US History Name \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Overview: The 2013 Senate Immigration Bill**

Source: Immigration Policy Center

**Background**

Despite widespread agreement that our nation’s immigration system is “broken,” we haven’t had a major overhaul of our immigration laws since 1986. In 2007, President George W. Bush pushed for comprehensive immigration reform and had the support of influential Republican and Democratic Party lawmakers, but the proposed bill never passed in the Senate.

**Write your**

**reaction to the policy changes proposed for each section marked with an arrow. Do you agree or disagree with each proposal? WHY?**

Following the re-election of President Obama in 2012, the call for reform increased. A “Gang of 8” Senators representing both parties worked together to create a comprehensive bill that was proposed in the spring of 2013. It passed in the Senate but was never brought to a vote in the House of Representatives. As proposed, the bill would have increased border security, changed the system for immigration visas, created a “guest worker” system, and allowed a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants currently in the country. The bill included 5 basic provisions:

**Section 1: Border Security**

Before any other provisions of this bill go into effect, several security benchmarks must be met along our southern border. Included among these benchmarks are: constructing 700 additional miles of border fence; deploying nearly 20,000 additional border patrol agents (doubling our current number of agents); increasing the use of a wide variety of border surveillance technology, including unmanned drone aircraft; and increasing the prosecution of illegal border crossings.

It was estimated that these security measures would cost nearly $45 billion over a ten-year period.

**Section 2a: Immigrant Visas for Undocumented Immigrants**

This proposal would allow illegal immigrants who have been living continuously in the U.S. since 2011 to apply for Resident Provisional Immigrant (RPI) status and be put on a path to citizenship. They may not have been convicted of a felony (or 3 misdemeanors), pass background tests, pay all assessed taxes, pay application fees, and pay a $1000 penalty, among other requirements. After 13 years under RPI status, they could apply for naturalization. During that waiting period, they must demonstrate full-time employment status (with some exceptions) and show English proficiency. An accelerated path to citizenship would be created for undocumented immigrants who came to the U.S. as minors (the DREAM Act) and fully employed agricultural workers.

**Section 2b: Legal Immigration Reforms**

A new merit-based point system for awarding visas would be introduced. Points would be awarded based on educational experience, work experience, and other criteria. Over time, this would replace the family-based visa system and the diversity lottery.

**Section 3: Workplace Enforcement**

This section contains provisions to strengthen the enforcement of immigration laws within the country. Central to this effort would be making it harder for undocumented immigrants to find jobs, by requiring the use of E-Verify, a computer system that helps employers determine the eligibility of job applicants to work in the U.S. Fines would increase for businesses that knowingly hire undocumented workers. Also, this section would increase the likelihood of deportation for non-citizens found guilty of participating in gang-related activity.

**Section 4: Reforms to Nonimmigrant Visa Programs**

To respond to the call from American businesses that there is a growing need for non-citizen labor, the bill would increase the number of non-immigrant (temporary) worker visas available for less-skilled workers. The bill would require that these workers be paid the same wage paid to U.S. workers and employers would have to prove that they were not displacing U.S. workers. Additional categories for increased visas would include investors, retirees, and college students.

**Section 5: Jobs for Youth**

The bill would establish a Youth Jobs Fund, providing seasonal and year-round employment opportunities for low-income Americans, ages 15-25. The funding for this $1.5 billion per year fund would come from a $10 surcharge on all employment-based immigrant and temporary worker visas.

**Summary questions**

* **Out of the different parts of the bill, which one would be the biggest change to our current immigration system?**
* **What aspects of this bill do you think are the most controversial?**
* **This bill passed the vote in the Senate but was never voted on in the House of Representatives. Why hasn’t the House voted on it? Do you think this kind of bill will ever pass Congress?**