



A Hard Pill To Swallow

Obama's Actual Record On Immigration Reform Has Been Nothing More Than Partisanship And Inaction

AS A SENATOR, OBAMA INFLATED HIS ROLE IN CRAFTING IMMIGRATION REFORM

Chicago Sun-Times' Lynn Sweet: Senator Obama "Inflates His Leadership Role" On Immigration Reform. "In the meantime, Obama on the campaign trail inflates his leadership role – casting himself as someone who could figure out how to get something done. Obama 'did not absolutely stand out in any way,' said Margaret Sands Orchowski, the author of 'Immigration and the American Dream: Battling the Political Hype and Hysteria,' and a close follower of the legislation." (Lynn Sweet, Op-Ed, "Obama Overstates His Role On Immigration," *Chicago Sun-Times*, 7/12/08)

- **Senate Staff Members And Then-Sen. Arlen Specter Recalled That Obama Had Not Been At The Early Legislation-Crafting Meetings He Claimed To Attend.** "To Senate staff members, who had been arriving for 7 a.m. negotiating sessions for weeks, it was a galling moment. Those morning sessions had attracted just three to four senators a side, Sen. Arlen Specter (R-Pa.) recalled, each deeply involved in the issue. Obama was not one of them." (Shailagh Murray and Jonathan Weisman, "Both Obama And Clinton Embellish Their Roles," *The Washington Post*, 3/24/08)

IN THE SENATE, OBAMA USED "POISON PILL" AMENDMENTS TO KILL BIPARTISAN IMMIGRATION REFORM

Obama "Backed 11th Hour Amendments" To The Bipartisan Immigration Bill That Imperiled The Immigration Reform Compromise. "Obama was part of the bipartisan group of senators who began meeting in 2005 on comprehensive immigration reform. But last summer, with the presidential nominating race well under way, Obama backed 11th-hour amendments - supported by labor, immigrant rights, and clergy groups - that Republicans saw as imperiling the fragile compromise. None of those measures passed. But Obama was part of a 49-to-48 majority that voted to end after five years a temporary worker program that had been a cornerstone of the immigration deal. The vote, backed by labor, was seen as a major setback to bipartisan negotiations." (Ariel Sabar, "For Obama, Bipartisan Aims, Party-Line Votes," *Christian Science Monitor*, 4/17/08)

- **Obama Proposed An Amendment That Was Seen As Part Of An Effort To Offer "Potentially Fatal Blows To The Fragile Coalition Backing The Bill."** "They first had turned back a Republican bid to reduce the number of illegal immigrants who could gain lawful status. They

later rejected two high-profile Democratic amendments. One would have postponed the bill's shift to an emphasis on education and skills among visa applicants as opposed to family connections. The other, offered by Sen. Barack Obama, D-Ill., would have ended a new point system for those seeking permanent resident 'green cards' after five years rather than 14 years. All three amendments were seen as potentially fatal blows to the fragile coalition backing the bill, which remains under attack from the right and left." (Charles Babington, "Immigration Deal Survives Senate Challenges, Backers Cautiously Optimistic," *The Associated Press*, 6/7/07)

- **Obama "Voted For One Amendment ... Designed To Insert A Deadly 'Poison Pill' Into The Bipartisan 'Grand Bargain' On Immigration Reform."** "But then, on the floor of the Senate last week, Obama voted for one amendment -backed by the AFL-CIO and sponsored by Sen. Byron Dorgan (D-N.D.) - designed to insert a deadly 'poison pill' into the bipartisan 'grand bargain' on immigration reform." (Mort Kondracke, Op-Ed, "Pandering to Base, 2008 Candidates Risk More Division," *Roll Call*, 6/14/07)

Obama Voted For Five Amendments That Would Have Killed The Bill While Then-Sen. Ted Kennedy Voted Against Them. "These included an amendment Obama offered that would have sunsetted the merit-based evaluation system for immigrants after five years; two amendments from Sen. Byron Dorgan, D-ND, to sunset both the temporary guest worker visa program and the Y-1 non-immigrant temporary worker visa program after five years; and two amendments from Sen. Jeff Bingaman, D-NM, that would have removed the requirement that 'Y' non-immigrant visa holders leave the United States before they are able to renew their visa, and would have lowered the annual visa quota for guest workers from 400,000 to 200,000 per year. Obama voted for all five; Kennedy voted against all five." (Jake Tapper, "¿Quien Es Mas Macho?" [ABC News' Political Punch](#), 7/8/08)

