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Moving past the wall: Trump plan takes on legal immigration

WASHINGTON — The most contentious piece of President Donald Trump’s new proposal to protect the so-called Dreamers has nothing to do with them. It’s the plan’s potential impact on legal immigration that sparked fierce Democratic opposition Friday and appeared to sink chances for a bipartisan deal in Congress.

The proposal outlined Thursday by the White House would end much family-based immigration and the visa lottery program, moves that some experts estimate could cut legal immigration into the United States nearly in half.

The plan would protect some 700,000 young immigrants from deportation and provide a pathway to citizenship, an offer the White House described as a concession to Democrats. But it also represented a victory for immigration hawks and a seismic shift for immigration policy in the U.S., which has long centered on the question of how to stop illegal border crossings, not how to curb legal immigration.

“It’s an enormous change in rhetoric and position,” said Alex Nowrasteh of the conservative Cato Institute. “Forever, people have talked about illegal immigration and now this anti-legal immigration position is standard for much of the Republican Party.”

The Senate’s top Democrat, Chuck Schumer of New York, dismissed the plan Friday as a “wish list” for hard-liners. He acknowledged the bipartisan common ground on protections for the immigrants now shielded by the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, or DACA. But he accused Trump of using them as “a tool to tear apart our legal immigration system and adopt the wish list that anti-immigration hardliners have advocated for years.”

Flu widespread across US for third straight week

NEW YORK — Sick with the flu? You’ve got a lot of company.

The flu blanketed the U.S. again last week for the third straight week. Only Hawaii has been spared.

Last week, 1 in 15 doctor visits were for symptoms of the flu. That’s the highest level since the swine flu pandemic in 2009. The government doesn’t track every flu case but comes up with estimates; one measure is how many people seek medical care for fever, cough, aches and other flu symptoms.

Flu is widespread in every state except Hawaii, with 39 states reporting high traffic to doctors last week, up from 32.

At this rate, by the end of the season somewhere around 34 million Americans will have gotten sick from the flu, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said Friday.

Honduras' new top cop helped cartel move coke

MEXICO CITY — When Jose David Aguilar Moran took over as Honduras' new national police chief last week, he promised to continue reforming a law enforcement agency stained by corruption and complicity with drug cartels.

But a confidential Honduran government security report obtained by the Associated Press says Aguilar himself helped a cartel leader pull off the delivery of nearly a ton of cocaine in 2013.

The clandestine haul of more than 1,700 pounds of cocaine, street value of \$20 million, was packed inside a tanker truck that, the report says, was being escorted by corrupt police officers to the home of Wilter Blanco, a drug trafficker recently convicted in Florida and now serving a 20-year sentence.

From wire sources

Aguilar, who at the time was serving as chief of intelligence for Honduras' National Police, intervened after a police official safeguarding the drugs was busted by a lower-ranked officer who had seized the tanker, the report says. The handcuffed officer called Aguilar, who ordered that the officer and the tanker be set free, says the report which was prepared by the Honduran Security Ministry's Inspector General.

Trump: US "open for business," and economists mostly agree

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump highlighted his tax cuts and deregulatory efforts with a salesman's pitch to an elite economic forum in Switzerland on Friday: The United States, he said, is now a far more inviting place for foreign companies to spend, invest and build.

"We are competitive once again," Trump told an assemblage of international business executives, financiers and academics.

While discounting some of the president's more grandiose claims, many economists agree that he has generally made the United States more welcoming for businesses.

Last month, Trump signed a tax package that cut the corporate income tax to 21 percent from 35 percent. The Republican Congress has also passed laws to overturn at least 15 rules put in place by the Obama administration, and the administration has put dozens of other regulations on hold. Those steps should encourage more overseas businesses to move to the United States or expand existing operations, economists said.

"It was a vastly exaggerated claim, but there is some truth to it," said Adam Posen, president of the Peterson Institute for International Economics.