

Could Biometric Chips Help Keep ISIS Out of America?

The U.S. House of Representatives will take up a bill this week to tighten U.S. border control after last month's Paris attacks by toughening entry requirements for those traveling from "visa waiver" nations, a Republican leader said on Wednesday.

"Now we're looking at the visa waiver program – those gaps and vulnerabilities in that," House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy said on CNN. "You're going to see a bill roll out later this week and pass next week as well."

McCarthy then told Fox Business Network the bill would be unveiled on Thursday and would "move through in a very strong bipartisan vote next week."

The Obama administration this week announced changes to the program, which allows travelers from 38 countries, including much of Western Europe, to enter the United States without obtaining a visa from a U.S. consulate or embassy. Each year about 20 million visitors to the United States use the program, which allows them to stay 90 days.

House Speaker Paul Ryan, in a statement, said lawmakers will consider several changes, including requiring participating countries "to issue smart e-passports with biometric chips" and screening travelers with databases of lost and stolen passports and criminals.

"In the coming days, the House will continue to evaluate these proposals and determine appropriate next steps to ensure we know exactly who is entering our country," the chamber's top leader said.

The visa efforts come after the Nov. 13 attacks in Paris that led Western countries to re-evaluate their security. The Islamic State militant group has claimed responsibility for

the attacks, which killed 130 people. Authorities are still searching for some of those involved.

The White House changes announced Monday require U.S. authorities to collect more information about travelers' visits to countries such as Syria and Iraq, where Islamic State has established a stronghold.

Legislation introduced in the U.S. Senate this week would have travelers from "visa waiver" countries provide fingerprints and photos and require individuals who had visited Syria or Iraq in the last five years to obtain a visa.

Timing for any House bill will be tight, as members of Congress work on a bill to fund the government through September and also rush to adjourn at the end of next week.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell has said the must-pass funding bill may address Syrian refugees, another issue raising concerns after the Paris attacks. {eo}

(Reporting by Lisa Lambert and Susan Heavey; Editing by Chizu Nomiyama and Bill Trott)

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