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Immigration Reform: 1986 & Today

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In 1986 president Ronald Reagan passed the largest immigration bill in American history. He granted amnesty to nearly three million undocumented immigrants, but many still considered this immigration bill to be a failure. The 1986 Amnesty Act, more properly known as the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 (IRCA), was supposed to secure the border, crack down on businesses that continued to hire undocumented immigrants and put an end to illegal immigration here in the United States. It failed to deliver on its promises. Many undocumented immigrants became legal citizens, however the border was never secured, business continued to hire undocumented immigrants and it did not put an end to illegal immigration here in the United States.

Consequently, now, 27 years later the American undocumented immigrant population has more than tripled with an estimated 11 million undocumented immigrants in this country. And once again, the growing Latino voice has forced immigration reform back to the political forefront. But with many still remembering vividly how the last immigration bill played out, it sparks the question, what's going to be different this time? This piece seeks to investigate the differences between the 1986 Amnesty Act and the proposed immigration bill of today and its likelihood of success.