

Obama, Congress tackle immigration reform in US

BY BRYAN DOOLEY
SENIOR WRITER

In recent weeks, immigration reform has become a significant point of contention between President Obama and Congressional Republicans. Both have released reform proposals.

"The current immigration system in the U.S. contains many injustices, so in that sense I believe it is 'broken,'" said Maria Rosales, associate professor of political science. "If its goal is to create a group of people who can be relatively easily exploited and over whom many other people can feel superior, then it is succeeding."

Obama's plan focuses on four general principles: continuing to strengthen border security, streamline legal immigration, foster opportunities to gain citizenship, and penalize employers who hire undocumented workers.

According to whitehouse.gov, Obama's reform includes a commitment to protect citizens from "those who would do our nation harm from entering our country." Simultaneously, he proposes that the U.S. provide opportunity rather than punishment for those who might be here illegally to serve in the military or are seeking higher education.

"I think as long as it's a fair and feasible process for everyone, it can be of great progress for the U.S.," said junior Renato Garcia, treasurer for Hispanos Unidos de Guilford.

"Some of the promises and future plans really put hope in the lives of thousands of immigrant

families around the country," Garcia continued. "Not only for the children in the educational systems, but for their parents that are trying to make an honest living for themselves and family."

The House of Representatives' plan is similar to Obama's. The primary differences between the two, however, are the chosen method of border security and what the path to citizenship entails.

Both Obama and the House are seeking reform because the current system of legal immigration and citizenship is an extensive and time consuming procedure.

"The process is very long, expensive and involved," said Alfonso Abad-Mancheño, assistant professor of Spanish. "I used to have to apply for a visa yearly in Madrid, which cost 100 dollars each time.

It's much easier to get a green card, but that costs about 10,000 dollars in legal fees. It can take one to five years; in my case, it was three years."

Guilford Assistant Professor of History Zhihong Chen had a similar experience.

"I came to the U.S. to continue my education," Chen said. "It was very difficult to get a student visa at the time, and I had to work very hard. Once in school, I needed to maintain full-time student status in order to be covered by the visa, so basically there was no taking breaks."

"Once students finish school (in the U.S.) they have a very limited time period to find a job if they choose to stay here, so there is tremendous pressure," continued Chen.

The U.S. has attempted to pass comprehensive immigration reform before and failed, yet some remain optimistic.

"It's clear that the re-election of President Obama sent a message to those opposing immigration reform that they need to stop obstructing this process and start engaging in a debate about how to reform the system," said Jorge Zeballos, interim director for diversity training and development and Latino community program coordinator. "As a result, we are seeing real movement in that direction for the first time in years."

The recent momentum may be the result of the actions of ordinary people.

"Many committed individuals, most of whom are undocumented, have gone to jail pushing for immigration reform," said first-year Lucas Perez-Leahy. "There have been sit-ins — including in John McCain's office and the headquarters of Immigration and Customs Enforcement — and acts of civil disobedience all over the country."

The president has received criticism from conservatives.

"The president's bill would be dead on arrival in Congress, leaving us with unsecured borders and a broken legal immigration system for years to come," said Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.) to Fox News.

While Rubio criticized Obama's plan, he also advocated for his own somewhat similar plan.

Ken Gilmore, associate professor of political science, noted that Rubio is a Cuban-American leading the Republican side of negotiations.

"Hispanics voted overwhelmingly for the president, and Hispanics tend to be democrats," said Gilmore. "It's not an accident that Senator Rubio is the one out front on this issue for the Republicans."

Immigration rights activists argue the U.S. cannot afford more of the same.

"We need policy proposals to address and be rooted in the reality in which our communities are

living," said Lori Fernald Khamala of the American Friends Service Committee on North Carolina immigrant rights program.

"Too many families, many of mixed status, live in fear of being separated from their mother, father, sister or brother or are exploited at work. So far, the proposals on the table miss the mark in realistically addressing these concerns."

"We urge a clear and broad path to citizenship and policies that protect the rights of workers. We must ensure that the roadmap to citizenship includes all those who are currently here, contributing to our communities," she continued.

Robert Duncan, assistant visiting professor of political science, agreed that some immigrants deserve a path to citizenship.

"The proposed Dream Act said that children of immigrants can join the military, go to war and put their ass on the line defending our country. They deserve citizenship," said Duncan. "People improving their lives, that's what America stands for."

