
The American Dream Is For Everyone

Author : Cyrus Mehta

By [Cyrus D. Mehta](#) & [Sophia Genovese](#)

The Trump Administration [has announced an immigration proposal](#) that pits the lives of Dreamers against other immigrant populations. Dreamers are young people who came to the United States prior to the age of 16, and fell out of status through no fault of their own. They were granted authorization to remain in the United States under an Obama-era program known as [Consideration of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals \(DACA\)](#). The Trump White House has stated that they are willing to provide a pathway to citizenship for Dreamers in exchange for fewer family-based immigration categories, the elimination of the Diversity Visa Program, and \$25 million in funding for the infamous wall. President Trump had previously cancelled DACA on September 5, 2017.

[DACA recipients](#) have [strongly opposed](#) the [White House's proposal](#), [arguing that they refuse to benefit from a bill that will disrupt the lives of millions](#). A pathway to citizenship for Dreamers is desperately needed, but even Dreamers realize that they're not the only ones whose lives remain in the balance. [H-4 spouses](#) are set to lose their ability to work, and H-4 dependents could age out if their parent continues to be stuck in the employment-based backlogs. [TPS recipients are being forced to return](#) to countries where poverty and violence remain the norm. [Foreign nationals](#) of banned countries anxiously await the ability to come to the US and join their families or begin working in their fields. Foreign students nearing graduation fear the H-1B lottery cap and USCIS's increased scrutiny of [level one wages](#) and [IT-related positions](#). [Skilled workers from India and China](#) stuck in the backlogs recently feared being sent back home while they await their green cards. Although this proposal has been pulled back, the fact that it was made heightens the fragility of an immigration system that keeps skilled workers waiting for decades on end because of the unavailability of immigrant visas. Undocumented populations are increasingly fearful of the lack of ICE enforcement priorities and the increased number of non-criminal immigrants being arrested on [buses](#), [at schools](#), or [courthouses](#). Although Dreamers stand to gain from the White House proposal, [they do not, in good conscience, accept the trade-offs](#). At the same time, it would be perfectly understandable if a DACA recipient wanted to accept the Trump Administration's deal so long as it would benefit her. It is natural for each group of immigrants to want to get their own benefit without regards to whether the enactment of legislation would improve the immigration system as a whole. However tempting this might be, it would clearly be in the interest of all immigrants, including Dreamers, if they united and steadfastly demand an immigration deal that fixes the immigration system to help everyone, which in turn benefits the national interest. Otherwise, what may seem to benefit you but hurt others, will come back to also ultimately hurt you.

The Trump Administration's proposal is cruel and nothing short of xenophobic. While fixing DACA is urgently needed, such a fix will not resolve all the other problems in the immigration system. It is not worth getting a fix for DACA, without other urgently needed fixes, in exchange for immigration restrictions that would fulfill the wish list of a nativist. America has nothing to gain, and much to lose, from such a limited immigration policy. [We have repeatedly argued](#) that [immigration is a net positive for the economy and society](#). [Immigrants keep America competitive in STEM fields and other industries](#). Closing the doors to talented immigrants will undoubtedly make the US less competitive globally.

In stark contrast to the Trump Administration's xenophobic wish-list is the [Immigration Innovation \("I-Squared"\) Act of 2018](#), introduced by two Republican Senators, Orrin Hatch (R-UT) and Jeff Flake (R-AZ). The bill would increase the H-1B visas from 65,000 to 85,000 a year and proposes [lifting the existing cap of 20,000 additional H-1B visas reserved for those with master's degrees if their employers agree to sponsor their green cards](#). The bill includes a "market-based escalator" so the supply can meet increased demand. That means granting up to 110,000 additional visas (a total of 195,000), and prioritizing visas for those with master's degrees, foreign Ph.D.'s or U.S. STEM bachelor degrees. The bill would also eliminate per-country caps on employment-based green cards and allow H-4 visa holders the ability to work. It will also not count derivative family members, which if implemented upon enactment, will quickly drain the decades long backlogs in the employment-based preferences. The bill does not address Dreamers, but rather focuses on employment-based visas. Although imperfect, the bill serves as a proper starting point when discussing sensible immigration policy. Specifically, the bill acknowledges the utility and benefit of foreign skilled workers, especially in the IT field. Hatch and Flake have both realized that these workers not only benefit US industries, but also help create jobs for American workers. In a global economy, all forms of capital, including intellectual capital, flow to their optimum destinations according to the laws of supply and demand. The American economy does not operate in a vacuum and assumptions to the contrary, the very assumptions that have dominated the nativist response to date, only enrich our foreign competitors while we all lose. The people who run immigration policy in the Trump administration care about American workers but do not effectively express such concern. Instead, they have created policies that make US companies less competitive and the US itself less desirable as a place for the world's creative elite to live and work. There is a better way where everyone benefits. We can, if we think and act anew, transform immigration policy from an endless source of controversy to a flexible weapon in our economic arsenal so that everyone profits. I-Squared does provide the opening salvo. This bill has all the right ingredients – elimination of per country limits, not counting derivative family members that have till now clogged up the employment-based preferences and increasing the H-1B visa cap. We need I-Squared as much as a fix for DACA recipients.

Congresswomen and men need to similarly create a comprehensive bill that provides a pathway to citizenship for Dreamers without throwing other immigrant populations under the bus. Even requiring Dreamers – who only know America as their country – to wait 10-12 years on a probationary basis before they can apply for permanent residence and citizenship is unnecessary and cruel. Although Dreamers are under no obligation to prove their worth, as their humanity alone entitles them to respect, we nevertheless see [DACA recipients thriving in the respective fields and substantially benefiting the United States](#). The proposed legislation should also not undermine family immigration since family unification has been the cornerstone of US immigration policy since its inception. Family members of the principal immigrant support each other, and thus create more stability and bring about more prosperity. It is also not necessarily the case that a skilled immigrant in a STEM field will only benefit the United States. The nation's immigration history is replete with examples of immigrants from all walks of life succeeding in the country through their hard work, grit and determination. Objecting to family-based migration, including cutting off the ability of a US citizen to sponsor a parent, means that you are advocating a total shut-down of immigration and the cruel separation of families. It is also immoral to do so.

With the exception of descendants of indigenous peoples, every American is a descendant of immigrants. Everyone's mother, grandmother, great-grandmother, etc. came to the United States from a foreign land in the hopes of creating a better life. The American Dream is for everyone, whether your family has been here for generations or if your family just arrived yesterday. It is

senseless to close the doors to immigrants seeking opportunity in a nation whose identity is intimately intertwined with migration.