

DACA reforms will leave thousands at risk of deportation

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Last Thursday, the White House put forth its proposal for an immigration bill. The policy framework put forth by President Donald Trump's administration reveals the president's key policy points and what he's willing to concede to the Democrats in order for this to pass.

It is good news for the thousands of young people who would be unprotected if DACA were to end. A path to legal status would bring them out of the shadows and give them the right to fully participate in their communities.

The framework includes a big concession: providing legal status to an estimated amount of 1.8 million Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals recipients and other DACA-eligible illegal immigrants, including individuals who qualified for DACA but did not apply.

Framework

This would mean a 12-year path to citizenship for around 800,000 beneficiaries who were brought into the country as children and have grown up as Americans. In exchange for a path to citizenship, the framework lays out \$25 billion in funding for the wall on the border of United States and Mexico. Also included are changes to "chain migration," limiting family sponsorship to spouses and minor children only and relocating diversity visa slots to visas given on the basis of merit or skills.

Although this framework has been proclaimed by many as a compromise that advocates for both Republican and Democratic policies, it has already had its fair share of criticism. For many immigration hard-liners the White House's framework is too close to amnesty for DACA recipients.

Concerns

On the other side of the aisle, many liberals are concerned with the drastic limit on legal immigration with the end of family sponsorship and diversity lottery. These concerns from both

sides threaten the chances of the proposal ever passing Congress. In fact, these differences in political ideology will probably end the negotiations and leave Congress without a solid bill to pass.

Even with the White House helping and setting out their demands, the road to legal authorization for DACA recipients will be very rocky. With the White House and the Republican party not unified on immigration policy, negotiations are put in peril.

Congress is working under a tight deadline as the first batch of DACA work permits begin to expire on March 5, the date set by the Trump administration. If this framework is to become a law, it will face an uphill battle.

This is not the first or last time Congress will try to overhaul immigration policy. Over the years, we have learned how easily any sort of negotiations can fall apart and kill the bill. For instance, in 2010, the Dream Act failed by five votes. The immigration debate is a looming conundrum for many lawmakers and is becoming a headache for the Trump administration.

Trump wishes he could just appropriate funding for his wall and the Department of Homeland Security. Instead he has to compromise and negotiate. He has forced the immigration debate to the forefront by giving a “deadline” to end DACA, giving the Democrats the moral high ground.

He was certainly betting that the Democrats would give in easily and pass his wall demands in order to save DACA recipients. What he did not account for was the drastically different views of several lawmakers of his own party. The rest of the Republican lawmakers are not uniformly rallying behind the president’s proposal.

Why Senate Republicans aren’t voting for this

Senate Republicans are not interested in voting for a bill that might not pass the House. In turn, House Republicans are not convinced that it is in their own self-interest to vote for a bill that offers protections to unauthorized immigrants, making themselves vulnerable to primary challenges. Republicans will not risk their jobs for a base that will not help them keep their jobs in the first place.

It is important to Republicans that they keep their majority. Therefore, they will not risk helping a base that, for the most part, doesn’t even align with the Republican party. They would be helping the Democrats increase their constituency and hurting themselves in the process with their base in the upcoming 2018 midterm elections.

The Republicans will need some very heavy persuasion to change their minds and rally behind a pro-immigrant proposal.

This is not the only bridge the White House’s plan will need to cross.

Historical precedence

According to a study by the Cato Institute, the White House’s framework would decrease legal immigration by 44 percent. It will be the largest legal immigration cut since the 1920s. This will

be a big issue for the Democratic party, who will have to choose between current dreamers at the expense of future legal immigrants.

Democrats have been put in an impossible position: take the deal to help DACA recipients and concede too much to the right's policy framework, or let down a growing part of their base.

The Democratic party will have a lot of soul searching to do. It will need to frame DACA and Dreamers as their most important constituency, in expense of other legal immigrants, and lose any pretense of being a moderate, "tough but fair" voice on immigration.

It would frame their quest to help DACA recipients as more than a humanitarian mission. It would strictly make them the pro-immigrant party. They would no longer be able to woo moderate Republican voters with moderate immigration ideas. This change in stance has been going on for some time, but this would eliminate any pretext of even pretending.

Too much at stake

The Democratic party has shifted from moderate immigration views to advocating for the rights of immigrants. Their focus has always been on unauthorized immigrants in the United States like Dreamers. Despite their inability to vote, they have been recognized as an active constituency of the Democratic party.

Trump's DACA deal would be a high price to pay for the Democratic party. Trump's proposal is holding DACA recipients hostage in order to cut legal immigration drastically. This would change the way we let in immigrants into the country.

Not only would the Democrats become the party of the immigrant, but they would be betraying the future immigrant in exchange for the immigrants already inside the United States. It would involve a conscious moral problem for the party. Do they stand for immigration as an ideal? Or are they only interested in helping DACA kids because they know they would be a helpful base to help them win future elections?

There is too much at stake for future immigrants. The changes to legal immigration should worry at least a part of the Democratic party. It would change how we view legal immigration and to who we should extend the privilege of coming into the country.

It would be less based on family reunification and instead based on the economic needs of the country due to changes in "chain migration" and the end of diversity visas. It is something that the White House isn't interested in framing as a big part of their immigration proposal. Instead they focus on the border wall, without arguing why cutting legal immigration would be beneficial for the country.

This framework comes after the revelation of Trump's controversial "shithole countries" comment, adding that the U.S. should get more people from countries like Norway. The Trump administration has not been shy in stripping minorities like Salvadorians and Haitians of their TPS status . Likewise, his suggested proposal curbs legal immigration of minorities by ending the diversity visa hints at the underlying racism of the Trump White House proposal.

The response to the White House's immigration proposal by immigrant rights groups might ease the Democrats' mind and guide their decision without a guilty conscience. United We Dream, an immigrant advocacy group, was clearly against the proposal, calling it "a white supremacist ransom note."

It will be easier for Democrats to make a decision if the group who will benefit has denounced the proposal. This isn't the first time Congress has tried to overhaul immigration before. We can expect the debate to rage on. If that happens, there might be no easy solution to the DACA problem at least in the near future, leaving thousands of young people without protection from deportation.