be given a six year conditional status. During that time, the applicant must have been attending college or serving in the military for at least two years, and must have also passed criminal background checks.

In a clever political move on Thursday, Senator Reid tabled the vote in the Senate until next week so that the Senate could vote on the House bill, which unexpectedly passed on Wednesday. The last time the House passed a major immigration bill was HR 4437, which would have made all undocumented

immigrants into felons, including those who assisted them such as pastors and medical personnel. Clearly, the passage of DREAM in the House is a sea change from the passage of HR 4437, which fortunately never went on to become law. <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/frank-sharry/dream-act-makes-history-ib795118.html>. But we do hope DREAM does. A new Gallup poll released Friday reveals that 54% of Americans support the DREAM Act. <http://politicalticker.blogs.cnn.com/2010/12/10/poll-54-percent-support-dream-act/> It remains to be seen whether this would change the minds of Republican Senators who had supported prior versions of the DREAM Act, and even a few Democratic Senators (especially from states such as Montana that have no immigrants). Given that DADT was opposed even though more Americans (67%) were in support of its repeal, it remains to be seen whether the Gallup poll on the DREAM Act (with 54% in favor) will have a sway upon the recalcitrant Senators. Within that poll, two-thirds of Democrats say they would vote for the measure, but only 57 percent of independent voters are in favor and even a fewer 34 percent of Republicans say that they will vote for DREAM. In any event, the tabling of the Senate vote was a positive one, and will strengthen the prospects of DREAM's passage, as it will give more time to mobilize support, and the new Gallup poll should help advocates in gaining more votes in the Senate in favor of DREAM.

One cannot go wrong with DREAM. It is clearly the right thing to do. These kids are in the US in an undocumented capacity for no fault of their own. They are as American as any other kids, and share the same dreams and aspirations, only to have their hopes dashed when they realize that they are in a second class undocumented status. Giving these kids a chance will also help the economy by generating more taxable earnings and will also reduce the budget deficit by over \$2.2 billion over a 10 year period, <http://immigrationpolicy.org/just-facts/dream-act-supporting-us-economy-creating-opportunities-immigrant-students>. And won't America ultimately benefit if you give more DREAMers a chance to aspire and succeed through innovation, creativity and industry?

According to Michael Mandel, Chair of the AILA-NY Advocacy Committee, the chances of success in the Senate are "uphill but very possible," which is what he had heard, and it is critical that we continue to flood Congress with your calls. He urges that you take a few minutes to ask the recalcitrant senators listed below (but who are not yet lost causes such as John McCain) to vote YES on the

DREAM Act. Also, keep checking <http://www.dreamactivist.org/>, <http://www.nysylc.org/> and www.thenyic.org/dreamact for updates. Ultimately, in the end, the polls do matter, and the recent Gallup poll should sway these Senators to do the right thing by voting in favor of DREAM. And those Republicans who are afraid to come out in favor of this legislation because of the current anti-immigrant mood in the party caused by the Tea Party movement, they should pay heed to people like Newt Gingrich and Jeb Bush, who realize that the Republican party will be doomed if they alienate themselves from the growing number of Latino voters, <http://bit.ly/gL38LJ>.

Senate Democrats: 866-967-6018 or 202-224-3121

Conrad (ND)
Dorgan (ND)
McCaskill (MO)
Webb (VA)
Warner (VA)
Landrieu (LA)
Pryor (AR)
Tester (MT)
Hagan (NC)

Senate Republicans: 866-967-6018 or 202-224-3121

Hutchison (TX)
Brownback (KS)
Murkowski (AK)
Brown (MA)
Kirk (IL)
Bennett (UT)
Voinovich (OH)
Snowe (ME)
Collins (ME)
Lemieux (FL)
Lugar (IN)
Bunning (KY)