



The Daily Dish

How Do You Solve A Problem Like DACA?

DOUGLAS HOLTZ-EAKIN | SEPTEMBER 6, 2017

Eakinomics: How Do You Solve A Problem Like DACA?

As expected, yesterday the Trump Administration [announced](#) that it would no longer continue the Obama policy known as DACA — Deferred Action on Childhood Arrivals. Under this policy, about 800,000 young adults who were brought to the United States illegally as children could continue to work or go to school without the fear of immediate deportation. To no one's surprise, the move created an emotional and political firestorm. But what are the issues at stake?

First, this is unquestionably bad news for the roughly 800,000 current participants in the program, and the up to 1.9 million who might potentially take part. It's not hard to see the negative impacts on them.

Second, it is bad news for the economy. AAF's Ben Gitis pegs the total cost of ICE agents deporting all the potential DACA participants at about \$50 billion, and the economic cost as a loss of about 1 percent of real gross domestic product, or \$175 billion (in 2020).

Third, it is superior legal policy. As the Department of Homeland Security released explained: "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." In English, DACA was an illegal executive overreach by President Obama.

The result is a no-win situation, especially because President Trump chose to defer full implementation for six months while calling on Congress to "fix" the problem in the interim. Unfortunately, President Obama acted precisely because Congress did not pass legislation that would have the effect of DACA. In effect, the president is taking credit for solving the DACA legal problem, and fingering Congress to avoid the personal, social, and economic costs despite the evidence that Congress has simply been unable to do so.