

## Essential that Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals continue

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This week, Attorney General Jeff Sessions announced President Trump's decision with respect to the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program. He stated the president has decided to end the program but defer termination of the program for six months to give Congress an opportunity to decide what to do with respect to immigration policy — a decision that made just about everyone unhappy.

There are significant moral and economic issues at stake in this debate. But before addressing them in greater detail, let's start with the bottom line: for both moral and economic reasons, it is essential DACA be continued.

Senator John McCain, R-Ariz., who increasingly is being viewed as a voice of reason in these tumultuous times, put it this way in a statement released by his office: "I strongly believe that children who were illegally brought into this country through no fault of their own should not be forced to return to a country they do not know. The 800,000 innocent young people granted deferred action under DACA over the last several years are pursuing degrees, starting careers, and contributing to our communities in important way." He added "rescinding DACA at this time is an unacceptable reversal of the promises and opportunities that have been conferred to these individuals."

That's the crux of the matter in a nutshell. Because these young people are not guilty of breaking the law (their parents are the ones who broke the law by entering the country illegally and bringing their children with them), simple human decency requires they be allowed to continue to be in this country.

The DACA program, it should be added, does not make them permanent residents. They only receive a two-year renewable deferral of deportation along with a work permit. Once the two-year deferral of deportation ends, they must reapply for another two-year deferral, which is granted only if they have not engaged in criminal activity or otherwise violated the law while in this country.

There are also economic reasons for continuing DACA. The young people covered by this program, who have become known as "Dreamers," contribute far more to the economy than they cost tax payers. In an article entitled "The Economic and Fiscal Impact of Repealing DACA" published by the Cato Institute, a conservative think tank, Ike Brannon and Logan Albright estimate deporting those in the DACA program would cost the federal government more than \$60 billion, followed by a \$280 billion reduction in economic growth during the next decade.

Brannon and Albright note, “The average DACA recipient is 22 years old, employed and earns about \$17 per hour. The majority are still students and 17 percent are pursuing an advanced degree.” They add that “DACA recipients are more like H-1B Visa holders than the general population of unauthorized immigrants.” (H-1B Visas allow U.S. employers to employ foreign workers in specialty occupations.)

Another Cato Institute study suggests that while the economic impact of immigration is positive and substantial, the fiscal impact (cost to the government) tends to be quite minimal.

Sen. McCain states, “The federal government has a responsibility to defend and secure our borders, but we must do so in a way that upholds all that is decent and exceptional about our nation. I will be working with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to devise and pass comprehensive immigration reform, which will include the DREAM Act.”

That is the best way to proceed on this matter. Whether comprehensive immigration reform, which will include the DREAM Act, can be accomplished in six months is highly uncertain. But if members of Congress are willing to set partisan differences aside and work together to address the problems facing our nation, anything is possible.

And what if Congress lacks the vision and willpower to work together to enact comprehensive immigration reform? In that case, the best option would be to continue DACA in its present form.

It is interesting to note President Trump, who likes to be unpredictable, stated he might revisit the issue if Congress does not act during the six-month grace period. Perhaps there is a glimmer of hope emanating from the White House after all.