



## Fact Sheet: The DREAM Act

### Bill Provides a Path to Citizenship that Must Be Earned

Congress is set to consider the Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors Act, or DREAM Act, in the lame duck session. The bill would provide legal status to undocumented immigrants who came to the United States as children provided they meet certain strict conditions. The bill is supported across the political spectrum and it promotes hard work and the notion that you can be successful no matter where you were born or who your parents are.

This fact sheet explains who would be able to apply for citizenship under the act, how it would work, and some of the legislative hurdles the bill is up against even though it enjoys widespread support.

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Let's be clear: We are talking about children.

- The DREAM Act provides a path to citizenship for children who were brought to this country by no choice of their own.
- Many of these kids do not even realize they are “illegal” until years after they come to the United States. This is the only country they’ve ever called home.
- Now they live in fear of deportation to a country where they may not have any family or any connection to.
- These kids have the same hopes and dreams as any other kid in America. They want to make the most of their lives and give back to their country.
  - We are talking about kids like Walter Lara, an honor student who found out he was “illegal” when he was applying for college.
  - We are talking about kids like Stephanie, who started at UCLA when she was 16 and works two or three minimum wage jobs to pay for her schooling.

- We are talking about kids like Eric Balderas, a Harvard biology major who has been in America since he was 4 and was detained when flying back to school after visiting his mother.

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This is not amnesty. Eligibility requirements for legal status under the DREAM Act are strict and legal status must be earned.

- The DREAM Act does not provide automatic citizenship for these kids—legal status must be earned.
- Eligibility for legal status under the DREAM Act is strict. Kids must be physically present in the United States for at least five consecutive years prior to the date of enactment of the law. This will not be a magnet for more illegal immigration.
- Only kids who were under 16 when they came to the United States are eligible for legal status under the DREAM Act. And those who are 30 at the time of enactment are no longer eligible.
- Young people must meet the DREAM Act’s high standards to earn legal status, and work through a lengthy process that includes graduating from high school, being of good moral character, passing background tests, and continuing their education at college or in the military.

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The DREAM Act has traditionally received bipartisan support and it is supported across the business, education, military, and faith communities.

- The DREAM Act is currently co-sponsored by Sens. Dick Durbin (D-IL) and Richard Lugar (R-IN). It has historically received bipartisan support. Ten Republicans voted for it in 2007, including Sens. Orrin Hatch (R-UT), Olympia Snowe (R-ME), Sam Brownback (R-KS), Bob Bennett (R-UT), Susan Collins (R-ME), Kay Bailey Hutchison (R-TX), and Richard Lugar (R-IN).
- Seventy percent of likely voters of all political stripes support the DREAM Act.
- The DREAM Act receives broad support from leaders in the military, business, education, and faith communities.

- The DREAM Act is included in the Department of Defense's Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2010-12 to help the military “shape and maintain a mission-ready All Volunteer Force.”
- One of the steps kids could take to obtain permanent residency under the DREAM Act is to serve in the U.S. armed forces for at least two years.
- Margaret Stock, a retired lieutenant colonel in the U.S. Army Reserve, states: “Potential DREAM Act beneficiaries are also likely to be a military recruiter’s dream candidates for enlistment. ... in a time when qualified recruits—particularly ones with foreign language skills and foreign cultural awareness—are in short supply, enforcing deportation laws against these young people makes no sense. Americans who care about our national security should encourage Congress to pass the DREAM Act.”

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Republicans have a choice: side with the anti-immigrant wing of their party or solve a serious problem. This will have political ramifications for the party in 2012.

- The 2010 midterm elections showed Latinos will turn out for candidates who are concerned about their issues. They will also turn out against candidates who appear to scapegoat and demagogue them. The Latino vote was critical, for example, in propelling progressives such as Sens. Harry Reid (D-NV), Barbara Boxer (D-CA), and Michael Bennet (D-CO) to victory. In all three races the Republican opponent took anti-immigrant positions.
- There appears to be a concerted political strategy to satisfy the anti-immigrant wing of the Republican Party. Republican leaders suggested rewriting the U.S. Constitution to deny citizenship to kids born in this country.
- Now these same Republicans will scapegoat children and play on voters’ legitimate concerns about our broken immigration system to score political points.
- One group—Somos Republicanos—warned Republicans that by putting anti-immigrant Reps. Steve King (R-IA) and Lamar Smith (R-TX) in charge of immigration policy, “the conditions for a Republican presidential candidate to garner the necessary Electoral College Delegates to win the 2012 presidency will not be possible.”