

Should we permit illegal aliens who are criminals, to remain in U.S.?

U.S. Sen. John Cornyn, the top Republican on the Judiciary Committee's Immigration, Border Security and Citizenship subcommittee, introduced an amendment to the immigration bill to close a gaping loophole in the bill that will ensure the following individuals are either permanently barred from the United States or prohibited from getting any immigration benefit: members of terrorist-related organizations, known gang members, sex offenders, alien smugglers who use firearms and felony drunk drivers.

“The question I put to my colleagues is this: Should Congress permanently bar from the U.S. and from receiving any immigration benefit: suspected terrorists, gang members, sex offenders, felony drunk drivers, and other individuals who are a danger to society?,” Sen. Cornyn said. “I hope that every Senator would answer this question with a positive response.

Sen. Cornyn's amendment also closes the loophole in the pending bill that allows legalization of those illegal immigrants who have violated court ordered deportations, or absconders.

“Unlike the first half of my amendment, this is not a technical correction. In other words, the decision to legalize this population of illegal immigrants was not an oversight by those who drafted this ‘compromise’ legislation,” Sen. Cornyn said. “Their decision was that Congress should allow exceptions for individuals who are illegally in the United States in defiance of a court order, as well as those individuals who have previously been deported from the United States pursuant to a court order and have again reentered illegally. I could not agree with this decision and I believe every member of the Senate should make clear where they stand on this matter. Congress has determined that each of these crimes is a felony. The laws are on the books, and we must make sure they are enforced.”

Below are examples of why Sen. Cornyn's amendment is needed:

* Current law prohibits U.S. citizens convicted of sex crimes against minors from bringing a relative into this country. But, the bill does not specifically prohibit illegal immigrants – who could be removed from the country because they are sex offenders and failed to register as such – from entering the U.S. or getting legal status such as lawful permanent resident status.

* The bill retains a “loophole” in current law that would allow an alien who has been repeatedly convicted of driving while intoxicated to remain in the U.S. and get legal status such as “Z” visa status or a green card.

* The bill retains a “loophole” in current law that allows an alien who has committed terrorist acts or belongs to a terrorist organization and has not yet been removed from the U.S. to get legal status. Here is a real-world example of this loophole:

--Last year, Mohammed El Shorbagi pleaded guilty to providing material support to Hamas. His actions, however, would not specifically bar him from becoming a U.S. citizen or getting other immigration benefits — because it is not one of the grounds excluded from the definition of good moral character.

Sen. Cornyn noted that Secretary of Homeland Security Michael Chertoff said during recent immigration negotiations that illegal immigrants who have defied the U.S. court system do not deserve to be rewarded with legalization. “Unfortunately, the drafters of this bill—in an effort to accommodate

certain far left advocacy groups—ignored Secretary Chertoff’s common sense observation. What is the message we send about the rule of law in America when Congress won’t even categorically prohibit rewarding those illegal immigrants who have ignored court orders?”¹

[Read the amendment](#), pdf

[How did your Senators vote](#) on the Cornyn Amendment - S1348?

What will this mean regarding your support of them in the next election?

What do you think? Write a persuasive essay on either question.

1. Should criminals, who are not citizens, be allowed to remain in the U.S. ?
2. Should individuals who were ordered deported and never left or came back illegally be allowed to stay in the U.S.?

¹ [Senator Cornyn’s web site](#) press release May 23, 2007.