



The Daily Dish

Clock Ticking to DACA Deadline

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Eakinomics: Clock Ticking to DACA Deadline

When President Trump ended the executive branch's Deferred Action on Childhood Arrivals (DACA) on September 5, he gave Congress six months to craft a legislative solution. That set an effective deadline of March 5 for legislative solutions, but many had hoped for a solution [before the end of 2017](#). (Note, for the record, that President Trump could extend the deadline.)

To [recap](#), the Obama Administration created DACA — a policy that allowed so-called Dreamers who entered the country illegally as minors to receive a renewable two-year period of deferred action from deportation and to be eligible for a work permit. Roughly 800,000 (of the 1.9 million eligible) signed up. Notice, however, that DACA participants were not (and could not be) legalized. Instead, the federal government essentially announced it would look the other way and not enforce deportation for DACA participants.

However, it simply didn't pass legal muster. As the Justice Department explained in September: "This Administration's decision to terminate DACA was not taken lightly. The Department of Justice has carefully evaluated the program's Constitutionality and determined it conflicts with our existing immigration laws," said Acting Secretary Elaine Duke. "As a result of recent litigation, we were faced with two options: wind the program down in an orderly fashion that protects beneficiaries in the near-term while working with Congress to pass legislation; or allow the judiciary to potentially shut the program down completely and immediately. We chose the least disruptive option."

Since October, the Department of Homeland Security is no longer processing renewals or applications, so every day there is a growing number of individuals who are transitioning from protected status to deportation risk. This is also a [risk for the economy](#). As AAF's Ben Gitis explains: "The federal government would have to spend \$7 billion to \$21 billion to remove the 790,000 undocumented immigrants currently enrolled in DACA. In order to remove these immigrants, each would have to be apprehended, detained, legally processed, and transported to his or her country of origin. In turn, this would shrink the labor force by 740,000 workers and reduce real GDP by \$72 billion."

At the policy level, the key question is what other initiatives will be paired with legalizing the DACA Dreamers, ranging from nothing to stronger border enforcement, or broad reform of the visa system. At the political level, there is a bipartisan consensus that a DACA fix is necessary. Anything that is a bipartisan good idea becomes a hostage in Washington — knowing it should pass, both sides attempt to attach more controversial issues.

So, the clock ticks, the personal risk rises, and the threat to the economy mounts. Eventually the political maneuvering must come to an end and a set of DACA and related provisions will likely be passed by Congress.