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# Immigrant groups see hope in moves toward reform

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Written by  
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Proposed federal legislation that would provide a way for undocumented immigrants to gain citizenship is giving local immigrants and the organizations that support them hope that immigration reform could be closer to reality.

If eventually enacted into law, these groups say longtime residents of Middle Tennessee neighborhoods may eventually have an avenue to citizenship they have long desired, said Eben Cathey, the spokesman for the Tennessee Immigrant and Refugee Rights Coalition.

"These people have lived here for decades," Cathey said. "They are the fabric of their communities. They need a pathway to citizenship that's reasonable."



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Vanderbilt political science professor Efen Perez said in Nashville and a region which has seen a substantial increase in immigrant population, the announcement of these potential policies offers a chance, not a guarantee of citizenship.

"For many, it's a beginning," Perez said. "It's no slam dunk, but it provides a sense of hope."

While the announcements of the president's and Senate group's proposals have brought largely positive responses, Perez said getting legislation past Congress' most conservative members poses a significant a challenge.

"When the issue comes up, it's been a long uphill battle," he said.

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“Who you haven’t heard from about this yet have been its vociferous opponents.”

Cathey said he also hopes federal leaders consider this new policy as not only a solution for future immigration reform, but also as a recognition that “our current immigration system has failed.”

In a statement, TIRRC executive director Stephen Fotopulos urged the president to quickly turn these proposed policies into law.

“Now that a consensus has emerged that our 11 million undocumented neighbors should have a clear pathway to earned citizenship and that families deserve to stay together, President Obama must use his power to immediately end unjust deportation programs that undermine our shared American values of family and fairness,” he said.

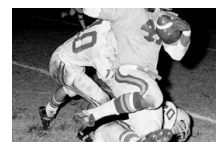
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