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DACA: End to program will weaken, not strengthen, U.S. economy and security

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The timing of the announcement of Donald Trump's decision to end the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program could not have been worse.

Attorney General Jeff Sessions delivered a message Trump himself could not (or would not) in an uncompromising fashion as Houston began to clean up from Hurricane Harvey and Irma was preparing to pound the Caribbean and Florida.

Apparently, the chaos of the weather wasn't enough.

Sessions' announcement immediately – and potentially forever – disrupts approximately 750,000 young lives, and those of their families, for no particular reason other than to please President Trump's voting base.

There is no reason this should be a priority now in the middle of fires, hurricanes, a health care crisis, serious cyber- and physical- security issues (North Korea), rising inequality and crumbling infrastructure. Not to mention the need to stabilize Social Security, pass a new federal budget and figure out how to pay for disaster relief in Texas and perhaps Florida.

Immigration reform is also on the list, but this is not the way, nor the time, to go about it.

The move is inhumane, unnecessary and comes at a time when the U.S. Department of Labor projects shortages in skilled labor for jobs in agriculture, construction and health care. Colorado is already feeling the pinch, and the conservative Cato Institute says that repealing DACA will harm the economy to the tune of \$280 billion in lost economic growth over the next decade. It will also cost taxpayers \$60 billion to deport all these young people to places they have never known.

Colorado has an estimated 17,000 people enrolled in DACA (about 150 to 200 live across our five-county region), who entrusted their future ability to work and go to school to the government. To end DACA, affording Congress only six months to act (and quite possibly fail), is a betrayal and the surest way to create enemies, not just of the DACA enrollees, but of anyone in or outside our borders who empathizes with the plight of these young people who are here through no fault of their own. It is a sure way to weaken, not strengthen our economy and national security.

President Obama established DACA because Congress has failed for decades to come up with immigration reform legislation. Members of Congress opposed to the program say it is unconstitutional, and these kids are breaking the law. These members are also lawmakers who

have the power to put these youth – who are vetted, not criminals; who are in school or holding steady jobs as often the highest wage earner in their families – on a path to citizenship. That would allow them to fulfill their dreams and continue to contribute their skills and ingenuity to the only country most have ever known.

This week, Sens. Bennet and Gardner teamed up to support the bipartisan bill known as the DREAM Act. This bill would protect young immigrants who illegally came to the U.S. before the age of 18 from deportation, and set them on a path to legal residency and citizenship.

Congressman Scott Tipton would be wise to join his fellow Congressmen in support of the act.

We implore Colorado's full delegation to act with haste and compassion and stand up for these young people.

Immigrants dreaming of American citizenship built our nation. We should not fail this group of young hopefuls now.