



McCain, Obama Trade Blame for Failure of Immigration Reform

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Maria Pena--EFE

WASHINGTON (EFE via COMTEX) --The future of immigration reform has almost been left out of the presidential election debates, although mutual accusations are growing between Barack Obama and John McCain about who stymied the 2007 reform plan.

Since last Friday, Hispanic groups and those in favor of legalizing undocumented immigrants have trained their guns on a McCain commercial in Spanish accusing Obama and the Democrats of sinking the reform by backing five "poison-pill" amendments to the bill.

But those amendments came out of the debate to reach a final version of the bill in search of a bipartisan solution to illegal immigration, and the fate of the bill McCain co-sponsored with Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-Mass.) was sealed by four Republican lawmakers.

In the commercial entitled "Which side are they on?," a male announcer says in Spanish: "Obama and his allies in Congress say they are on the side of immigrants, but they're not. Reports in the press say that their efforts were like 'poison pills' that caused immigration reform to fail."

"Is that being on our side? Obama and his Congressional allies - ready to block immigration reform, but not ready to govern," the narrator concludes.

Aired on Spanish-language television stations in potential swing states like Colorado, Nevada and New Mexico, the spot makes no mention of McCain's change of position on the reform, since he now gives top priority to strengthening security on the porous southern border.

The McCain campaign says that the Arizona senator continues to support immigration reform.

But except when talking to Hispanic groups, none of the candidates even mentions immigration reform, as if the subject were taboo.

Immigration is a minefield from which few can now profit politically and, as with other subjects of national importance, will remain as unfinished business until the new Congress convenes in January.

Several independent groups and media outlets have taken the trouble to check the advertising of the two campaigns for any lies or exaggerations.

The editorial board of The New York Times cataloged McCain's accusations against Obama as a "gross distortion."

Repeating the complaints of the Democrats, the editorial board added that the fact is that McCain did not take part in the congressional negotiations and that the reform bill was killed by the Republican Party, due to pressure from its right wing.

After pointing out that the Republican platform recommends a tough stance against undocumented aliens and opposes their legalization, The Times asked whether the new ad signifies that McCain "really supports" a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants.

"Is he willing to stand up to his own party on that? If he is, let's hear him say so - in English, too," the editorial board said.

For its part, the Washington Post also noted on its campaign blog: "In truth, Obama and many other Democrats publicly supported the efforts to enact immigration reforms started by Sens. McCain and Kennedy in 2005."

Such groups as the National Council of La Raza, the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund and America's Voice also criticized what they consider the commercial's inaccuracies and even asked that McCain take it off the air.

The McCain distributed Tuesday a new information sheet about Obama's stance on immigration, which says that the Democratic presidential candidate was not fully involved in the negotiations.

On the contrary, it adds, McCain took a "big political risk" in promoting the bipartisan project.

But, say Hispanic groups, that was before he won the presidential candidacy, and those same groups can only hope that if he wins in November, McCain will be able to go against his party's hardliners.

They also ask that voters be told the truth so they can vote on the issues, not on myths.

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