

How California's Congressional Delegation Voted on Immigration Reform ca. 1986

As the comprehensive immigration reform effort moves forward in Congress, how did California's congressional delegation vote on the last major reform legislation – the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986?

Forward Observer reviewed the Congressional Record and media reports from the summer and fall of 1986. The final bill, known as Simpson-Mazzoli, passed the Senate by a vote of 63 to 24 and passed the House by a vote of 238 to 173. It was signed into law by President Reagan on November 6, 1986.

Of the 47 members of the California delegation, 33 voted in favor of the final bill and 13 voted against it (and one member did not vote):

- Democrats voted in favor 19-9.
- Republicans voted in favor 14-4 with Rep. Badham not voting.
- Twice as many Democrats (9) as Republicans (4) voted against the final bill, but majorities of both parties supported the comprehensive package (68% of Democrats; 78% of Republicans).
- Only three members who served in Congress at the time remain in office. Two voted for the bill – Rep. George Miller (D-11) and Rep. Henry Waxman (D-33). Sen. Barbara Boxer, then representing the state's 6th district as a Representative, voted against.

The key elements of Simpson-Mazzoli required employers to attest to their employee's immigration status, made it illegal to hire unauthorized immigrants, legalized certain agricultural illegal immigrants, and legalized illegal immigrants who entered the United States before January 1, 1982, after paying a fine and back taxes. An estimated three million illegal immigrants were granted legal status as a result of the bill.

While the bill gained a strong majority of the California delegation, key members voted against the final bill. *The Miami Herald* reported that Democrats Don Edwards and Edward Roybal said they voted against the bill because they believed employer sanctions would "prompt employers to discriminate against Hispanics or foreign-appearing job applicants" (*Miami Herald*, October 16, 1986).

Some Republicans who voted against the bill stressed border security and were opposed to granting legal status to illegal immigrants. Rep. David Dreier (R-33) stated we must "do everything possible" to strengthen the border patrol and curb illegal aliens, potential terrorists and drug smugglers (*State News Service*, October 17, 1986). *The Miami Herald* reported that Rep. Duncan Hunter (R-45) "opposed the bill on grounds that its amnesty provisions were too generous" (*Miami Herald*, October 16, 1986).

Below are tables showing the final vote and quotes illustrating points of opposition to the final package. For more updates and insights on the comprehensive immigration reform effort, follow Forward Observer on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

U.S. SENATE

Senator	Vote
Sen. Pete Wilson [R]	Yes
Sen. Alan Cranston [D]	Yes

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Representative	Vote
Douglas Bosco (D-1)	Yes
Eugene Chappie (R-2)	No
Robert Matusi (D-3)	Yes
Victor Fazio (D-4)	Yes
Sala Burton (D-5)	No
Barbara Boxer (D-6)	No
George Miller (D-7)	Yes
Ronald Dellums (D-8)	No
Pete Stark (D-9)	Yes
Don Edwards (D-10)	No
Tom Santos (D-11)	Yes
Edwin Zschau (R-12)	Yes
Norman Mineta (D-13)	No
Norman Shumway (R-14)	Yes
Anthony Coelho (D-15)	Yes
Leon Panetta (D-16)	Yes
Charles Pashayan (R-17)	Yes
Richard Lehman (D-18)	Yes
Robert Lagomarsino (R-19)	Yes
Bill Thomas (R-20)	Yes
Bobbi Fielder (R-21)	No
Carlos Moorhead (R-22)	Yes
Anthony Beilenson (D-23)	Yes
Henry Waxman (D-24)	Yes
Edward Roybal (D-25)	No
Howard Berman (D-26)	Yes
Meldon Levine (D-27)	Yes
Julian Dixon (D-28)	Yes
Gus Hawkins (D-29)	No
Matthew Martinez (D-30)	No
Mervyn Dymally (D-31)	No
Glenn Anderson (D-32)	Yes
David Dreier (R-33)	No
Esteban Torres (D-34)	Yes
Jerry Lewis (R-35)	Yes
George Brown (D-36)	Yes
Alfred McCandless (R-37)	Yes
Robert Doran (R-38)	Yes
William Dannemeyer (R-39)	Yes
Robert Badham (R-40)	Did Not Vote
William Lowery (R-41)	Yes
Daniel Lungren (R-42)	Yes
Ron Packard (R-43)	Yes
Jim Bates (D-44)	Yes
Duncan Hunter (R-45)	No

NO VOTES – DEMOCRATS

The Miami Herald stated Rep. Don Edwards, Rep. Edward Roybal and other House Democrats voted against the bill because they "believed the sanctions against employers would prompt employers to discriminate against Hispanics or foreign-appearing job applicants."

The Miami Herald, October 16, 1986

The Chicago Tribune identified Rep. Matthew Martinez as one of the "critics of the amnesty provisions charge," who stated it was, "unfair to grant resident status to those who entered the country illegally." Before the final vote he stated, "How about all the people who waited in line all these years to come in legally?"

The Chicago Tribune, November 18, 1986

According to the *Los Angeles Times*, [Rep. Mervyn Dymally] voted against the bill because, "I wanted to stick with the Hispanic caucus, which stays with blacks on South Africa." The *Times* report added, "He said he has no quarrel with those who supported the bill because further delays in immigration reform might have 'nailed the coffin on amnesty,' which he supports."

Los Angeles Times, October 26, 1986

NO VOTES – REPUBLICANS

According to State News Service, Rep. David Dreier stated, "I'm really pleased," with his amendment [he introduced], though he voted against the overall bill. He added, "It is so important to do everything possible to strengthen the border patrol, to make sure that the flow of illegal aliens, potential terrorists and drug smugglers is stemmed."

State News Service, October 17, 1986

According to *The San Diego Union-Tribune*, Rep. Duncan Hunter opposed the bill and said "he disagreed with the provisions for legalizing undocumented aliens who established permanent homes in the United States before 1982." Hunter added, "That's going to send the wrong message to people that they can come to this country illegally,"

The San Diego Union-Tribune, October 10, 1986