

Why a rare bipartisan consensus on immigration totally fell apart

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Mary Giovagnoli, director of the Immigration Policy Center, helps explain what happened to the STEM visa proposal in this Washington Post article:

Others, however, [blame](#) [1] Republicans of playing politics by setting up the bill to fail so they could pin the blame on Democrats: The House GOP leadership put Smith's bill on what's known as the suspension calendar, which requires bills to have two-thirds instead of a simple majority to pass. Typically, the procedure is used to pass noncontroversial bills that are highly likely to pass. But it can also be used "to create a difficult vote for whatever party isn't in control," says Mary Giovagnoli, director of the Immigration Policy Center.

But even if you put the politics aside, there's still a major policy difference between Republican and Democratic proposals: Do we try to maintain the same overall numbers for legal immigration as we had in the 1990s, or should we look beyond quotas and encourage higher levels of legal immigration to stimulate the economy?

"If you're unwilling to let go of the numbers from the 1990s, you're always going to be looking to replace any new category," says Giovagnoli. "The diversity visa has become a relatively easy target — it's one of the few visas that's available to someone with no basic relationship to the U.S."

Republicans maintain that higher-skill immigration should take priority. But Democrats cast the elimination of the program as "an attack on the poorer segments of the immigration stream," Giovagnoli explains, pointing out that nearly half of the diversity green cards go to immigrants from African countries who might not have another way to get to the United States.

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