



Congress needs to act on DACA

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President Trump recently ordered an end to the Obama-era program known as the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), which protects a certain portion of young undocumented immigrants from deportation. The president also urged Congress to pass a replacement bill with a six-month extension before he begins phasing out its protections.

What happens after that six-month period is largely unknown — which is causing much anxiety among DACA recipients and their families and advocates.

Our organization, which helps advance public policy that helps ensure liberty, opportunity and prosperity for all American working families, was out front and center at the time that President Obama announced his decision to implement DACA. We repeatedly warned about the substantial constitutional overreach in the creation of DACA.

This was a view repeatedly espoused by Obama himself, who correctly stressed that he simply did not have the power to act unilaterally about two dozen times in various speeches and media appearances before deciding that political considerations ahead of his 2012 reelection battle outweighed the limits of presidential power outlined in the Constitution.

At a minimum, we noted, what can be done by executive order can be undone by executive order.

In that sense, we continue to acknowledge that the power to legislate should only be done by the legislative branch. But Trump's recent decision is not without its own set of complications. And Attorney General [Jeff Sessions](#)'s announcement of the plan to end DACA, while highlighting some of the same points made above, was also sprinkled with lies and propaganda about immigrants.

If it was or is Trump's goal to find a way for DACA recipients to not be forcibly deported, then clearly Sessions is not on the same page, as Sessions's remarks were clearly meant to dissuade lawmakers from any such objective.

The effect of President Trump's decision to pressure Congress without committing to work with lawmakers on immigration legislation or without outlining specifics of what he is willing to sign into law casts doubt on his willingness to follow through on his commitment to solve the issue of status for DACA recipients. Some have been holding out hope after several instances where he acknowledged their lack of culpability, calling them "terrific kids" and promising a solution "that will make people happy and proud."

The ambiguity is causing some headaches on Capitol Hill. The announced six-month window for Congress to act is a time frame that does not give much time for legislative action when Congress already has a full plate of huge issues to deal with. Sen. Mario Rubio (R-Fla.), for example, noted in his statement that “it is important that the White House clearly outline what kind of legislation the president is willing to sign. We have no time to waste on ideas that do not have the votes to pass or that the president won’t sign.”

It must be continuously stressed that Dreamers in general, some of whom are recipients of DACA, were brought to the country as children and did not violate any immigration law of their own volition. Numerous studies show that they are productive members of our society who contribute much to the American economy.

Trump campaigned on making our economy stronger. Deporting Dreamers would negatively affect our economy. There are over 800,000 Dreamers nationwide, and, according to a study by the Cato Institute, the average DACA recipient is 22 years old, over 90 percent of them are employed, and they earn about \$17 an hour. The majority are still students, and 17 percent are pursuing a college degree. Other studies also show that immigrants have proved to be twice as likely to become entrepreneurs as native-born U.S. citizens, and thus responsible for creating jobs.

The deportation of DACA participants would cost the American economy billions of dollars while doing little to address the true reasons for an immigration system that is in dire need of modernization. Trump would have been wise to work with Congress to replace DACA with an initiative that focuses on removing bad actors from the country and allows intelligent, industrious and law-abiding immigrants to continue to contribute to the success of our great nation.

These are all points that members of Congress should keep in mind, especially with the clock now ticking on DACA recipients. But above all stands an extremely important and fundamental point that is a root cause of why the reactions to the president’s DACA decision have been so visceral and have come from varying corners of the political spectrum: Punishing kids for the actions of their parents is both bad policy and bad politics.