

The DREAM Act

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The Development, Relief, and Education of Alien Minors Act, also known as the DREAM Act, helps undocumented students who cannot further their education or receive benefits most Americans enjoy. These students have graduated from high school but cannot go to college, join the military, pursue their careers or even drive legally because they do not have the necessary documents. The goal of this fact sheet is to raise awareness about undocumented students and the barriers they have that prevents them from accessing America's opportunities.

Why does being an undocumented immigrant matter?

Being an undocumented immigrant is not an easy life, especially for young people who have spent their whole lives in the United States. There are many limits to being an undocumented immigrant because they don't have a valid Social Security Number, which is basically the way America identifies people. Different states have different requirements, but some of the things you need a Social Security Number for include: getting married, getting a driver's license, receiving health insurance or benefits, getting a job, and even attending college.

How many undocumented immigrants are there in America today?

There are about 11.2 million undocumented immigrants living in the United States. It's hard to estimate these numbers because people keep their statuses secret. Still, based on estimates, the number of unauthorized immigrants living in the U.S. has tripled since 1990, when there were only 3.5 million. The number of "legal permanent residents" (LPR) in the U.S. as of 2010 is 12.6 million people. Most LPRs need to live here for 5 years before becoming eligible for citizenship, so about 8 million LPRs are eligible today.

Of these 11.2 million people, who would qualify for the DREAM Act?

In order to qualify for the DREAM Act a person must have entered the United States before age 16, have been continuously present in the United States for at least five years before the law's enactment, have obtained a high school diploma or its equivalent, and be less than 35 years old. Estimates range from 800,000 to 1.03 million to 2.1 million undocumented eligible students.

What will the DREAM Act do for these students?

The bill would allow current, past, and future high school students a path to citizenship through college or the armed services. Students who continue to college or join the military will be eligible to adjust their status to "conditional lawful permanent resident." This LPR status would be valid for six years during which time they would need to either complete two years in a program for a bachelor's degree or other higher degree or serve two year in the armed services to have their conditional status removed and granted full LPR status. The DREAM Act would not make students eligible for federal education grants but would give them access to federal work study and student loans.

What will the DREAM Act do for America?

According to the White House, the DREAM Act will benefit the economy. The non-partisan Congressional Budget Office did a study and determined that the DREAM Act will cut the deficit by \$1.4 billion and increase government revenues by \$2.3 billion over the next ten years. A recent UCLA study determined that students eligible for the DREAM Act could add between \$1.4 and \$3.6 *trillion* in taxable income to our economy over the course of their careers, and since a college graduate is likely to earn 60% more than a high school graduate, this number would be a lot lower for students unable to attend college.

So what's happening now with the DREAM Act?

The DREAM Act brings up a lot of controversy. The most recent version of the DREAM Act was introduced to Congress on December 7th 2010 and passed in the House of Representatives but was killed in the Senate by a 55-41 vote. 60 votes were needed for it to pass.

How much would the DREAM Act cost?

It's hard to put a number on the cost of the DREAM Act because we don't know exactly how many people will be eligible or will apply for legal permanent status. The Congressional Budget Office estimated that the bill would increase deficits by \$5 billion over ten years starting in 2021 which does not account for the increased revenues in taxable incomes mentioned above. Fox News and the Center for Immigration Studies, the DREAM Act will cost \$6.2 billion a year.

How much does it cost to continue what we're doing?

According to the National Immigration Forum, the government spends about \$23,000 to deport a single immigrant. So, if we use the number from the Center for Immigration Studies, of the 1.03 million undocumented students who may be eligible for the DREAM Act, it would cost over \$23 billion to deport them all. ICE estimates that deporting all undocumented immigrants would cost \$94 billion. In addition, the border patrol's budget has been increasing by \$300 million a year since 2005, and the government is spending an additional \$300 million a year to keep 1,200 National Guard troops on the border.

For More Information:

- On numbers of undocumented immigrants: <http://www.pewhispanic.org/2011/02/01/authorized-immigrant-population-national-and-state-trends-2010/>
- On LPRs: http://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/statistics/publications/ois_lpr_pe_2010.pdf
- On the DREAM Act: <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/pubs/DREAM-Insight-July2010.pdf>
- On benefits of the DREAM Act for America: http://americasvoiceonline.org/research/reasons_to_support_the_dream_act/ and <http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/DREAM-Act-WhiteHouse-FactSheet.pdf> and <http://www.immigrationpolicy.org/just-facts/dream-act#economic>
- On the costs of the DREAM Act: <http://thinkprogress.org/security/2010/12/03/176405/cbo-dream-act/> and <http://www.cis.org/dream-act-costs>
- On the costs of detaining and deporting immigrants: <http://www.immigrationforum.org/images/uploads/2011/ImmigrationEnforcementOverview.pdf> and http://articles.businessinsider.com/2012-01-30/news/31004595_1_deportation-kumar-kibble-rob-paral
- On the status of the DREAM Act: <http://content.usatoday.com/communities/onpolitics/post/2010/12/senate-dream-act-/1#.T5rFEjJWqIQ>