



February 2013 Barnett Law Group Breaking News

Comprehensive Immigration Reform - In January, just days after inauguration, President Obama and eight Senators (four Republicans and four Democrats) issued two independent proposals to overhaul our country's immigration laws. Over Presidents' Day weekend the Miami Herald released a draft of a leaked White House immigration bill that includes: a path for undocumented immigrants to become legal residents within eight years and increased border security, interior enforcement, and worksite enforcement. The bill takes a moderate approach and is in line with the package released by the bi-partisan group of eight Senators.

Leaders in the Senate have given themselves a deadline of March 1st to produce legislative language that embodies the principles they released. Once a bill is introduced it will go through normal Senate procedure including hearings and a markup in the Senate Judiciary Committee (chaired by Sen. Leahy (D-VT)) and debate and a vote on the floor of the Senate. To overcome a potential filibuster (which is likely) the bill will need to receive at least 60 votes. This means at least five Republicans, but probably more as some Democrats are likely to vote no, will need to support the bill for it to pass.

Currently, leaders in both parties and members of the bi-partisan gang of eight Senators are making the rounds of national press in order to sell their ideas and advocates are hard at work behind the scenes to ensure that any legislative language doesn't leave immigrants in a legal limbo.

H-1B Season To Open April 1, 2013 - The popular professional worker program which provides nonimmigrant work visas for up to 6 years will begin accepting petitions on April 1 for FY2014 for Oct. 1, 2013. The program is limited to 65,000 visas, and each year as our economy improves, these visas go more quickly. This program is one of the issues under consideration for Comprehensive Immigration Reform. In order for the US to compete on the world stage with other countries for talented professionals we need more than 65,000 professional worker visas per year. Since the H-1B program under our current immigration law is one of only a handful of work visas available employers are urged to contact our office now for more information on sponsoring a foreign worker.

Historic New Immigration Program to Attract Job Creators to Canada - Our neighbors to the north have been successful in attracting foreign talent. On April 1 Canada will launch a new program to recruit innovative immigrant entrepreneurs who will create new jobs and spur economic growth. The Program is part is a series of transformational changes to Canada's immigration system that will make it faster, more flexible and focused on Canada's economic needs. Already a much friendlier immigration system than the U.S. Canada is luring talent that the U.S. needs.

Bypass Customs Lines Through City Hall - A second office for Global Entry is now open for registration in the visitor's center of City Hall from 10 to 3 on Tuesday and Wednesdays. This program allows travelers classified as "low risk" after a background check and interview to bypass long immigration and customs lines by scanning their own passports at airport kiosks. Enrollment costs \$100. Houston has enrolled the second most people in the U.S to Global Entry.

If you are interested in learning more about these new developments, please contact our firm at (713) 980-9939 or psb@barnett-lawgroup.com.