

What is the DREAM Act?

On July 20, 2017, Senator Lindsey Graham (R-SC) and Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL) introduced the bipartisan DREAM Act of 2017 (S.1615), a bill to provide legal status and a path to citizenship for certain long-term residents who entered the U.S. as children. This is a bipartisan effort to create a way for nearly 800,000 undocumented children and adults, who were brought to the U.S. at no fault of their own, to gain permanent legal status and to pursue their educational and employment goals without threat of deportation.

Why is the DREAM Act Necessary?

The DREAM Act of 2017 would address the plight of undocumented youth living in the U.S., many of whom were brought to the U.S. at a young age, have been educated in American schools, and consider the U.S. their only home. Undocumented youth who graduate from high school face significant barriers to everything typically associated with youth of that age, including driving, working, and access to higher education. Reducing these barriers will allow them to increase their contributions to their communities.

On September 5th of 2017 the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) Program will be up for renewal. This program currently serves thousands of young immigrant children who are enrolled in school and have only known the U.S. as their home. Without the action of Congress on this legislation, DACA recipients and many undocumented students and graduates who contribute to our country and economy will face an uncertain future.

Who Can Apply?

The DREAM Act states that the Secretary of Homeland Security shall grant lawful permanent resident status on a conditional basis to a person who:

- Entered the U.S. before their 18th birthday and has been continuously present in the U.S. for 4 years;
- Is not inadmissible for these reasons: criminal, security and terrorism, smuggling, student visa abuse, ineligibility for citizenship, polygamy, international child abduction, or unlawful voting;
- has not participated in persecution;
- has not been convicted of federal or state offense punishable by a term of imprisonment of more than 1 year (not related to immigration status)
- has been admitted to an institution of higher education, or has graduated from high school or obtained a GED or a high school equivalency diploma, or is enrolled in secondary school or in an education program assisting students in obtaining a high school diploma or in passing a GED or equivalent exam.

What are the terms of this Conditional Permanent Resident Status?

The conditional permanent resident status is valid for 8 years. The status may be terminated by the Secretary if it is determined that the person no longer meets the inadmissibility, criminal conviction, and persecution criteria. If the conditional status is terminated the person's status will return to the his/her previous status.

What happens after Conditional Requirements have been met?

After 8 years the Secretary shall remove the conditional basis for permanent status if the person:

- satisfies the inadmissibility, criminal conviction, and persecution criteria;
- has continued residence in the U.S.
- has earned a degree from an institution of higher education, in good standing for at least two years in higher education program, completed at least two years of military service, or has been employed for at least three years with employment authorization for at least 75 percent of that time.
- Has demonstrated the ability to read, write, and speak English;
- has an understanding of U.S. history and government affairs

How Will This Help?

With children of immigrants being the fastest growing segment of the U.S. child population, it is in our best interest as a country to implement policies that will ensure that all our children have the ability to achieve their full potential. The DREAM Act would help the United States maximize our greatest asset—our children—by providing immigrant students who have grown up here with the opportunity to achieve the American dream and give back to the country they already call home.
