



## **Local legislators split on decision to dismantle DACA**

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September 5, 2017

Reaction by local legislators was split Tuesday as President Donald Trump decided to halt new applications for the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, commonly known as the Dreamers Act.

DACA protects hundreds of thousands of young immigrants who illegally entered the country as children.

Attorney General Jeff Sessions declared the Obama administration's program "an unconstitutional exercise of authority" that must be revoked.

"I'm here today to announce that the program known as DACA that was effectuated under the Obama administration is being rescinded," Sessions said.

The administration is giving Congress six months to come up with a legislative fix — "should it choose to," Sessions said — before the government stops renewing permits for people already covered by the program.

U.S. Sen. Bob Casey, D-Scranton, disagreed with the move, calling it "an insult to America and our values."

"They have been law-abiding residents who have learned English, paid taxes and secured jobs that allow them to support themselves and their families," Casey said of those shielded by DACA. "Our government promised them that they would be protected if they came forward and now President Trump is breaking that promise."

Casey said the action is "profoundly unjust, immoral and without regard for basic fairness."

Citing the CATO Institute, Casey said deporting "dreamers" would cost more than \$60 billion and would result in a \$280 billion reduction in economic growth over the next decade. He said the Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy estimates the 1.3 million young people enrolled in or eligible for DACA pay \$2 billion each year in state and local taxes.

"It's clear that Republicans in Washington and the Trump Administration are not serious about fixing the problem of illegal immigration, securing our border and reforming our immigration system," Casey said. "Instead, their only plan is to deport 11 million individuals, including 790,000 dreamers."

Casey said Congress should move immediately to pass the bipartisan Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act, which would allow the “dreamers” to become permanent residents if they meet the very stringent qualifications outlined in the bill.

On the other side of the Senate aisle, Sen. Pat Toomey, R-Lehigh Valley, said children who were brought to the United States illegally, at a young age, are not at fault and deserve support. However, Toomey said President Barack Obama did not have the legal authority to create the DACA program and to ignore enforcement of existing immigration law.

“President Trump’s decision to end this program, while giving Congress six months to come up with a legislative solution, is the right step,” Toomey said. “Congress needs to pass legislation to accommodate these young people while simultaneously addressing the other challenges within our deeply broken immigration system, including stopping dangerous sanctuary cities, strengthening border security, and cracking down on companies that hire people who are here illegally.”

U.S. Rep. Lou Barletta, R-Hazleton, commended Trump for placing a deadline on ending DACA and recognizing that decisions regarding immigration in this country rest with Congress, not the executive branch.

“When President Obama illegally granted amnesty to hundreds of thousands of illegal immigrants, he improperly created more competition for American workers and legal immigrants who are already finding it difficult to get work,” Barletta said. “American citizens, or people who have come to the United States legally, should not have to suffer from others butting in line after they have broken the law to enter this country.”

Barletta, who recently announced he will run for the GOP nomination for Senate and the chance to unseat Casey next year, said he has always been clear on this issue.

“We cannot have a conversation about those who are in our country illegally before we stop the flow of illegal immigration,” Barletta said. “We are dealing with this problem today because Congress has failed to enforce our laws and secure our borders.”

### **AG considering action**

U.S. Rep. Matt Cartwright, D-Moosic, said he joins Republican House Speaker Paul Ryan in supporting deferred action for childhood arrivals.

“Eliminating DACA would cost around \$450 billion from our national economy over 10 years,” Cartwright said. “That means we will lose many thousands of American jobs for our economy. Not the jobs DACA recipients are filling. I’m talking about many thousands of jobs that American citizens are filling now. We will lose those jobs if we lose DACA.”

Pennsylvania Attorney General Josh Shapiro said he is carefully reviewing Trump’s DACA directive and he has been in communication with fellow Attorneys General and state leaders.

“I won’t hesitate to do my job and take legal action if the federal government breaks the law as it ends its commitment to these young people,” Shapiro said. “There are 5,889 dreamers in Pennsylvania who contribute to our economy, our military and quality of life. They came here through no fault of their own as young children in the care of their parents. They relied on a

commitment from the U.S. government and should be able to depend on that promise — not live in fear.”