



Rep. Paul Gosar misstates statistics in claiming DACA recipients are more prone to crime

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U.S. Rep. Paul Gosar, one of the staunchest opponents in Congress to legalizing undocumented dreamers, posted statistics on his official Facebook page this month claiming "Daca-aged illegals" commit a disproportionate number of kidnappings, manslaughter and other crimes.

Gosar's Facebook page was bombarded with comments questioning the accuracy of his posts and the validity of the report.

The author of the report that Gosar cited in the posts, John R. Lott Jr., stood by his findings but said Gosar misstated some statistics. Lott, president of the Crime Prevention Research Center, is a controversial economist best known for producing reports frequently cited by conservative supporters of gun rights.

Citing Lott's report, Gosar, a Republican, erroneously posted that "DACA-aged illegals account for nearly 30 percent of all kidnappings in Arizona."

Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, DACA, is the Obama-era program offering temporary deportation protections and work permits to "dreamers," the undocumented immigrants who came to the U.S. as children. President Donald Trump has announced DACA will end March 5, but Congress is debating what will follow its expiration.

In separate posts, Gosar also wrote, citing Lott's report, that "DACA-aged illegals" accounted for "15 percent of all Arizona manslaughters," "14 percent of all sexual assaults each year" and "nearly 14 percent of all first-degree murders in Arizona."

All of Gosar's posts were made under the headline, "Getting to know DACA-aged illegals," even though most undocumented immigrants with criminal records are not eligible for the DACA program.

In an email, Lott initially told *The Arizona Republic*, "All those numbers are correct." Lott added a link to his Jan. 17, 2018 report, "[Undocumented immigrants, U.S. Citizens, and Convicted Criminals in Arizona.](#)"

But after further questioning, Lott acknowledged Gosar had wrongly stated in his Facebook post that "DACA-aged illegal immigrants account for 30 percent of all kidnappings in Arizona." In fact, the report says undocumented immigrants account for 30 percent of kidnappings committed by people between the ages of 15 and 35.

"Sorry, you are correct," Lott wrote. "I read it too quickly. They make up 30% of all kidnappings by those between the ages of 15 and 35, not 30% of all kidnappings."

Lott also acknowledged Gosar made the same mistake in several other posts.

"U.S. Rep. Paul Gosar of Arizona confused two different sets of numbers in what he posted on his official Facebook page," Lott wrote. "What he should have posted is that DACA-aged illegals account for 15 percent of all manslaughter convictions by similarly aged Arizonans between ages 15 through 35, nearly 30 percent of all such kidnapping convictions, 14 percent of such sexual assaults, and 14 percent of such first-degree murders.

"While DACA-aged illegals account for about 2 percent of Arizona's population, they make up nearly 8 percent of the Arizona prison population," Lott added, which Gosar summarized accurately.

Reporter Dianna M. Nández interviews Belen Sisa, a DACA recipient and ASU student, about what the cost of DACA is. [Hannah Gaber/azcentral.com](http://HannahGaber.com)

Report counters other research

Lott's report was based on data from 1985 to 2017. It concluded that undocumented immigrants in Arizona are 142 percent more likely to be convicted of a crime than other Arizonans, are 163 percent more likely to be convicted of first-degree murder. What's more, undocumented immigrant criminals are 45.4 percent more likely than other criminals to have been gang members, the report said.

Alex Nowrasteh, an immigration policy analyst at the Cato Institute, a libertarian think tank, said Gosar's posts and the report they are based on, are questionable because previous research has shown undocumented immigrants are less likely to commit crimes than native-born people.

"This report is contrary to virtually all of the research on illegal immigration that has been published in the United States," Nowrasteh said. "Overwhelmingly that research finds that illegal immigrants are either less crime-prone than natives or have about the same rate of criminality."

Nowrasteh also said he repeatedly asked Lott to provide the data he used in his report so that he could try and replicate Lott's findings on his own, but Lott refused.

"Extraordinary findings like Mr. Lott's require him to share all of his research, his data and for him to explain clearly and concisely how he calculated this. The fact that he has not done so violates the norms of social science research," Nowrasteh said.

The Republic's politics team discusses the most recent developments in the race for City Hall, Congressman Paul Gosar's view of the Charlottesville white supremacists rally and the upset after the release of school letter grades on Oct. 11, 2017.

Gosar still claims he got it right

Gosar's chief of staff, Tom Van Flein, disputed that Gosar's Facebook posts misstated the report's findings.

"The data was taken from the report exactly, it was not wrongly used at all," Van Flein said.

After being read Lott's email, Van Flein said he intended to contact Lott and any errors would be "clarified."

However, Van Flein defended the intention of Gosar's posts, which he said the congressman made to counter "the notion that the DACA recipients are all Rhodes scholars" in light of immigration legislation pending in Congress aimed at allowing roughly 700,000 current DACA recipients to remain permanently.

The Trump administration on Thursday unveiled a proposal to give 1.8 million dreamers a 12-year path to citizenship, in exchange for sharp limits in legal immigration and setting aside \$25 billion for a border wall, border security enhancements, and hiring more immigration enforcement officers.

Gosar, however, opposes immigration legislation that gives "amnesty" to undocumented immigrants, including DACA recipients, who Gosar believes have not been properly vetted, Van Flein said.

"Congressman Gosar favors the rule of law," Van Flein said. "He wants everyone to apply for visas lawfully, to get in line the way everyone else has," Van Flein said. "He sees the DACA recipients and their families as cheating, as coming to the country illegally ahead of other immigrants who have filled out visa applications, paid their dues, and have gone through a vetting process and are trying to come here legally."

Reporter Dianna M. Nández interviews Belen Sisa, a DACA recipient and ASU student, about what the DACA is and the difference between DACA and the Dream Act. Hannah Gaber/azcentral.com

'Arguments to dehumanize us'

Karina Ruiz, president of the Arizona Dream Act Coalition, a nonprofit that advocates for dreamers, said Gosar's posts are an attempt to "dehumanize" dreamers and to counter pressure building in Congress to pass immigration legislation that would legalize their status.

"The reality is that immigrant youth have put enough pressure into Congress to make our lives a priority," she said. "People from the other side are going to come up with arguments to dehumanize us in a way."

Meanwhile, Gosar's Facebook page has been inundated with comments blasting the congressman and claiming he's trying to smear undocumented immigrants who came to the U.S. as children.

"My BULL (expletive) just went off big time..." wrote one Facebook user, Cindy Weideman Tate.

Another Facebook user, Circe Fortuna Shaw, wrote, "My goodness Mr. Gosar, check your facts. You really need to stop trying to confuse your constituents with half-truths. DACA can't be DACA if they have committed a serious crime. You are deliberately muddying the issue."