Abstract

This master's thesis focuses on the inability of the U. S. Congress to pass a comprehensive immigration reform. The main goal of the thesis is identification of key factors that prevent successful passage of this legislation. Two latest immigration reform proposals from 2007 and 2013 were selected for the research. To analyze them, process tracing was used. This method allows for better understanding of the legislative development. As an analytical framework, approach of John W. Kingdon was selected. His revised garbage can model of organizational choice applied to congressional decision making identifies three process streams that are critical for passing legislation in Congress – problem definition, policy generation and politics. Firstly, Kingdon's framework is described and then applied to the selected immigration reform proposals case studies. Emphasis is put on identification of factors that play key role in generating and passing the policy. Then, both case studies are compared to allow for more general inference. The key finding of the thesis is that the political stream is crucial to passing comprehensive immigration reform. Based on the comparative case study, political skills of leaders and political context significantly influence the ability of Congress to act on the immigration legislation. The main contribution of this thesis is identification of those factors preventing a comprehensive immigration reform from passing and also discussion of conditions that could increase the chance of successfully reforming the immigration system in the future.