

# Candidly Conservative: DACA: The least of our problems

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Unless you live under a rock, you've probably heard a lot about DACA recently. DACA — the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program — was implemented in 2012. Under DACA, individuals who were brought here illegally by their parents are eligible to receive a renewable two-year period of deferred deportation and can obtain work permits. Recipients of DACA have been dubbed “Dreamers,” and there are about 750,000 of them.

In 2014, two years after DACA was originally signed into law, President Obama signed an executive order which expanded the program to include an additional 330,000 illegal immigrants. According to midterm election polls, most Americans were not entirely on board for the bill expansion, which was demonstrated in sweeping congressional gains for the Republican party. Since President Obama took such an overreach, he received sharp criticism by those on both sides of the political spectrum, including the writers of Saturday Night Live.

Who is chosen to be a Dreamer? According to the CATO Institute, “the average DACA recipient is 22 years old, has a job, and earns approximately \$17.00 an hour.” None of the recipients have a criminal background, and each of them have lived in the United States for at least five years. DACA applicants are required to pay the processing fees for background checks and the annual renewal fee, keeping the United States' costs at a minimum.

As a conservative, I see the problems associated with DACA. Many say that the program leads to amnesty, or that the United States just doesn't have the money to keep the program. But technically, we don't have money for anything, as we're \$1 trillion in debt to China, but that's another topic.

Another critique of DACA is that many feel we should not be giving illegal immigrants “special treatment.” However, under current law, DACA recipients are ineligible for means-tested welfare benefits provided by the federal government. States are given the opportunity to extend welfare benefits, but few have chosen to do so.

If we were to deport the 750,000 Dreamers back to countries they have never called home, our economy would be wrecked. A repeal of DACA would cost the United States government a hefty amount of lost tax revenue. The CATO Institute conducted a [survey](#) predicting the results of ending the DACA program, and the numbers are astonishing.

Cutting out the DACA program immediately and deporting its participants would cost approximately \$283 billion over the span of 10 years. If the program was to be eliminated and DACA participants remained in the United States illegally, opting to make wages 10-20 percent less, the economic impact would be in the range of \$60-\$100 billion. Although the damage is much less, it would still be very damaging.

DACA recipients continue to make positive contributions to the economy by making higher wages, buying cars and creating new businesses. This growth benefits all Americans.

As Americans, what are we to do? Deporting DACA recipients does not even begin to solve the problem of illegal immigration. Eliminating DACA is not ideal, morally or fiscally. As a nation, we must address the real problems we face instead of choosing to sidestep the difficulties.

Today, we have North Korea threatening our country, territories and allies with nuclear missiles; Hurricane Harvey has devastated the state of Texas, and Hurricane Irma is projected to damage the Florida panhandle; ISIS continues to recruit and radicalize Americans.

DACA and the Dreamers who call this country home are the least of our country's worries.