



## Discharge petition can help nation's Dreamers

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We stand to lose 685,000 workers and \$460 billion over the next decade.

This is what the United States economy would lose by ending the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, which currently offers temporary work permits and protection for nearly 700,000 individuals who were brought to this country through no fault of their own, as long as they meet specific work, school and background check requirements. Texas alone would lose an estimated \$6.3 billion in GDP annually.

You've likely heard these — and many other — statistics before and wondered why Congress hasn't acted. After all, over 70 percent of Americans support a permanent legislative fix that allows these young people to stay and continue contributing to our history, culture and economy.

But, the truth is, we have acted but have been repeatedly shut down. In January, I introduced the bipartisan Uniting and Securing America (USA) Act in the House which pairs a DACA fix with smart border security measures so we can finally achieve operational control of our southern border by 2020. Unlike other proposals, the USA Act incorporates the Smart Wall concept as its border component, which scraps a contiguous, physical wall in favor of modern technology like sensors, radar, LIDAR, fiber optics, drones and cameras - all of which are available commercially — to detect and track cross-border incursions until they can be safely interdicted.

The bill has the support of 60 total co-sponsors, half Republican and half Democrat, and would likely achieve a majority in the House. But just like all alternative bills that address DACA, the USA Act has not been brought to the floor for a vote. Meanwhile, at least 113,000 families in Texas wait in limbo for DACA certainty and drug trafficking continues to generate an estimated \$64 billion in annual sales in the United States due to unsecure borders.

After several attempts to solve these problems — it's time for a new strategy.

That's why I have been working with my colleagues to bypass legislative obstacles with a parliamentary procedure called a discharge petition which would force a debate on the House floor in front of the American people. If the discharge petition receives 218 signatures, it will trigger a vote on HR 774, which if adopted, will allow a series of floor votes on four DACA, immigration and border security bills under the "Queen of the Hill" rule. According to the rule,

whichever proposal receives the most votes and meets the mandatory majority-vote threshold would be adopted.

Queen of the Hill would include Rep. Bob Goodlatte's Securing America's Future Act, Rep. Lucille Roybal-Allard's Dream Act of 2017, my bipartisan USA Act and an immigration bill of Speaker Paul Ryan's choosing. Each bill offers a DACA fix with some or no varying degrees of border security and immigration components attached.

Ninety-seven percent of DACA recipients are in school or working. They are your classmates and your co-workers. They are starting new businesses at a rate almost double than the American public. Not only are these folks paying taxes, but they are purchasing first homes, cars and services from American businesses. They are creating jobs and contributing to our economy.

The discharge petition has been endorsed nationally by a variety of organizations, including the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, Hispanic Leadership Fund, the Cato Institute, FWD.us, Coalition for the American Dream, the National Immigration Forum, New American Economy, Year Up and the National School Boards Association. Locally, it is supported by the Greater San Antonio Chamber of Commerce, the San Antonio Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, the South San Antonio Chamber of Commerce, San Antonio Independent School District and more organizations each day.

But even with widespread support, a successful discharge petition can only be brought to the floor on specific legislative days, dramatically limiting the available days left to solve this issue during this calendar year.

The clock is ticking and we must force House Leadership to take up these important pieces of legislation.