



## Support for ‘Dreamers’ growing

Mark Delich

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As an Arizona Republican who has dedicated my career to advancing sensible immigration policy, I’ll be the first to tell you that it is the responsibility of Congress, not the executive branch, to make immigration law. When President Trump announced his decision to end the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program on Sept. 5, he called on Congress to do just that.

Members of Congress have until March before 1,400 DACA recipients a day begin losing their work authorizations and become subject to deportation to countries they may not even remember. That is why 86 percent of Americans want members of Congress to act with urgency and find the political will to provide certainty for these young people who only know America as their home.

While I may not always agree with President Trump, when it comes to “Dreamers” we share the same view that, in his words, they are “good, educated young people who have jobs and are serving in the military ... and who have been in the country for many years.” They deserve an opportunity to earn citizenship.

The average Dreamer arrived in the United States at six years old and today is just 26. They speak English and they are culturally as American as any native-born citizen. They are enrolled in school, they’re members of our churches and they’re working professionals. They serve in our military and work in our communities as teachers, nurses and engineers. These are the exact type of young immigrants we should be welcoming to our country.

Take the story of my colleague, Maria, a current DACA recipient who arrived in the U.S. at age five from Peru. She was educated here, paid her way through college and graduated with a 3.8 GPA. DACA recipient Alonso Guillen, a rescue volunteer during Hurricane Harvey, died while trying to save his fellow Texans stranded in the high waters.

Dreamers like Maria and Alonso followed the rules they were given under DACA to give back to the nation that has given them so much.

So what does this path forward look like? Luckily, legislation to protect Dreamers exists and has broad bipartisan support in Congress. Both the DREAM Act and the RAC Act are bipartisan bills built on a merit-based system that would require all applicants to serve in the military, pursue an advanced degree or find employment to earn legal status. The process to gain citizenship is lengthy and strict. Dreamers who apply cannot have any serious criminal convictions and must be able to pass an extensive background check, including fingerprinting. Those who apply will not be able to earn citizenship for over a decade. Finally, to earn citizenship, Dreamers would be required to demonstrate the ability to read, write and speak English and show a knowledge and understanding of U.S. civics. Passing the DREAM Act or RAC Act is the moral and just thing to do.

New research by the libertarian Cato Institute has also underlined the dramatic consequences to the U.S. economy, and the cost to the federal government, if DACA is repealed without a legislative solution in place. Cato indicated the economic cost would be more than \$200 billion and the cost to government \$60 billion.

This is all happening while the Department of Homeland Security is reporting that the southwest border “is more difficult to illegally cross today than ever before.” As a result of congressional investment in border security over the past two decades border apprehensions are at a historic low — down an astonishing 93 percent today from the year 2000.

There is no question that Congress must also pass comprehensive immigration reform. But in the short-term, inaction for Dreamers is unacceptable. Congress must act urgently to address this emergency by passing bipartisan legislation that will allow our economy to continue to thrive and give Dreamers the chance to earn citizenship in the only country they know as home.