



# THE MONITOR

## DACA deadline arrives

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The deadline for recipients to re-apply to a federal program that shielded them from deportations has arrived.

Despite talk in mid-September from the Department of Homeland Security's deputy assistant attorney general that the deadline might be pushed back, it remains intact. The additional time would have afforded recipients of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals more time to submit application renewals, alleviating some concern for them.

Now a month since U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions announced the program's rescission, many DACA recipients are left with a sense of uncertainty, and now can only hope that politicians work out a deal with President Donald Trump's administration to replace the program that shielded nearly 800,000 undocumented people.

According to an Oct. 3 news release from the DHS Office of the Press Secretary, "of the approximately 154,200 individuals whose DACA is set to expire between Sept. 5 and March 5, 2018, just over 106,000 have either renewal requests currently pending, or have already had U.S. Citizenship Immigration Services adjudicate the renewal requests."

At the forefront of the argument in favor of replacing the program is the economic damage that could result from yanking nearly 1 million people, and more than 100,000 state-wide, from the nation and state's workforce.

Salvador Contreras, an associate professor of economics and finance at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, said it might be difficult to gauge the regional impact because the number of DACA recipients tends to be higher in bigger cities — like San Antonio, Austin, Houston and Dallas — where the impact will be more apparent.

In January, the Cato Institute released a report that showed the economic and fiscal impact of repealing DACA, the 2012 Obama-era executive order that shielded residents who entered the country illegally as children from deportation.

The report cited a June 2015 national survey conducted by Tom K. Wong, of the National Immigration Law Center and Center for American Progress, in which he spoke with more than 450 DACA recipients.

Contreras, who cited Wong's survey, said the math of removing that many workers out of the state doesn't bode well for the state economically.

"Texas is the second largest home to DACA recipients, the first being California, thus taking the second biggest GDP hit," Contreras said. "These guys are in the labor force — 91 percent of them are employed. It's just simple math. If you take out 91 percent of (more than) 100,000

people with an average income of \$30,000 to \$40,000 and some multiplier effect to that, it's a sizable amount."

According to the Cato Institute report, a DACA study conducted by Nolan G. Pope found that the program "moved between 50,000 and 75,000 immigrants into employment." The study, which was published in the Journal of Public Economics in 2016, specified that their employment was "either outside the formal labor force or unemployment, and increased the average income of immigrants in the bottom of the income distribution."

Contreras believes the phase-out of the program will lead people who enjoyed the benefits of higher-paying jobs — access to public universities and education from the 2012 executive order — go back to living in "the shadows," to avoid deportation.

"They went from the shadow economy (to where) they were able to get proper jobs and demand proper compensation for their skill sets," the professor said. "What happens to all these people who were out of the shadows, and now (may be) forced to go to a country they do not know? They're more than likely to go back to the shadows."

U.S. Reps. Henry Cuellar, D-Laredo, and Filemon Vela, D-Brownsville, underscored the damage it would do to the state and the country if a large number of people were to be yanked from the workforce, stating that more than \$450 billion in GDP nationally could be lost in the next 10 years.

"By the president's own description, DACA recipients are 'good, educated and accomplished young people,'" Vela said in a prepared statement. "Pushing them back into the shadows will have a significant impact on our country's economy to the tune of \$460.3 billion in GDP loss over a decade and a cut in contributions to Medicare and Social Security of \$24.6 billion over a decade.

"But beyond the economic reasoning, we also have a moral obligation to allow these children who came to the United States through no fault of their own and who only know the United States as their home to remain. Their lives have been lived in the United States and shaped by the United States. They are our own."

Cuellar shared similar sentiments; calling the program's phase out a humanitarian failure, as well as an economic one.

"In Texas, over 120,640 young people, who have known no other country, have benefited from the DACA program," he said. "Of those, over 104,959 are working and contributing over \$6 billion annually to the GDP. I will continue to fight to keep families together and to keep our American values strong while opposing the building of walls. We need a bipartisan comprehensive immigration approach to solve the challenges at our border and ensure that Dreamers have a place in the nation that they love. I call on my colleagues in Congress to act now and to stand up to protect families and the rights of everyone in our country."