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Sunday's Editorial: Most Americans support the Dreamers

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The Trump administration has created the impression that it's trying to stop or slow down immigration on a variety of fronts.

We're not just talking about illegal immigration. We're talking about longtime programs with creditable reputations.

For instance, the status of children of illegal immigrants — the Dreamers — still is up in the air.

There are about 800,000 people brought to the U.S. as children and are threatened with deportation.

Consider these facts from the Florida Hispanic Chamber of Commerce:

- 86 percent of Americans support Dreamers.
- Dreamers pay over \$100 million a year in state and local taxes.
- A total of 6 percent of Dreamers have started businesses, about 12 percent have bought a home and over half have bought a car.
- If there is no immigration reform legislation, it will mean a \$1.5 billion loss in gross domestic product for Florida.
- If immigration reform is passed, then almost \$23 billion will be added annually to gross domestic product.

The libertarian Cato Institute reports that immigration produces a net benefit for Americans and helps prop up wages.

The DREAM ACT co-sponsored by Florida's Rep. Ros-Lehtinen would do this:

- Provide a pathway to citizenship to Dreamers provided they pass higher education, military enlistment or job requirements, pass background checks and establish good moral character.
- Strengthen border security.
- Increase the number of immigration court judges and appeals attorneys.

Meanwhile, a group titled FWD.us has partnered with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and the Cato Institute to support legal immigration.

Cutting back on immigration would mean 4.6 million fewer jobs by 2040. With an aging population over the developed world, immigration is a key way to maintain a productive labor force.

More facts

Immigrants accounted for \$2 trillion of the \$18 trillion U.S. economy, according to a report from the U.S. Academy of Sciences.

Immigrants will account for all net growth in the working age population by 2035, reported the Pew Research Center.

A rule to provide a clear immigration pathway for foreign entrepreneurs to build startups in the U.S. has been delayed.

Holders of Temporary Protected Status work largely in construction, restaurant and landscaping businesses. About 9,000 of them work for the U.S. government. About one-third are homeowners. Removing all of them would result in a cut of \$6.9 billion into Social Security and Medicare contributions.

The H1B program allows highly skilled immigrants into the economy, many of them trained at U.S. universities. These visas are always snapped up quickly. The Trump administration, however, has installed roadblocks in an already laborious process.

Over 1 million foreign students are studying at U.S. colleges. They contributed \$36.9 billion and supported more than 450,000 jobs in the 2016-17 year.

These students pay the full price of tuition, effectively subsidizing the tuition of native-born students.

There ought to be a way to allow the best and brightest to remain in the country rather than educate them and kick them out.

In fact, one-quarter of physicians in the U.S. are international medical graduates.

Working class

Everyone isn't willing or able to attend college. But jobs paying a living wage need to be available for people in the trades and others.

A paper by the Brookings think tank lists a few ideas for raising earnings of non-college graduates.

People still need skills. These can be provided through more supports for community colleges and apprenticeship programs. This could mean low-interest loans. The best programs include partnerships by employers.

Regions that are depressed, such as coal country, could receive additional federal aid. Training former coal workers as solar energy installers, for instance, could even extend their life spans.

Barriers to work need to be eliminated with programs like “ban the box” that create disincentives to hire ex-convicts. Programs like Operation New Hope with its record of success need to be scaled up. Its secret is working with employers up front.

Beefing up the Earned Income Tax Credit rewards work, especially for childless adults.

America is built on a strong work ethic. We need to find ways to encourage people to work in an era of low wages, part-time jobs and elimination of benefits.