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# Senate Votes Down GOP Measure on Border Security

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The Democratic-led U.S. Senate on Wednesday rejected a Republican amendment that foes said would have undermined a key element of the White House-backed bill that aims to provide a pathway to citizenship for 11 million undocumented immigrants.

Republican Senator Charles Grassley of Iowa said the defeat of his amendment, 57-43, broke a promise by President Barack Obama's Democrats to permit an "open debate" on the landmark immigration legislation. Democrats forced a vote after little discussion.

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Grassley's amendment would have required the Obama administration to certify "effective control" of the entire southwestern border of the United States before any of the 11 million undocumented residents now here could begin applying for legal status.

As written, the legislation would allow those living in the United States illegally to apply for legal status within six months of enactment. Democrats and some Republicans have made this provision a core element, and bipartisan support is considered essential for passage of the bill.

Referring to Grassley's amendment, Democratic Senator Charles Schumer of New York said, "We all know that will take years and years and years" for the federal government to certify that no illegal entries were happening at the U.S.-Mexico border.

But Grassley argued that his amendment would strengthen the immigration bill by ensuring there is "true border security before legalization (of the undocumented) and that's what the people of this country want."

Grassley said the Democratic leadership's use of a procedural maneuver to quickly dispose of his amendment showed that the promised "fair and open process is a farce."

The vote marked the first skirmish on a bill that is expected to be debated through the end of this month.

Later on Thursday, the Senate is expected to tackle additional amendments to the bill.

Meanwhile, behind the scenes, a bipartisan group of senators was trying to negotiate a deal on how to toughen border security measures without offending the delicate coalition of senators now supporting the bill.

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In this first vote on an amendment, five Republicans joined 50 Democrats and two independents in voting to reject it. Two Democrats and 41 Republicans opposed the procedural move to kill it.

The entire "Gang of Eight" senators, four Democrats and four Republicans who wrote the bipartisan bill, helped reject the amendment.

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