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As Government Shutdown Looms, Ending DACA Would Cost Hundreds Of Billions Of Dollars

Alex Kotch

Democrats in the U.S. House and Senate appeared ready to withhold their votes on a short-term government spending bill unless Republicans agreed to reinstate the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, which extends protected status to roughly 750,000 young adults whose undocumented parents brought them to the United States as children. If Congress doesn't pass a spending bill by Friday, the government will effectively shut down, leaving only essential services such as law enforcement and air traffic control in operation.

The current short-term funding plan, unveiled by House Speaker Paul Ryan on Tuesday, funds the government through Feb. 16 and extends the Child Health Insurance Plan for six years. With Democrats opposed and the GOP still divided, a government shutdown could very well occur this weekend.

As members of Congress consider government funding and the fate of the "Dreamers," something seemingly left out of the discussion is the giant price tag of deporting hundreds of thousands of young adults who have spent the majority of their lives as U.S. residents. Authors of two 2017 studies estimate that the process would cost the country's economy as much as \$430 billion.

The libertarian Cato Institute noted that Dreamers tend to make significant contributions to the economy. Over a decade, the U.S. would lose \$215 billion in economic output as well as \$60 billion in tax revenue. The deportation process will cost \$7.5 billion, with each removal costing the government roughly \$10,000. In total, Cato estimated a \$283 billion price tag on deporting the Dreamers.

"The United States economy would be poorer by more than a quarter of a trillion dollars if President Trump were to make good on his threat to repeal it," wrote Ike Brannon and Logan Albright.

The liberal Center for American Progress used a different method to calculate the financial burden of deporting the Dreamers, concluding that ending DACA would result in \$460 billion in economic losses, with 685,000 workers ejected from the U.S. economy. States with conservative government officials who oppose DACA would face major annual gross domestic product losses, including Texas (\$6.3 billion), Tennessee (\$347 million) and Kansas (\$336 million).

"The present threat to those with DACA is real," wrote Nicole Prchal Svajlenka, Tom Jawetz and Angie Bautista-Chavez. "Moreover, because DACA recipients are so well integrated into

families, communities, schools, and workplaces throughout the country, the economic and social effects of ending DACA would be widespread and significant.”

In September, Attorney General Jeff Sessions, a fierce immigration opponent, announced that the Trump administration would phase out DACA, falsely claiming that “those in the country illegally are lawbreakers who hurt native-born Americans by usurping their jobs and pushing down wages,” according to The New York Times. At the time, Trump called on Congress to “legalize DACA.” But on Jan. 11, Trump rejected a bipartisan deal to maintain protected status for Dreamers while increasing funding for border security.

The American public is united behind DACA. A new CBS News survey found that nearly 90 percent of Americans, including 79 percent of Republicans, support the program.