

This is a printer friendly version of an article from the **The Greenville News**
To print this article open the file menu and choose Print.

[Back](#)

Immigration legislation draws words of caution
State's House members take wait-and-see point of view

Published: Tuesday, May 22, 2007 - 2:00 am
Updated: Tuesday, May 22, 2007 - 9:17 am

By Dan Hoover
STAFF WRITER
dchoover@greenvillenews.com

South Carolina's U.S. House members are taking a cautious approach to Senate immigration legislation that has split the state Republican Party and divided its two senators.

Opponents have argued the bill, forged by Sens. Edward Kennedy, D-Mass., John McCain, R-Ariz., and Lindsey Graham, R-S.C. to be acceptable to the Bush White House, represents amnesty for illegal aliens.

When Graham told delegates to Saturday's state GOP convention that it didn't represent amnesty, he was greeted with boos and shouts of disapproval. Sen. Jim DeMint, a vocal opponent, was greeted with cheers and a standing ovation.

Rep. Gresham Barrett, a Republican from Westminster, said during the convention that he has serious reservations about the Senate plan, particularly as to whether it grants amnesty to 12 million illegal aliens, but Greenville's Bob Inglis suggested a go-slow approach, to wait and see the final version to be sent to the House.

Advertisement Asked if he could vote for a Senate plan, based on what he now knows of it, Inglis said, "I don't know."

He supports provisions in the Senate bill that would require verification of Social Security numbers as a condition of hiring and its huge increase in Border Protection personnel, Inglis said. But he's concerned that it doesn't do enough to increase the number of skilled workers admitted legally.

Inglis said he doesn't buy critics' allegations that the bill is a form of amnesty for illegal immigrants.

"In my view, amnesty is no consequences for bad behavior, and that's not what this (bill) is," he said.

However, if opponents are correct in that only heads of households would be required to return to their native countries and begin the process toward visas and eventual citizenship, leaving larger numbers of family members in the United States illegally, he might have to reassess, Inglis said.

Under the Senate plan, most of the estimated 12 million illegal immigrants could obtain legal status and visas to live and work in the United States indefinitely without returning home.

Illegal immigrants could seek a "Z visa" and get on track toward permanent residency after paying fees and fines. Heads of households would have to return to their home countries first. Guest workers would have to return to their home country after periods of two years.

They could renew their visas twice but would be required to leave for a year in between each time, The



Associated Press reported.

Barrett issued a statement Friday saying immediate reform is needed. He hadn't been able to review the details of the Senate bill, but he said he looks forward to "supporting legislation that will put Americans first, secure our borders and ensure the laws of our country are respected."

Kim Olive, spokeswoman for Republican Rep. Joe Wilson of Lexington, said he would have no comment because he hasn't seen the bill, and with several House bills being passed around, it would be premature.

Wilson's requirements for immigration legislation include "a border-security-first approach" and implementation of an employee verification system, coupled with enforcement of laws currently on the books before taking additional steps, Olive said.

Democratic Rep. John M. Spratt Jr. of York won't take a position on the Senate bill but will wait for a House version, said his spokesman, Chuck Fant.

Republican Rep. Henry Brown of Charleston and Democratic Rep. Jim Clyburn of Columbia, the House majority whip, couldn't be reached for comment.