AS PRESIDENT, OBAMA IGNORED IMMIGRATION REFORM ENTIRELY

PROMISE: Then-Sen. Obama Promised To Make Immigration Reform A Priority In His First Year As President. OBAMA: "I marched with you in the streets of Chicago to meet our immigration challenge. I fought with you in the Senate for comprehensive immigration reform. And I will make it a top priority in my first year as President—not only because we have an obligation to secure our borders and get control of who comes in and out of our country. And not only because we have to crack down on employers who are abusing undocumented immigrants instead of hiring citizens. But because we have to finally bring undocumented immigrants out of the shadows. Yes, they broke the law. And they should have to pay a fine, and learn English, and go to the back of the line. That's how we'll put them on a pathway to citizenship." (Sen. Barack Obama, [Remarks Before The League of United Latin American Citizens](#), Washington, D.C., 7/8/08)

- **During The 2008 Campaign, Obama Said He Would Make Immigration A "Top Priority."** OBAMA: "And I will make it a top priority in my first year as President—not just because we need to secure our borders and get control of who comes into our country. And not just because we have to crack down on employers abusing undocumented immigrants. But because we have to finally bring those 12 million people out of the shadows." (Sen. Barack Obama, [Remarks At National Council Of La Raza](#), San Diego, CA, 7/13/08)

FAIL: Obama: "[M]y Biggest Failure So Far Is We Haven't Gotten Comprehensive Immigration Reform Done." UNIVISION'S JORGE RAMOS: "There is something different, something personal. I don't know what you are reading before going to sleep right now. I don't know if you have already read the book 'No Easy Day' in which a Navy SEAL tells the story of how Osama Bin Laden was killed. According to many his death was your biggest achievement. What is your biggest failure?" OBAMA: "Well, Jorge as you remind me, my biggest failure so far is we haven't gotten comprehensive immigration reform done, so

we're going to be continuing to work on that. But it's not for lack of trying or desire. And I'm confident we're going to accomplish that. You know what—obviously, the fact that we haven't been able to change the tone in Washington is disappointing. We know now that as soon as I came into office you already had meetings among some of our Republican colleagues saying, 'How do we figure out how to beat the president?' And I think that I've learned some lessons over the last four years, and the most important lesson I've learned is that you can't change Washington from the inside. You can only change it from the outside." (President Barack Obama, [Univision Town Hall](#), Miami, FL, 9/20/12)

- **"Obama Never Followed Through" On Immigration Reform.** "After promising during his 2008 campaign to take on the immigration issue, Obama never followed through, leading to disappointment among various Hispanic groups." (Steve Holland, "Romney Appeals To Hispanics Again With Economic Message," [Reuters](#), 9/17/12)
- ***The Washington Post's The Fact Checker: Obama Earned Two Pinocchios On Immigration Because "A Guarantee Is A Guarantee."*** "The president certainly faced opposition from Republicans and even members of his own party on this issue. But a guarantee is a guarantee, regardless of whether he miscalculated the will of Congress to compromise. Obama failed to deliver on a promise, and he blamed Republicans instead of acknowledging any real responsibility for that failure. He earns two Pinocchios." (Josh Hicks, "Obama's Failed Promise Of A First-Year Immigration Overhaul," *The Washington Post's "The Fact Checker,"* 9/25/12)

"In Fact, The White House Never Endorsed A Comprehensive Reform Bill, Just A Vague Framework." "This looked at one point like it could be one of the most politically potent of Obama's unmet promises. Not only did he do little to advance an immigration law overhaul during his first year in office, there's little indication the administration ever made a full-court press for one. In fact, the White House never even endorsed a comprehensive reform bill, just a vague framework." (Josh Gerstein, "5 Unmet Promises Of President Obama," [Politico](#), 10/16/12)

