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## Senate disappoints but doesn't surprise state observers

### They say there isn't enough political will to tackle issue

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Although the Senate immigration bill held out great hope for what its supporters said was a "grand bargain," it was a bill no one really liked. So its failure Thursday disappointed, but didn't surprise, many in Wisconsin who followed the hotly debated issue closely.

Christine Neumann-Ortiz, executive director of Voces de la Frontera, a worker- and immigrant-rights organization, said the bill as introduced was "very problematic because it wouldn't have afforded a realistic legalization" process for the estimated 12 million illegal immigrants in the country.

"Our organization and the national network we're part of was committed to the legislative process, and our hope was that the bill could have been amended to provide stronger civil rights protections," she said.

"I'm not surprised, really, that it failed because clearly the political will was not there."

But that's no excuse for the House of Representatives to not take up the issue before the 2008 presidential election, Neumann-Ortiz said.

Green Bay Ald. Chad Fradette, who introduced an ordinance that the city passed last week to bar businesses with city licenses from hiring illegal immigrants, said he was happy the bill failed.

"You should first deal with what you have," he said. "Immigration laws aren't broken; they just have not been enforced."

Fradette said immigration officials should enlist more help from local officials on immigration enforcement and step up deportations.

Although the bill drew lots of opposition from conservatives who said it amounted to "amnesty," a Harris Poll this week showed that 57% of adults favored a program allowing illegal immigrants to stay in the country if

they have a job and pay back taxes.

Benjamin Marquez, a political science professor at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, said he was surprised the bill made it to the Senate again.

Provisions that required a head of household to return to Mexico to wait for a visa would have been "very, very hard for immigrants to do," he said. "They would have continued to live in the shadows, as they do now."

Although Marquez was disappointed over the bill's fate, he said there has to be some kind of amnesty.

"Those who are running for re-election don't want to touch the issue because hard choices have to be made and, ultimately, conditions in the sending countries have to improve," he said.

Darryl Morin of the League of United Latin American Citizens in Wisconsin said of the bill: "It's very disappointing and a missed opportunity. It will be years before there's the political will to drum up support to address this issue, which is so divisive."

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