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## Trump's deportations of Dreamers could usher in new economic, legal woes

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President Donald Trump has made conflicting comments about the status of undocumented immigrants who entered the country as children. And if he does decide to dissolve the Obama-era program that provided some protections for them, there could be economic and legal complications across the country.

The Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, known as DACA, offers some undocumented immigrants the opportunity to receive a renewable two-year deferment on deportation and temporary work authorization. Despite his criticism of DACA during his presidential campaign, Trump told The Associated Press in April that Dreamers, as recipients are known, should “rest easy.” His administration, however, has deported dozens of previously protected Dreamers.

Now, the fate of the more than 760,000 people who have permission to stay in the U.S. under DACA remains uncertain.

“The administration is going after a lot of different people. People with DACA, people who had DACA, people with no criminal convictions, people who have been here for a very long time,” said Kate Voigt, the associate director of liaison at the American Immigration Lawyers Association. “It’s really part of this administration’s efforts to ramp up its deportation force.”

If Trump were to dismantle the program, Dreamers could be forced into limited, lower-wage jobs. Turning promising white-collar workers into possible blue-collar workers could create challenges for the other Americans competing for those jobs, said Ike Brannon, a visiting fellow at the Cato Institute who has researched the consequences of repealing DACA.

“It’s kind of ironic,” Brannon said. “He [Trump] might actually be creating the scenario that he’s trying to stop.”

The potential end of the program could cost the federal government more money and reduce Dreamers’ contributions to the economy.

A January report from the Cato Institute, co-authored by Brannon, estimated that the deportation of current Dreamers could cost the government \$60 billion and cause a \$280 billion decline in

economic growth within a decade. The report also said the repeal or rollback of the program could result in a loss in tax revenue.

An Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy report from April found that continuing the program and ensuring that those who are eligible are enrolled could increase estimated state and local revenue by \$425 million. The same report predicted that revoking the provisional status and work permission of DACA recipients could reduce estimated state and local revenues by approximately \$800 million.

For the states with the most Dreamers, the end of the program could have significant economic consequences, studies show. California leads the nation in the number of initial DACA recipients with 216,060, followed by 120,642 in Texas and 41,256 in Illinois, according to a Pew study.

A January study from Center for American Progress, a progressive think tank, estimated that if workers covered under DACA were to lose their work authorization and jobs, the U.S. GDP could be reduced by \$433.4 billion in the following decade.

Doubts surrounding the future of DACA already have started affecting the economy, with people not enrolling in the program because of the process' expense and recipients not renewing their status, said Sen. Cory Booker (D-N.J.).

“These are people who don't know other countries, many of them, who have no memory of their home nation,” Booker said. “It's just a stunning undermining of their ability to contribute to the country they know and love.”

A CAP survey from October of last year found that DACA recipients work in many different sectors of the economy, with 21 percent of respondents reporting that they work in educational and health services, followed by 11 percent in the nonprofit sector and 9 percent in wholesale and retail.

“Their ability to now work legally has meant that they've been able to be more economically productive and create more economic growth for the areas that they live in,” said Philip E. Wolgin, the managing director of immigration policy at CAP and one of the co-authors of the survey.

The survey showed that the purchasing power of Dreamers rose as respondents were able to buy new and used cars, allowing states to collect sales taxes, and their first homes.

But for those who oppose DACA, the program creates more problems for American workers rather than resolving divisions in the economy.

Ira Mehlman, media director at the Federation for American Immigration Reform, which pushes for a decrease in immigration, said that Dreamers create competition within the labor market that “is an unnecessary, additional impediment for other people who are seeking those same opportunities.”

“The economy adjusted to the presence of large numbers of people who are working here illegally,” Mehlman said. “It can also adjust to their absence.”

Along with the possible economic effects of terminating DACA, there could be court challenges if the administration continues its policy of deportations.

In an emailed statement, Steve Blando, a spokesperson for U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, said, “USCIS is still accepting/processing DACA requests under existing policy.”

The federal government has deported at least 43 Dreamers since Trump took office, leading to court challenges. A lawsuit from Juan Manuel Montes, a 23-year-old deported Dreamer, raises questions about the protection DACA recipients have under the administration.

“There’s no legal grounds for a DACA beneficiary to say he shouldn’t be deported,” said Mark Krikorian, the executive director of the Center for Immigration Studies, which supports cutting down on immigration. “It doesn’t mean the ACLU won’t file bogus lawsuits.”

More legal challenges are possible if the administration disregards the work authorizations under the program before they expire, said Daniel Costa, director of immigration law and policy research at the Economic Policy Institute.

Costa added that despite the potential consequences, the government could remain “in an OK position legally speaking.”

Dreamers, and those who represent them, say they will continue to fight.

Greisa Martinez, a Dreamer and advocacy director of United We Dream, an immigrant youth-led organization, remains skeptical about the intentions of Republicans, including Speaker Paul Ryan and Trump, toward the program.

“To be clear with Representative Ryan, with Trump, and other Republican leadership: They can’t say that they love the Dreamers and that we should rest easy at the same time that they’re allowing ICE agents and CBP to deport us,” Martinez said.

“We’re not going to be thrown back into the shadows,” Martinez said. “We have come too far and we’re not going to turn around.”