



Atkins: Undo of ‘Dreamer’ program could prove a nightmare

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If President Trump reverses the Obama administration policy granting protection to students and workers who were brought to the United States as children, it may play well to his base of supporters seeking anti-immigration policies. But it will also deal a multibillion-dollar blow to the economy that will be hard to square with the president’s campaign promises of prosperity for all.

By definition, the more than 800,000 so-called “Dreamers” covered under Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals — DACA — bear no resemblance to the image of undocumented immigrants Trump portrayed on the campaign trail — “rapists” who are “bringing drugs” and “bringing crime” and threatening Americans’ safety and security.

To qualify, DACA program participants must be enrolled in school, be a graduate, or an honorably discharged veteran of the U.S. military. They must have a felony-free record and pose no threat to national security.

Since the penalty for being kicked out of the program is the prospect of deportation, Dreamers tend to be high-performing students and workers, according to a Cato Institute analysis released yesterday. In a nutshell: They are economic drivers, not detriments.

That Cato report, an update of an earlier study by the organization, projects that the repeal of DACA — and the subsequent loss of such highly motivated and qualified talent from the American workforce — would result in a whopping \$215 billion in lost GDP. The federal government would lose \$60 billion in revenue.

Some states would be hit particularly hard — including Texas, which is already taking an incredible economic hit from the devastation of Hurricane Harvey. Reversing DACA would cost the Lone Star State nearly \$25 billion, according to the analysis.

Even if the reversal of DACA is phased in — Trump is reportedly considering allowing those currently protected by DACA to finish the term of their work permits — the ultimate impact will be “dragged out,” not mitigated.

It will also make an already unpopular move — 64 percent of Americans support DACA, according to a new NBC News/SurveyMonkey poll — even less palatable.

Ali Noorani, executive director of the National Immigration Forum, warned, “The economic toll that this action is going to take on the American public is something I’m not sure this administration has come to terms with.”