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REWARDING LAWBREAKERS

By KRIS W. KOBACH

May 21, 2007 -- THE immigration bill set to hit the Senate floor this week has over 300 pages - yet few people have seen the details. Proponents, led by Ted Kennedy, waited until the last minute to make the draft public - so most senators will be in the dark when they debate it.

But the text is now circulating on Capitol Hill, and the content is astonishing. Just when it is becoming clear that overwhelming majorities of Americans - of all parties and all races - say they want to see stronger enforcement of our laws, the bill would take the country full speed in the opposite direction.

As promised, the bill will legalize most of the 12 million to 20 million illegal aliens now in the country via a new "Z visa." Each would pay \$3,000 - only slightly more than the going rate to be smuggled into America.

But provisions buried in the fine print are far more outrageous. Here's a sampling:

1) To qualify for the Z-visa amnesty, an illegal alien need only have a job (or be the parent, spouse, or child of someone with a job) and come up with a scrap of paper suggesting he was in the country before Jan. 1 of this year. Any bank statement, pay stub, or similarly forgeable record will do.

Expect a mass influx unlike anything this country has seen before, once the 12-month period for accepting Z visa applications begins. These rules are an open invitation to sneak in and present a fraudulent piece of paper indicating that you were already here.

2) Supporters of the bill call the Z visa "temporary" - neglecting to mention that it can be renewed indefinitely until the visa holder dies. Thus, we have the country's first *permanent* temporary visa. On top of that, it's a super-visa - allowing the holder to work, attend college or do just about anything else.

Are you a law-abiding alien who's interested in switching to this privileged status? Sorry. Only *illegal* aliens can qualify.

3) Many criminals and terrorists will find it easy to get a Z visa. The bill allows the government only *one day* to conduct a so-called "background check" on the

applicant. If the (already overstretched) feds can't find anything in that single day, the alien gets a probationary visa that lets him roam at will and seek employment legally.

Plainly, the bill's authors don't have a clue how the government maintains info on criminals and terrorists. It has no single, searchable database of all dangerous people. Much data exists only in paper records that can't be searched in 24 hours. Other information is held by foreign governments.

In this real-world version of "24," if the federal government fails to find the key facts soon enough, we all lose.

4) The bill effectively shuts down our immigration-court system. If an alien in the removal process is eligible for the Z visa, the immigration judge must close the proceedings and offer the alien the chance to apply for the amnesty. The wheels of justice won't just turn slowly, they'll go in reverse.

5) The bill transforms the federal Immigrations and Customs Enforcement (ICE) from a law-enforcement agency into an amnesty-distribution center. If ICE officials apprehend an alien who appears eligible for the Z visa (in other words, just about any illegal alien), they can't detain him. Instead, ICE must help him apply for the Z visa.

Rather than initiating removal proceedings, ICE will be initiating amnesty applications. It's like turning the Drug Enforcement Agency into a needle-distribution network.

6) The bill even lets gang members get the amnesty. This comes at a time when violent international gangs have brought mayhem to our cities. More than 30,000 gang members operate in 33 states, trafficking in drugs, arms and people.

Deporting illegal-alien gang members has been a top ICE priority. This bill would end that: Under it, a gang member qualifies for the Z-visa privileges as long as he simply signs a "renunciation of gang affiliation." He can keep his tattoos.

In Sen. Kennedy's America, "immigration enforcement" will become an oxymoron. And - just like the last time we offered an amnesty, in 1986 - millions of new illegal aliens will flood the country to apply for the amnesty fraudulently.

This bill isn't a "compromise" in any meaningful sense. It is a surrender.

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