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Deporting dreamers punishes achievers and doesn't make America safer

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As President Trump's talking point of choice, immigration policy took center stage for much of the campaign. Now, as the new presidential administration attempts to put these promises into action, many are watching how President Trump will handle "Dreamers" — the colloquial term for undocumented immigrants protected under the Obama administration's Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) policy. As its title suggests, DACA provides temporary relief from deportation for children who were brought to the United States as children by their parents.

If President Trump's objectives are what he claims, he should be interested in protecting immigration programs that weed out the criminally convicted yet allow those with no record to remain. DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) falls into that category and adds requirements of education or military service, meaning those who receive protection are highly contributing members of society with plentiful aspirations.

DACA does not provide blanket amnesty. The program's stipulations are strict, requiring Dreamers to not have had any felony (or major misdemeanor) convictions and either be currently enrolled in school, have attained a high school degree, or be serving in the military. For those who have not attained a high school degree, a GED can also be sufficient for DACA qualification. Protection expires and must be renewed every two years and only those under the age of 31 are eligible, provided they initially entered the country while under the age of 16. Dreamers, by definition, are contributing members of society who entered the U.S. by no illegal action of their own and who are serving their communities in myriad ways.

To change the rules on them now would be cruel payback after years of being productive members of society. Moreover, it wouldn't accomplish anything except a misguided and xenophobic attempt by President Trump to look like he's doing something to crack down on immigration.

Conservatives often frame illegal immigration as a threat to security and stability. This is an understandable, pragmatic view shared by a myriad of intelligent people. However, it is

unintelligent to repeal DACA with the motivation to strengthen border security and reduce crime, as the program only stays deportation for those without criminal records.

Given that Trump has promised more comprehensive immigration reform, fixating on DACA would be a waste of time. To make matters worse, a hasty DACA repeal would have major financial implications. The Cato Institute estimates the federal government would lose \$60 billion in tax revenue over the next decade if the roughly 750,000 Dreamers were deported. This loss in revenue doesn't even factor in the estimated loss in economic growth if these hardworking people were forcibly removed from our labor force.

For limited-government conservatives that have just spent the last eight years criticizing Obama's heavy-handed preference for executive orders, it might not make sense to favor a sweeping executive action like the DACA repeal would be. The conservative instinct should not be to turn to the executive, but to favor separation of powers and effective checks and balances on unilateral decision-making. DACA repeal would not only be bad policy, but also bad form.

To pursue meaningful immigration reform, the Trump administration and congressional conservatives need to be more thoughtful and pragmatic, assessing which programs detract from our country's safety and which immigration programs actually make our country better.

DACA allows Dreamers to go to college, pay taxes while working their dream jobs, and apply for a driver's license — things that seem so mundane to those of us that were born here, yet matter so much to the many that weren't. There's something very American about relentless drive and work ethic. Even though these Dreamers might not be full citizens, they certainly understand a thing or two about the American identity. Given the rigorous standards already in place, there's no reason to repeal a program as successful as DACA to deport thousands of residents who represent American values so well.