

The Salt Lake Tribune

Holly Richardson: Kicking out DREAMers hurts us all

Holly Richardson

September 6, 2017

In the world of public relations, it's common knowledge that if you want a story to get overlooked or buried, either release it on a Friday evening or when another news story is really heating up. President Trump often does both.

He announced Joe Arpaio's pardon the day Hurricane Harvey was making landfill and this past weekend – a holiday weekend and one in which the news cycle was still full of ark-building levels of rain, he rescinded the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, or DACA.

There are almost 900,000 people currently using DACA, with an estimated 1.2 million eligible. DACA is for those kids brought to the United States without coming through the proper channels and grants a two-year deferral on immigration action after registering with ICE. For immigration hardliners, a six-month implementation doesn't go far enough. For everyone else, legislation needs to happen quickly that will allow these contributing members of our society to stay, instead of punishing them for their parents' actions.

In Utah, a state where many say they believe that “man will be punished for their own sins,” there sure are an awful lot of people who believe that these children should be not only responsible, but punished for their parents' actions.

According to the New American Economy, more than 13,600 Utahns are currently DACA-eligible. Despite the rhetoric claiming undocumented youth are a drain on the Utah economy, 91.4 percent of the DACA-eligible population who are at least 16 years old are employed, earning more than \$176 million in total income annually and contributing more than \$22 million in total taxes annually, \$13 million of which goes to state and local revenue.

Nationally, those numbers are in the billions, with DACA-eligible youth earning almost \$19.9 billion in total income annually. They contribute more than \$1.4 billion to federal taxes and more than \$1.6 billion to state and local taxes. They also hold significant economic clout after taxes, with almost \$16.8 billion in spending power.

More than the economic impact, however, is the lived human experience of these kids and young adults. DACA-eligible youth serve in our military, are volunteering in the Hurricane Harvey aftermath, have gone to college, started business and families of their own and for many, have never known anywhere but the United States as home. They are real people. They are our neighbors.

Luckily, people are paying attention.

From university presidents to religious organizations to conservative think tanks like the CATO institute to political activism groups like Mormon Women for Ethical Government to countless individuals, people are demanding that Congress take action to protect these “DREAMers.”

Having complained long and hard about former President Obama’s use of executive orders instead of going through the legislative process, the Republican-controlled Congress now has had their bluff called. Will they actually pass meaningful legislation? I certainly hope so but these days, Congress looks a lot like BYU’s football team last week – unable to move the ball down the field. Now more than ever, it’s time they come together and get something done.