

# Paul Ryan: Immigration a question of 'when'

By [SEUNG MIN KIM](#) | 3/26/14 10:44 AM EDT

Updated: 3/26/14 3:57 PM EDT

<http://www.politico.com/story/2014/03/ryan-immigration-a-question-of-when-105042.html>

Rep. Paul Ryan (R-Wis.) pressed the economic case for overhauling the nation's immigration system on Wednesday, saying that reform is inevitable and necessary to boost growth in the United States.

Ryan's fellow House Republicans have largely put the kibosh on moving forward with immigration reform this year, but some key GOP lawmakers are still lobbying their colleagues publicly and privately to tackle immigration. The 2012 Republican vice presidential nominee is among figures who have urged the GOP to embrace an overhaul.

"To me, it's not a question of 'if' we fix our broken immigration laws," Ryan said Wednesday at a breakfast hosted by the United States Hispanic Chamber of Commerce. "It's really a question of 'when.'"

Ryan called the nation's immigration laws "chief" among the problems that are curbing economic growth. Noting the rate of retirement among baby boomers, Ryan said reforming the immigration system is necessary to fill future jobs.

"Please know that we understand the value of immigration," Ryan told the crowd. "We know its importance; we know its roots, its history here in America; and we have ideas on how to make this go forward and make it work so that we do have the rule of law, so that we do have reform, so that we're not in the same position 15 years down the road."

House Republican leaders signaled earlier this year that they were ready to move forward on immigration reform — months after the Democratic-led Senate passed a complete overhaul with a pathway to citizenship for millions of undocumented immigrants.

But the GOP quickly extinguished the chances that immigration will get done this year, citing skepticism that President Barack Obama will enforce any laws that Congress writes. Republicans are also reluctant to take on a divisive issue such as immigration during an election year in which they will almost certainly retain control of the House and have a good chance at capturing the Senate.

Ryan recently indicated in an interview with his hometown paper, the Janesville Gazette, that GOP leaders do not yet have the votes to pass immigration reform, but “we’re working hard to find where that consensus lies.”

Among the biggest obstacles on the way to that consensus is what to do with the millions of immigrants living in the United States illegally. House Republicans have yet to put forward a measure dealing with that issue, but Rep. Mario Diaz-Balart (R-Fla.), at the same event Wednesday, was optimistic that a small circle of House Republicans has legislative language that could work.

“Can we deal with the folks that are here in a way that is reasonable, that does not violate the rights of folks who have done things legally, [and] can we strictly adhere to the rule of law?” Diaz-Balart said. “Some of us think we’ve achieved that magic formula.”