Year After Year, Immigration Reform Wasn't A Top Priority For The Obama Administration

Immigration "Ranked Lower On His Priority List Than Health Care, The Arms-Reduction Treaty, Repealing 'Don't Ask Don't Tell' And Stopping Pay Discrimination Toward Women." "The fact that the president failed to lead on immigration or forge an agreement during his entire term shows that the issue ranked lower on his priority list than health care, the arms-reduction treaty, repealing 'don't ask don't tell' and stopping pay discrimination toward women." (Josh Hicks, "Obama's Failed Promise Of A First-Year Immigration Overhaul," *The Washington Post's "The Fact Checker,"* 9/25/12)

2010: Obama Repeatedly Talked About Immigration Reform But Failed To Act. "President Barack Obama is reassuring immigration reform advocates that he is committed to working with Congress on a comprehensive bill to fix a 'broken immigration system.'" ("Immigration Reform Rally 2010: Obama Tells Protesters He Will Fix 'Broken Immigration System,'" [The Associated Press](#), 3/21/10)

- **Despite Controlling Both Houses Of Congress, Obama Blamed "Political Posturing" For The Lack Of Reform.** "President Barack Obama on Thursday blamed immigration policy gridlock on 'political posturing and special interest wrangling.'" (Darlene Superville, "Obama Blames Politics For Delay On Immigration," [The Associated Press](#), 7/1/10)

2011: Obama's 2011 Immigration Speech Was "Understood — And Analyzed — As A Political Document Rather Than A Policy One." "President Obama's speech Tuesday in Texas was cast as an attempt at restarting the conversation about comprehensive immigration reform but will almost certainly land with a dull thud in a Congress wary of taking on an issue so fraught with political pitfalls.

Obama, of course, knows that. And so, his speech today is rightly understood — and analyzed — as a political document rather than a policy one.” (Chris Cillizza, “What President Obama’s Immigration Speech Tells Us About 2012,” *The Washington Post*’s [“The Fix,”](#) 5/10/11)

- **MSNBC’s Chuck Todd:** “No, there was nothing new as far as the President’s either legislative strategy or where he is on the policy. That was as much of a campaign speech as we have seen the President give in a couple of years that wasn’t related to an actual fundraising event. I mean, you look at the music as he’s leaving, the way he began it. It was very, obviously being in an outdoor venue so it a little bit of the extra umph to it that outdoor venues offer, it was very upbeat and campaigny and frankly, that’s what this—it’s hard not to look at what he’s doing and not view it through the prism of about 2012 and the fact that he knows Hispanic voters can put him over the top in about half of the swing states.” (MSNBC’s “Martin Bashir,” 5/10/11)

2012: Obama Says He Didn’t Fail On Immigration Reform Because He “Tried.” “Calling Republicans in Congress the ‘roadblock’ to getting comprehensive immigration reform passed, President Barack Obama seemed to bristle when Univision radio host Eddie ‘Piolin’ Sotelo pressed him on breaking his 2008 campaign promise to Latinos. ‘I would have only broken my promise if I hadn’t tried,’ the president told Sotelo in a radio interview broadcast Wednesday.” (Les Jansen, “Obama Pressed On Immigration Promise,” CNN’s [“The 1600 Report,”](#) 2/23/12)

Obama’s Record On Immigration Reform Is “Disappointing”

“Immigration Is ‘Clearly An Area Where The President Overpromised And Underdelivered,’ Said Lillian Rodríguez López, The President Of The Hispanic Federation, Who Is Also Chairwoman Of The Leadership Coalition.” (Julia Preston, “Hispanic Organizations Give Obama And Congress A C,” *The New York Times*’ [“The Caucus”](#) 8/10/11)

- **Lopez: Obama’s Immigration Policy Has Been A “Great Disappointment.”** “On a conference call Wednesday, she recalled that Mr. Obama had pledged to take up the overhaul bill in his first year in office. ‘The amount of enforcement activity by the administration has been a great disappointment to our community,’ Ms. Rodríguez López said.” (Julia Preston, “Hispanic Organizations Give Obama And Congress A C,” *The New York Times*’ [“The Caucus”](#) 8/10/11)