

## Bush: 'No problems' defending expanded immigration

By Eric Bradner, CNN

updated 6:41 PM EST, Tue December 16, 2014

CNN.com

**Washington (CNN)** -- Jeb Bush says he has "no problems" pushing policies in a 2016 Republican presidential primary that would allow more legal immigrants.

The former Florida governor discussed his position Tuesday on what could be a key issue for conservative voters in a brief interview with NBC's Miami affiliate, just hours after announcing on social media that he will "actively explore" a run for the White House.

"You've gotta protect the borders, enforce the law, be respectful of the rule of law, and at the same time, be able to encourage young, aspirational people to come to our country. It's a win-win," Bush said. "I have no problems advancing that idea."

READ: Jeb Bush's long campaign begins?

Asked whether much of the GOP's conservative base disagrees with Bush's position, he responded: "Well, we'll see. If I run, we'll see."

Bush offered no more details on his timeline for a decision, saying that will come "at the proper time."

He said he plans to "listen to people and see if my message can resonate, and that will be beginning next year."

Bush isn't the only Republican to call for some expansions of U.S. immigration policies. Incoming Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell said this month that the United States needs more H1-B visas, which allow companies to bring skilled workers into the country.

But calling for expanded immigration is problematic for many conservatives after a summer of reports of an influx of minors across the U.S.-Mexico border, and after President Barack Obama's November decision to halt deportations for millions of undocumented parents of U.S. citizens.

Bush blasted Obama's immigration move last month, tweeting that it is an "abuse of power" and going to Facebook to say his "ill-advised unilateral action on illegal immigration undermines all efforts to forge a permanent solution to this crisis. Action must come in the form of bipartisan comprehensive reform passed through Congress."

RELATED: Potential Bush bid sways none in GOP field

Those comments could put Bush uncomfortably at odds with similar moves -- though smaller in scope -- by both his father, George H.W. Bush, whose "Family Fairness" policy allowed 1.5 million relatives of newly legalized immigrants to avoid deportation while pursuing legal status, and his brother, George W. Bush, who protected 150,000 Salvadorans from deportation in 2001.

The issue blew up on another candidate, Texas Gov. Rick Perry, during his 2012 run for the White House.

Defending a Texas law granting in-state tuition to undocumented immigrants, Perry said: "If you

say that we should not educate children who have come into our state for no other reason than they've been brought there by no fault of their own, I don't think you have a heart."

He was eviscerated by the right, where many conservatives called his position an endorsement of amnesty. It was among several issues that ultimately sank Perry's candidacy.

Another potential 2016 Republican candidate, Florida Sen. Marco Rubio, could have problems with immigration, as well, after his push for comprehensive legislation drew conservatives' ire.

---

© 2014 Cable News Network. Turner Broadcasting System, Inc. All Rights Reserved.