

Employers speak out about their need for Dreamers

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July 20, 2021

At a time of labor shortages that started before Covid, Texas and eight other states ignored business leaders and their own economic self-interest to strike at DACA. A federal judge in Texas ruled recently that the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, which prevents deportation of people brought here illegally as children, is unconstitutional.

There are no winners in this decision – not in politics and certainly not in the economy – but it might force Congress to act. The judge all but demanded it.

Eighty percent of Americans support the Dreamers, who are American in everything but the paperwork.

Republican strategist Karl Rove told the Austin American Statesman a few months ago that Republican opposition to protecting Dreamers “puts us on the wrong side of an issue that we ought to be for.” DACA recipients “do not deserve to be given the back of our hand and told to get lost and return to a country that in many cases they have no memory of whatsoever. If we can’t solve the things that are most obvious and have the clearest and broadest mandate to resolve, then how are we going to resolve these other thorny problems in our immigration system?”

The Texas attorney general and his fellow travelers argued that it was costing their states to provide education, police protection and healthcare to undocumented immigrants. But the Corporate Roundtable for the New American Workforce has said Dreamers contribute \$433 billion to the nation’s gross domestic product, have a \$60 billion fiscal impact, and pay \$12.3 billion in taxes.

Wal-Mart, a co-chair of the group, said in an open letter it values the Dreamers and “supports legislative solutions that avoid disrupting these families, our communities and the economy.” Other signers were Best Buy, Cummins, Lyft, Marriott, Target, Tyson Foods, and Uber.

The cost to employers of replacing them, according to the conservative Cato Institute, would be \$6.3 billion in recruiting, hiring, and training.

In New Mexico, we don’t know what the Dreamers are costing us, but we do know what the loss would be if we lost them. According to a University of Southern California study in 2019, 7,400 Dreamers in the 1st Congressional District paid \$38 million in federal taxes and \$21.8 million in state taxes and wield \$174 million in spending power. In CD2 6,500 Dreamers paid \$36 million

in federal and \$20 million in state taxes and had \$165 million in spending power. In CD 3 were 3,900 Dreamers paying \$23 million federal and \$12 million in state taxes and spending \$96 million.

Clearly, the politicians behind this lawsuit haven't given a thought to the labor pool, but employers have. Businesses large and small have been vocal for some time about the need to preserve DACA.

For the venerable Business Roundtable, the Dreamers “are employees, friends, and colleagues—part of the teams that allow our companies to compete on a global basis and create jobs for Americans,” the group said. “Deporting Dreamers would be a terrible mistake with devastating consequences not only for these young people, but also for America’s economic health.”

In February, Texas business leaders started the Texas Opportunity Coalition to push for federal legislation to preserve DACA. Supporters include The Hunt Companies (a major Republican donor), the Texas Business Leadership Council, the Texas Association of Business, and multiple chambers of commerce.

The coalition has the support of U. S. Sen. John Cornyn, R-Texas, who has said: “These young people are vital parts of our communities. They’ve grown up with our kids, attended the same churches, shopped at the same grocery stores and in some cases defended our freedoms in the United States military.”

Dreamers might provide the first shove in breaking the immigration logjam.