

Republicans plan response to Obama's immigration move

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Hurt by last year's government shutdown over their opposition to Mr Obama's signature healthcare law, the party is weighing how to counter his expected executive actions that would bypass Republican opposition in the House of Representatives and their refusal to take up a cross-party [Senate](#) immigration bill.

[Mr Obama](#) has long threatened to fix a broken immigration system on his own terms if House speaker [John Boehner](#) and his fellow Republicans in [Congress](#) fail to draft their own legislation.

Mr Boehner has refused to take up a bill on immigration, a lightning rod issue in the stormy partisanship of Washington politics, and has warned the president that executive action would "poison the well."

### **Fester too long**

In an online video yesterday, Mr Obama said: "Unfortunately, Washington has allowed the problem to fester for too long."

He will make a televised address at 8pm tonight on his plans, he said, "laying out the things that I can do with my lawful authority as president to make the system work better."

Mr Obama plans to make a speech at Del Sol High School in [Las Vegas](#) tomorrow to rally support for his initiative. The location points to the significance of the announcement – the

president gave a major speech on immigration at the school in January 2013, a week after his second inauguration.

[Nevada](#) is also the home state of [Democratic Senate](#) leader [Harry Reid](#), who will make way for Republican Mitch McConnell as the next Senate majority leader after the GOP won back the chamber in this month's midterm elections.

### **Halt deportations**

Mr Obama is said to be preparing to use his executive authority under Article 11 of the constitution to redirect the country's 12,000 immigration agents from deportation actions against the parents of US-born citizens or legal residents and to issue them with work permits. This is a reversal on his long-held stance, much criticised by immigration groups, that he had no legal authority to halt deportations.

As many as five million people are reportedly expected to benefit from the move, out of the estimated 11.4 million illegal immigrants in the US.

The executive actions represent an expansion of the 2012 measure introduced by Mr Obama to allow children who were brought to the US illegally as children, known as Dreamers, to remain in the country.

Nobody knows the exact number of illegal Irish – or, indeed, the number of Irish who will be helped by Mr Obama's executive orders – but they are expected to total “some thousands,” said one US-based Irish immigration activist who declined to be identified.

### **At least five years**

In a report yesterday, the Migration [Policy Institute](#) estimated that 3.4 million illegal immigrants have at least one US-born citizen child, and as many as four in five have been living in the US for at least five years. So Mr Obama's orders could help many people.

Republicans must tread a fine line between following through on their objections to the president's “executive amnesty” without estranging ethnic minorities, which have become a growing political force.

One proposal floated by some Republicans is a little-used “rescission bill”. This would allow them to approve a must-pass spending bill by December 11th to keep the government open, then retrospectively strip out specific funding for immigration. This would hobble the president's proposals.

“We went down the government shutdown route a year ago. It didn't work, and I think a lot of people that recall that don't think it's wise to repeat that exercise,” congressman [Tom Cole](#), a Republican from [Oklahoma](#), told the *New York Times*.

“We've got a lot more than just a sledgehammer in the toolbox, and so let's use some of these other weapons that we have.”