

DREAM Act (Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act)

This bipartisan legislation introduced on March 26, 2009 addresses the situation faced by young people who were brought to the United States years ago as undocumented immigrant children, and who have since grown up here but are being denied the ability to fully contribute to society. The DREAM Act would provide certain undocumented youth conditional legal status and eventual citizenship, if they attend college or join the military. It would also allow immigrant students access to higher education by returning to states the authority to determine who qualifies for in-state tuition.

Requirements:

- **Age:** Immigrant students who must have entered the U.S. before age 16.
- **Academic:** The student must have been accepted for admission into a two-year or four-year institution of higher education or have earned a high school diploma or a GED certificate.
- **Long-term U.S. residence:** The student must reside in the U.S. when the law is enacted. In addition, those eligible must have lived in the U.S. for at least five years preceding the date of the enactment of the act.
- **Good moral character:** Immigrant students must demonstrate good moral character as defined in immigration law. In general, students must have no criminal background.

If the requirements are met, the student can apply for conditional status, which would last up to six years. Within six years, the student must: graduate from a 2-year institution of higher education, serve in the U.S. Military for at least 2 year, or complete at least 2 years toward a 4-year degree.

What it means for students: In 2006 the Arizona Interfaith Network organized against Proposition 300 (now a law that requires undocumented students to pay out of state tuition). AIN surfaced hundreds of stories from students who moved to the USA with their families while they were infants/children. Many of these students did not know they were undocumented until their teenage years. The DREAM Act could allow these students to come out of the shadows and fulfill their human potential.

Economic Connection: The DREAM Act could provide a way to increase the tax base for state, federal and local governments, According to the US Department of Commerce; a high school graduate earns \$1.2 million in the course of a 40-year span career compared to \$2.1 million for a person with a Bachelor's degree. A person holding a master's degree on average earns \$2.5 million in a 40-year period. Therefore a single person with a bachelor's degree who earns an average \$60,000 of taxable income will pay \$11,564 in taxes and welfare annually; in a 40-year span they will have contributed \$462,560.

National Security Implication: Allowing undocumented students a pathway to citizenship by joining the armed forces will support our national security efforts and lessen their pressure on recruitment.

