Will US revoke the right of American citizenship to foreigners born here?

A bill in the House of Representatives would change the 14th amendment to the US Constitution that grants anyone who is born on US soil the right of American citizenship. Efforts to revoke birthright citizenship could make it the new flashpoint in the debate over immigration.

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But in April, the Pew Hispanic Center, a Washington-based, nonpartisan organization, released a report (pdf download) that estimated the number of children of illegal immigrants, who received citizenship by birth on U.S. soil, has risen by nearly 50 percent from 2.7 million in 2003 to 4 million in 2008. One-third of those children live in poverty, which is nearly double the poverty rate for children of US-born parents.

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According to the "Birthright Citizenship Act" bill, which has 91 cosponsors, the proposed changes would affect the Fourteenth Amendment and only grant citizenship "if the person is born in the United States of parents, one of whom is:"

- a citizen or national of the United States;
- an alien lawfully admitted for permanent residence in the United States whose residence is in the United States; or
- an alien performing active service in the armed forces (as defined in section 101 of title 10, United States Code)."

But getting such changes through both houses of Congress is a long shot.

"I'd be surprised," if the bill passes, says Tamar Jacoby, president of ImmigrationWorks USA, a national employer group that supports immigration reform that secures borders, strengthens workplace laws, and brings the immigrants already in the country into, and paying into, the system. "This does come up every so often … but it hasn't gotten much traction in the past,"

However, some immigration reform advocates argue that federal courts have never specifically faced the question of whether children born to illegal immigrant parents should be granted citizenship, according to a recent NPR article.

Legislation aimed to prevent citizenship from being given to U.S.-born children of unauthorized immigrant parents is also being pushed at the state level in Texas and Oklahoma.

A list of countries, by population, that grant birthright citizenship:

- United States
- Brazil
- Pakistan
- Mexico
- Colombia
- Argentina
- Canada
- Peru
- Venezuela
- Malaysia
- Chile
- Ecuador
- Guatemala
- Dominican Republic
- Bolivia
- Honduras
- Paraguay
- El Salvador
- Nicaragua
- Panama
- Uruguay
- Jamaica
- Lesotho
- Trinidad and Tobago
- Fiji
- Guyana
- Belize
- Barbados
- Saint Lucia
- Saint Vincent and the Grenadines
- Grenada
- Antigua and Barbuda
- Dominica
- Saint Christopher and Nevis

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