

# The Washington Post

## **Trump just declared DACA ‘dead.’ To the rest of Washington, he was stating the obvious.**

Amber Phillips

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A deal to protect undocumented immigrants brought to the country as children was dead well before President Trump tweeted as much Sunday and Monday.

A battle in federal courts continues over the legality of Trump's decision to end the program in March. Any momentum in Congress to protect “dreamers” waned months ago, in part because Congress isn't up against a deadline anymore and because lawmakers have already turned their attention to getting reelected this November.

Trump hasn't proved to be a reliable negotiating partner on immigration, which advocates on both sides say has severely hampered any progress on a deal. In a recent budget battle, he would only offer a path to citizenship for hundreds of thousands of dreamers in exchange for something most in Congress have no intention of giving him: drastic changes to the legal immigration system. He and the dreamers ended up getting nothing.

So when Trump tweeted Sunday that “DACA is dead,” it didn't come as much of a surprise to Washington. For lots of reasons, the program protecting dreamers from deportation was already, indeed, dead for the foreseeable future.

“It's deader than dead,” said immigration expert Alex Nowrasteh with the libertarian Cato Institute. “This tweet is just an example of him saying the obvious in this situation.”

Trump uniquely has the ability to revive a deal. And we can't rule out that he was just venting in Sunday's tweet. He has changed his mind so many times on whether to protect dreamers that it's almost impossible to take anything he says about the subject at face value. He could decide that dreamers need protections in time to avoid any political blowback for Republicans before the November election.

Polls do present evidence that Republicans could face political repercussions if dreamers get deported en masse. Keeping dreamers in the United States is extraordinarily popular among Americans. Brought to the country as children, fluent in English and arguably as American as someone with citizenship, dreamers are a group for which it is easy to have sympathy.

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## Percentage of Americans who think dreamers should ...



58 percent say dreamers should stay and become citizens, while 23 percent say they should stay, but not as citizens

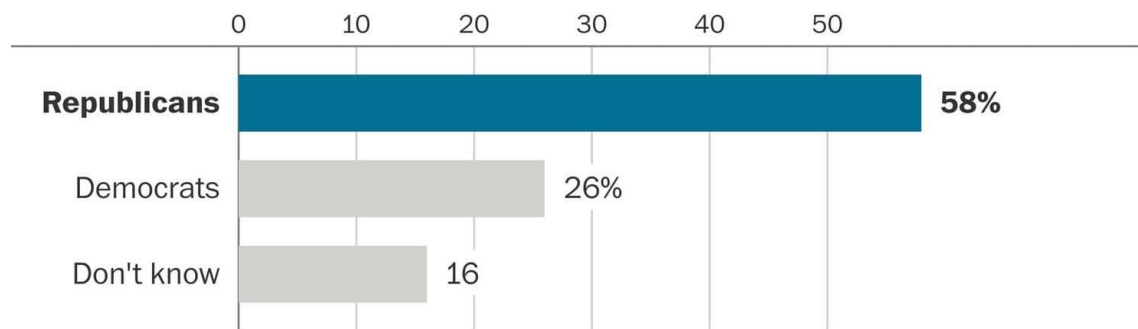
Source: December 2017 Marist poll

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A Quinnipiac poll from February found that a majority of Americans would blame Republicans if dreamers got deported.

## Which party would Americans hold responsible if Congress can't protect 'dreamers' in time?



Source: February 2018 Quinnipiac University poll

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But instead of figuring out what he can do to strike a deal in Congress, Trump seems focused on accepting the deal's demise and trying to spin the blame onto Democrats. (Democrats, for what it's worth, are pretty confident voters will blame the president). And as Democrats grow more confident they will take back control of the House of Representatives this November, they have little incentive to give Trump a break on this.

Right now, the fate of DACA may not be in the hands of politicians, anyway. There are two cases weaving through the courts in New York and California about whether Trump illegally ended the program. For now, the Trump administration has to continue to accept renewals, although it doesn't have to accept new applications. It's unclear how those cases will ultimately affect dreamers or whether there will be other court cases that prolong the debate.

Immigration experts say it's more likely than not that dreamers just fade into the shadows, back into the nebulous “will they be deported, or will they not?” phase from which they emerged when President Barack Obama first extended them protection from deportations in 2012.

“It will continue to be the slow burn that it already is, where dreamers who come into contact with law enforcement will be deported,” Nowrasteh said. “They just fade back into the shadows.”