The Daily Dish

A DACA Deal and the Economy

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Eakinomics: A DACA Deal and the Economy

Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) was a policy initiated by President Obama in 2012 to shield certain young undocumented immigrants from deportation. DACA applicants must: prove they were under the age of 16 when they came to the United States; have continuously resided in the country since 2007; be enrolled in school, have graduated high school (or equivalent), or have served in the military; be less than 31 years old as of June 15, 2012; and have no conviction of any crime or felony. If an individual satisfies these requirements, he or she acquires provisional legal status and can get papers permitting legal work. President Trump ended DACA and urged Congress to pass legislation providing the DACA population with permanent protections. His 6-month deadline is rapidly approaching, and many had expected a DACA deal to be included in a government funding bill needed by January 19.

Progress has been slow and doubts have arisen regarding meeting the deadline. Yesterday, President Trump hosted a mini-summit on the issue and the White House clarified the four things that it feels must be included in such a bill: DACA population protections, border security (although not definitively the wall), ending "chain migration" — a pejorative term for what has been the long-standing U.S. policy of family reunification — and ending the visa lottery as a way to enter the United States.

Among these it is important to remember that DACA protections affect more than just the immigrants themselves. AAF's Jackie Varas estimates that "the average DACA worker contributes $109,000 to the economy each year. If all DACA recipients were removed, U.S. GDP would decrease by nearly $42 billion." Put differently, the DACA population is an economic asset, and failure to protect it would undercut economic performance. Even worse, failing to get a DACA deal while simultaneously shutting the government would yield an anti-growth double whammy.