

DREAM Act

For many decades, the U.S. Government has had a difficult time effectively dealing with “illegal immigration.” The Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act, more commonly known as the DREAM Act, has been proposed in Congress as part of an effort to provide relief for young adults who were brought to the U.S. illegally when they were children. The act has been defeated each time it has come up for a vote, but the Obama administration issued an executive order that enacted many of the bill’s provisions on a temporary basis.

In August 2012, undocumented immigrants who met certain requirements were able to apply for deferred action which, if granted, would prevent them from being deported for two years and would permit them to apply for work authorization. Deferred action is only available to those under the age of 30 who arrived in the U.S. before turning 16. Applicants must have lived in the U.S. for at least five continuous years prior to June 2012; must meet certain “good character” requirements; and must either currently be in school, have obtained a high school diploma or GED, or be honorably discharged veterans.

Those opposing this plan argue that it is morally wrong to provide forgiveness to those who have broken the law. Even though these measures are targeted towards a very specific group of individuals, opponents fear that the new measures have the potential to encourage more illegal immigration in the future by those who expect to receive similar benefits.

Proponents of the DREAM Act argue that the bill will benefit the U.S. economically since the law’s changes are targeted towards young, educated adults. Economically enfranchising this group of immigrants is beneficial on many levels: those targeted will have a far greater earning potential than what they now expect; as a result, tax revenues will increase, and we will all benefit from having a larger talent pool. Additionally, because these immigrants were brought into the U.S. as children, it is wrong to deport those who through no fault of their own have become accustomed to life in the U.S. and are thus merely victims of the current immigration laws.

