BORDER PATROL
SENATE PASSES IMMIGRATION REFORM

BY BETH GERACI // Senior Editor

The U.S. Senate on June 27 passed bipartisan, comprehensive immigration reform that would, if signed into law, have a major impact on labor in the golf industry.

In a 68-32 vote led by Sens. John McCain, Chuck Schumer and other senators in the so-called “Gang of 8,” the Senate passed groundbreaking legislation that would create a path to citizenship for the 11 million people living in the United States illegally.

In addition to increasing security at the U.S.-Mexico border, the legislation would create a mandatory E-verify system, make minor changes to the H-2B worker visa program, which the golf industry depends on for seasonal help, and more.

Those changes to H-2B would make returning H-2B workers exempt from the program’s 66,000 annual cap through 2018, change the way H-2B worker wages are calculated and require employers to pay worker transportation costs.

The act also would create a new year-round “W-visa” program geared toward low-skilled foreign temporary workers and allow their spouses and children to work in the United States for the same temporary period.

However, it appears highly unlikely that the legislation ever will reach President Obama’s desk for a signature.

Republican leaders in the House have been slow to entertain immigration reform and have flatly refused to take up the Senate act at all, with House Speaker John Boehner telling the Washington press, “The House is not going to take up and vote on whatever the Senate passes. We’re going to do our own bill, through regular order, and it’ll be legislation that reflects the will of our majority and the will of the American people.”