

**UNIVERZITA KARLOVA V PRAZE**  
**Fakulta sociálních věd**  
**Institut mezinárodních studií**  
**PROTOKOL O HODNOCENÍ MAGISTERSKÉ PRÁCE**  
**(Posudek vedoucího)**

Práci předložil(a) student(ka): Alice Kristenová

Název práce: U.S. Congress and the Failed Comprehensive Immigration Reform”  
Comparative Study of 2007 and 2013 Proposals

Vedoucí: Jana Sehnálková

1. OBSAH A CÍL PRÁCE (stručná informace o práci, formulace cíle):

In her thesis, the author aims to answer the question of what particular reasons led to the failure of the U.S. Congress to pass comprehensive immigration reform. The approach towards immigration continues to be a major public policy challenge - though it has been identified as a problematic area that needs to be reformed, as the author points out, it is a difficult policy issue to tackle. In analyzing two legislative proposals, the author tries to identify the factors and conditions that had prevented the legislation from passing.

The thesis is composed of seven parts. In the first chapter, the author provides a very brief overview of major immigration legislation that brought about major changes to immigration policy in the 20th century. In the second chapter, the author looks at the differences in approach towards the issue of immigration between the Democratic and the Republican Party. In the third chapter, the author in detail describes the methodology implemented in her analysis. In the fourth and the fifth chapter, the author looks in detail at the 2007 and 2013 immigration legislation respectively and identifies the key problems, participants, and political processes that impacted the proposed legislation and its fate in the U.S. Congress. In chapter six, the author compares the two failed legislative proposals and concludes that by framing the problems of immigration and by offering the solutions to those problems, the two bills were not that different after all - however, they failed in Congress for different reasons, namely political leadership and the political context (such as elections, budget issues, etc.). In the last, seventh chapter, the author briefly ponders over the future of immigration reform under the current Trump Administration, as it continues to remain a hotly debated issue.

2. VĚCNÉ ZPRACOVÁNÍ (náročnost, tvůrčí přístup, argumentace, logická struktura, teoretické a metodologické ukotvení, práce s prameny a literaturou, vhodnost příloh apod.):

The author selected an interesting and at the same time very timely topic. The thesis is well-structured, the author carefully develops her arguments. The selection of process-tracing seems logical - the author in detail looks at the process of passing a bill in the U.S. Congress. In addition, the author also uses the analytical framework of John W. Kingdon called “garbage can model of decision making”. Through this framework, she is able to identify the key problems, the key actors, as well as the key processes in the congressional debates over proposed legislation. Having said that, while this framework can be very helpful, I see a potential pitfall in the fact that it is rarely exhaustive. I believe that the thesis should have included some critical assessment of the chosen framework.

I would recommend explaining all of the abbreviations used in the text - e.g. on p. 8, the author talks about IRCA, but does not explain what it is. On p. 9, the author refers to

“immigration reform community”, but does not explain what exactly it is and who is part of it. I am also missing a critical analysis of the used sources.

3. FORMÁLNÍ A JAZYKOVÉ ZPRACOVÁNÍ (jazykový projev, správnost citace a odkazů na literaturu, grafická úprava, formální náležitosti práce apod.):

Language-wise, the text is well-written. There are very few typos or grammar mistakes - e.g. on p. 26 at the bottom, something seems missing, as the author writes that “the role of individual goals of politicians on also cannot be omitted”. The author provides her own-generated tables and works with sufficient number of sources - both primary and secondary. Overall, her work fulfills the requirements for master’s thesis.

4. STRUČNÝ KOMENTÁŘ HODNOTITELE (celkový dojem z bakalářské práce, silné a slabé stránky, originalita myšlenek, naplnění cíle apod.):

The author mostly fulfills the goal of the thesis and generally answers the questions posed in the introduction. Her approach to the analysis of the two legislative proposals is quite original. The author shows that the definition of problems in immigration policy as well as the proposed solutions have not changed much over time. The issue has been thoroughly studied and most of the proposed solutions come from years of academic and practitioners’ research. However, with the involvement of so many different actors who enter the public policy process with different goals, this leads to policy fragmentation, which the author successfully describes. The author identifies the inability of the political leadership to effectively tackle the issue as well as to political context as the primary causes of the failure to pass an immigration overhaul. Here, I would have appreciated a more analytical approach to the congressional tactic used - the conclusion that the political leadership failed would thus have been more firmly supported by empirical analysis.

The author argues, based on the analytical framework, that the “window of opportunity” did not open for the immigration policy change. Here, I would have welcomed a more critical approach to the analytical framework. While the model generally helps us to identify what to look for in a policy process, the input may change in time depending on circumstances - and there seem to be predictable and unpredictable variables. Overall, it does not seem clear what are the replicable features of the “window of opportunity” based on which we can predict the alignment of all of the three streams.

I find interesting that the author points out that in 2007, the Republican Party securitized the immigration debate by presenting immigrants as a threat. While this is true, part of the GOP also alludes to the fact that illegal immigration causes a burden for American taxpayers and approach immigration debate from the perspective of the budget. It should also be mentioned that the GOP generally refuses amnesty for illegal immigrants, as their basic premise is that these people have entered the U.S. in violation of U.S. law and therefore should not be shown any leniency.

5. OTÁZKY A PŘIPOMÍNKY DOPORUČENÉ K BLIŽŠÍMU VYSVĚTLENÍ PŘI OBHAJOBĚ (jedna až tři):

1. You argue that the 1960s immigration reform gave way to illegal immigration. Can you explain in more detail how?
2. Was there any difference in congressional strategy during the 2007 and 2013 discussions of proposed legislation?
3. How do you think will the growing importance of the Latino electorate in the following year impact the immigration debate - presuming that the problem formulation and solution proposals will essentially remain the same.

6. DOPORUČENÍ / NEDOPORUČENÍ K OBHAJOBĚ A NAVRHOVANÁ ZNÁMKA  
(výborně, velmi dobře, dobře, nevyhověl):

The thesis fulfills requirements for Master's theses and is recommended for defense. I propose grade B.

Datum: June 14, 2018

Podpis: Jana Sehnalkova