



The DREAM Act: Building the Momentum for Immigration Reform

The DREAM Act is an important component of immigration reform and we expect it to be part of the broad reforms that Congress will debate this year. It shows that the political will needed to achieve comprehensive immigration reform is growing and that leadership across the board is committed to getting immigration reform done.

The “Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act” (DREAM Act) is bipartisan legislation that has been introduced by Senators Richard Durbin (D-IL) (S. 952) and Representatives Howard Berman (D-CA) Lucille Roybal-Allard (D-CA) and Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL) (H.R. 1842). The measure has thirty-four Senate and twelve House co-sponsors. This bill, which has consistently received bipartisan support since its first introduction in 2001, benefits talented immigrant children who have long-term residency in the U.S and who complete at least 2 years of college or military service.

Under the DREAM Act, individuals would qualify for *conditional* permanent resident status if they:

- came to the U.S. prior to the age of 15 (and are no older than the age of 32 in the House version and 35 in the Senate version-[Senate version only](#));
- have lived in the U.S. for at least five years before the passage of the bill;
- graduate from a U.S. high school; and
- can demonstrate “good moral character,” a common immigration law term that means that the individual is not a security risk, has not committed any crimes, and is not inadmissible or removable on other grounds.

These qualifying children would then have six years of conditional permanent resident status to complete at least two years of college or military service. Only after meeting these requirements, would they be granted *full* permanent residence (a green card).

The DREAM Act is about common sense solutions to fixing our broken immigration system. Placing higher education and citizenship out of reach for hard-working immigrant students does not force them to leave our country—the only country they call home. Instead, it forces them to remain in the underground workforce while America is deprived of the increased economic productivity and the tax revenues provided by a better-educated workforce.

It’s time to restore the American ideal of equal opportunity for these young people who want to be productive contributors to our society. The DREAM Act is an important component in the fight to reform our immigration system in a manner that strengthens our economic competitiveness, upholds our values as a nation of immigrants, and restores the rule of law.

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