

DACA

In 2012, Obama signed an executive order entitled Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals ("DACA") which allows people brought to the United States illegally as children the temporary right to live, study, and work in the United States. Obama signed this order after Congress failed to pass a bill that would protect these undocumented persons.

Who has been protected?

Undocumented persons who were brought to the United States as children—a group often described as Dreamers. This group is generally seen as the most sympathetic group of undocumented immigrants.

There are presently almost 800,000 young adults ranging from 16 to 36 that are protected under DACA.

Mexico is by far the biggest country of origin (78.5%). Then El Salvador, Guatemala, and the Honduras. Also a few from South Korea, Philippines.

There are Dreamers in every state, but especially California, Texas, New York, Illinois, and Florida. New Mexico currently has around 7,000 Dreamers.

ELIGIBILITY

1. Applicants had to arrive in US before age 16 and have lived here continuously since June 15, 2007.
2. Applicants could not be older than 30 when DACA was first enacted on June 15, 2012.
3. Applicants have graduated from high school or earned a GED, or have been honorably discharged from the military.
4. Applicants are currently in high school, college, or military.
5. Applicants must provide evidence of above, proof of education, and confirmation of identities.
6. Applicants must pass background checks and fingerprint checks.
7. The fee for the original application and all two-year renewals is \$495 each.

WHAT DACA DOES FOR THESE UNDOCUMENTED PERSONS

1. DACA defers deportation and allows these individuals to legally reside in the United States for two year. They could then apply for renewals.
2. Criticism: DACA doesn't give them a path to citizenship or even legal permanent resident (green card status—permit allowing a foreign national to live and work permanently in the U.S. Can't vote).
3. It allowed these persons to come out of the shadows. They could get a driver's license, credit card, bank account. DACA made it possible for undocumented

persons to work as paramedics, teachers, firefighters, engineers, etc., which would have otherwise been off limits.

4. They could enroll in college.
5. They could receive a two-year renewable work permit.
6. They paid income tax.
7. Some additional interesting statistics:
 1. 95% are currently working or in school.
 2. 54% bought their first car. 12% bought their first home.
 3. 63% moved to jobs with better pay.
 4. 49% gained greater access to employment that matched their education and training.
 5. 48% got jobs with better working conditions.

DACA STORIES FROM NEW MEXICO

In 2015, Senator Heinrich told some stories about New Mexico DACA recipients to the Senate floor.

The first story was about twin sisters named Jazmin and Yazmin, who immigrated to the United States with their mother from Mexico when they were three years old.

The twins graduated from Del Norte High School. Jazmin went on to UNM and graduated with a Bachelors in Business Administration, Magna Cum Laude. She is currently at UNM School of Medicine and wants to be a primary care physician so she can help families gain access to quality healthcare.

Yazmin also went to UNM and graduated with a Bachelors in Biology and Spanish, with a minor in Chemistry, also Magna Cum Laude. Yazmin has recently graduated from UNM School of Law and wants to work to ensure that every person has equal access to the law.

The other story is about Cesar. Cesar immigrated to Las Cruces from Juarez when he was in 5th grade and he is currently 26. He went to New Mexico State and graduated with a Bachelors in Biology, Microbiology, and Spanish, with a minor in Chemistry and Biochemistry.

When Cesar graduated from College in 2011, he couldn't get work in his field because of his immigration status so he had to work in landscaping.

When President Obama made his DACA announcement, Cesar immediately applied and was accepted. He then earned his Masters in Biology with a minor in Molecular Biology from New Mexico State University. He is currently a medical and Ph.D. student at Loyola University in Chicago.

Cesar said, "DACA changed my life. Within two to three years, I went from landscaping to becoming a medical student."

WHAT DID TRUMP DO?

Trump signed an executive order in September 2017 which stated that the government would not process any new DACA applications after September 5, 2017 and the government would accept renewals only until October 5, 2017. Work permits issued under DACA will be honored only until they expire.

Trump left it to Congress to act and gave them six months. If Congress doesn't act by March 6, 2018, as many as 983 undocumented young adults could lose protected status every day, nearly 30,000 a month, on average, for two years.

CURRENT STATUS

1. Trump says that he wants Congress to act to protect these undocumented young adults BUT he issued a list of priorities for any deal. This list could make any deal impossible. The list includes things like building the wall, expanding border militarization, detentions, and deportations. There is speculation as to how hard of a stance will be taken regarding the list.
2. Some lawmakers have proposed a bipartisan measure that could protect Dreamers from deportation. This offers temporary protection from deportation but does not provide a path to citizenship. Protected status ends three years after law is passed. No renewals. There probably is not enough Republican support for this to pass.
3. Possible scenario that might be the most likely: DACA gets repealed but ICE is instructed that going after DREAMERS is not a priority unless they have a criminal record. There are about 1,000 DREAMERS in this category.
4. Some states are currently in the process of suing the Trump administration for ending DACA. Washington is leading the way along with 13 other states, including New Mexico. California is filing their own suit.
5. Before DACA, these young adults were living in the shadows. Because of DACA, they trusted the government and came forward giving the government all of their information. The Department of Homeland Security states that it will keep all of their information in their database and will share it with ICE as necessary.

HOW WILL THE DECISION TO END DACA AFFECT THE UNITED STATES

The Cato Institute estimates the cost of ending DACA for businesses at \$6.3 billion in spending associated with employee turnover, recruiting, training, and hiring 720,000 new employees. Ending DACA would cost New Mexico more than \$384,600,000 in annual GDP losses. Four hundred business leaders spoke out against ending DACA. Their message was, "Dreamers are vital to the future of our companies and our economy and are part of who we will continue to have a competitive global advantage."

WHAT CAN WE DO?

An April 2017 survey of registered voters found that 78% of American voters support giving Dreamers the opportunity to stay in the United States permanently. This includes 73% of Trump voters!

Four possible ways to help:

1. Educate yourself and others.
2. Get involved locally by volunteering, organizing, donating, and attending protests and rallies. Organizations to contact include New Mexico Faith Coalition for Immigrant Justice, New Mexico Immigrant Law Center, El Centro, Encuentro, Catholic Charities
3. Stay up-to-date by following organizations and activists on social media. Some of the best to follow are United We Dream, Define American, National Immigration Law Center, FWD.us, Women's March, ACLU.
4. Contact our Senators to urge passage of a clean Dream Act. We don't want increased militarization, funding for a wall, or increase in enforcement operations included in the bill.

Senator Udall: 346-6791

Senator Heinrich: 346-6601