

Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) Talking Points

Background:

On September 5, President Trump announced that his administration would terminate the DACA program as of March 5, 2018, unless Congress passed legislation before that time to provide a statutory basis for the initiative. The days since have been filled with daily stories about the fate of DACA, the extraordinary accomplishments of some of the individuals who are registered in the program, and promises and commitments by members of both parties to address the issue before the president's deadline.

On September 13, we learned that the president, in a meeting with Senate Minority Leader Charles E. Schumer (D-NY) and House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-CA), had apparently agreed to support legislation that would permanently authorize DACA in exchange for expanded border security. The details remain in flux and so, in essence, as of Sept. 18 there is no specific deal to point to—just a deal to reach a deal. Still, we regard this development as welcome news in this yearlong effort to secure the protections of DACA for those who are covered by it. Part of the challenge regards the words used to describe the affected populations. Some politicians and news stories refer to “DACA recipients” or “DACA registrants” while others use the phrase “Dreamers,” which includes the DACA population as well as some individuals who are ineligible for DACA as it was implemented by the Obama Administration.

Ask:

While some legislation has been introduced to create a permanent DACA program, none of these bills has emerged as the favored vehicle. Nonetheless, given the widespread interest in DACA and the desire for a solution by many members of Congress, we believe that now is an excellent time for college and university leaders to reach out to their elected officials and to express support for a permanent solution to protect these outstanding individuals.

Issue:

Initiated in June 2012, DACA addresses the uncertain status of thousands of young people brought to this country as infants or children by granting eligible recipients temporary permission to stay in the United States and obtain work permits.

These young people grew up in the United States. They consider themselves American, just like their classmates, friends and neighbors, and in most ways they are.

Unfortunately, before DACA they were unable to work legally and lived a life in the shadows.

After years of living in limbo, many of them were able to register with the federal government and gain the temporary status available under the policy. To qualify for DACA, applicants must pass a multifaceted and rigorous test, including the requirement to have arrived in the United States before reaching age 16, resided here continuously since 2012, be enrolled in or completed high school, not been convicted of a crime, and not present a threat to national security or public safety. Today, about 800,000 young people have DACA status.

Now, these bright and talented young people are working, studying at colleges and universities, or enlisting in the armed services. Because they now have work permits, they can make immediate contributions to our society and our economy. They are paying taxes and buying cars, homes and consumer goods, all of which generates economic activity and increases tax revenue for federal, state and local governments. They are ineligible for federal means-tested welfare benefits, Pell Grants and federal student loans, as well as Obamacare tax subsidies.

According to a recent study by the conservative CATO Institute, a repeal or rollback of DACA would harm the economy and reduce tax revenue. CATO also estimates that deporting those with DACA status would cost over \$60 billion in lost tax revenue and result in a \$280 billion reduction in economic growth over the next decade.

Unfortunately, many of these young people live in fear and uncertainty now that the administration has announced plans to rescind DACA. Guidance from the Department of Homeland Security does not clarify if students can travel outside the United States for study abroad programs, international conferences or for family emergencies. Uncertainty regarding work permits after March 5 means many of our DACA students are struggling to plan for college costs past the spring 2018 semester.

In the 16 years since the Dream Act was first introduced, a number of bills have been introduced in Congress to address the uncertain status of these individuals, including various versions of the Dream Act, which the higher education community has long supported. We urge Congress to pass bipartisan legislation as soon as possible that will include all the protections currently provided under DACA and allow them to continue contributing to our society and economy by working, serving in the military or attending college.