

Immigration policy disagreements crowd out other legislative action

Look for policy differences over immigration to stymie most legislation between now and November, a development that will affect employers.

Example: The annual “farm bill”—usually an uncontroversial appropriations bill that allocates agricultural subsidies—was derailed May 19 by conservative House Republicans who said they wouldn’t vote for it unless Congress also passed a hardline immigration bill.

The Freedom Caucus legislation would have included limited protections for “Dreamers,” young people who were illegally brought into the country by their parents when they were children. But it would also have slashed legal immigration. Business groups strongly oppose limits on legal immigration, because many industries rely on foreign-born visa holders to do crucial work. The farm bill needs Freedom Caucus member votes to pass, so it is on hold until the House can agree on immigration policy.

The same fate may await any number of bills, including those addressing joint employment, paid family leave and other employment law issues.