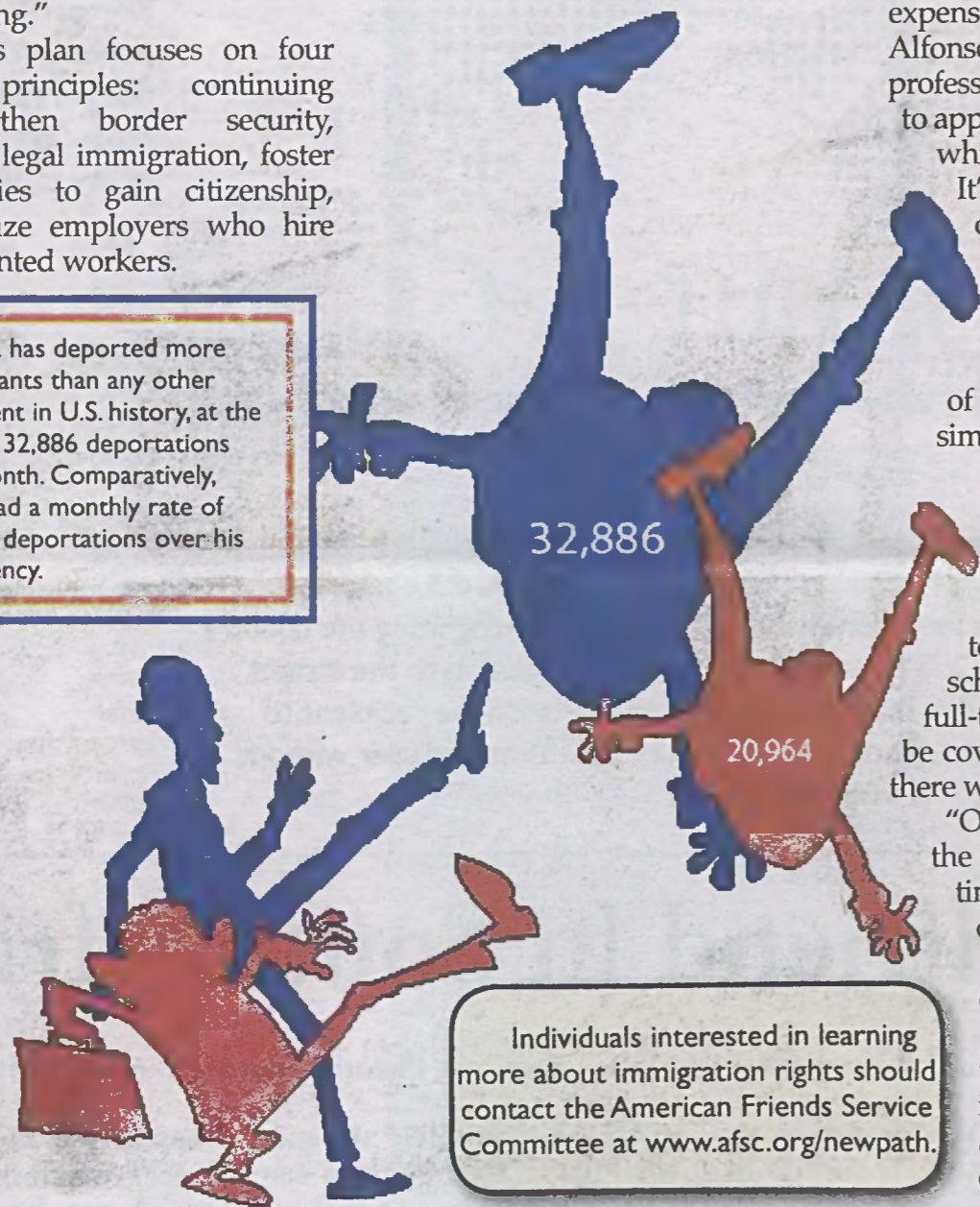
"The idea that they will take our jobs is bovine feces," continued Duncan. "Most of them are in one of two categories: Laborers that go after the jobs no American wants and the super smart. Immigrants began one out of every four technological and lead science start-up companies. Immigrants started Yahoo, eBay, and Google."

Junior Audrey Afanda, a Kenyan native, also noted immigrants' contributions and shared a message for those who oppose the path to citizenship.

"People don't think of how much people sacrifice for this country ... to be better taxpayers," said Afanda. "Nobody chooses to be an illegal immigrant because it's fun but because they have hopes for a better life."

Obama has deported more immigrants than any other president in U.S. history, at the rate of 32,886 deportations per month. Comparatively, Bush had a monthly rate of 20,964 deportations over his presidency.

GRAPHIC BY SAMIR HAZBOUN



Undercover UK police exposed for using deceased children's identities

BY JAMIE LUCKHAUS
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The Guardian revealed that undercover officers from London have been using the identities of at least 80 dead children in undercover operations for decades. London's Metropolitan Police Service issued fake passports to spies and instructed them to memorize the infants' names and medical details.

The classified practice was introduced 40 years ago when police attempted to infiltrate radical groups protesting the economic climate in London. Dead children's identities were the chosen method due to the authenticity of birth records and the minimal paper trail attached to their brief lifetimes.

"I truly understand the need for undercover officers," said an anonymous Greensboro police department officer to The Guilfordian. "However, there are better ways to fake an identity."

Now Met police chiefs admit that a second spy unit utilized dead children's names and information in a second round of undercover operations. In 2003, undercover spies implemented

this practice again, again without the consent of the dead children's parents.

Assistant Professor of Justice and Policy Studies Sanjay Marwah said there is no question that this method of false identification is an invasion of the right of the deceased children's families.

Pete Black, an officer who went undercover in the '90s with the fake persona of London child, told the Guardian that Special Demonstration Squad officers visited the houses where the children once lived to learn every aspect of the officers' new identities.

SDS undercover officer John Dines's experience exemplifies one risk of parents being unaware of the practice.

Dines had a two-year relationship with a woman while undercover and then disappeared when his duty was completed. The woman attempted to track him down and located the family of the deceased boy, mistaking the identity of the boy's family with the actual Dines family.

"The government can create any identity they want to ... so they don't need to steal real people's identities, which

can cause a lot of issues," Glyn Haugh, a British citizen living in Greensboro told The Guilfordian. "These are special operations, and they have to be approved by the Home Office and shouldn't be an everyday police force."

Some of the police spies spent up to 10 years pretending to be deceased people, according to the Guardian.

"I have seen the method of having a fake driver's license issued that is a fake name, fake date of birth, and address that is a random vacant lot or field in another town," said the anonymous Greensboro police department officer to The Guilfordian. "But the method of using a deceased child is unheard of. I do not think many U.S. departments would do this."

An unidentified Met police spy who adopted the identity of a child killed in a car crash told the Guardian the practice is justifiable as it is for the "greater good."

"The investigation in terms of what was really the greater good is not made clear at all," Marwah said. "Maybe the police feel that they don't have to make that clear, but I think it's imperative for them to make that clear."