

1. **Mark your confusion.**
2. **Show evidence of a close reading.**
3. **Write a 1+ page reflection.**

Trump Prepares to End DACA

The administration may undo the program shielding unauthorized immigrants who arrived as children, rolling back a signature Obama-era initiative.

Source: by Priscilla Alvarez (an excerpt), *The Atlantic*, September 4, 2017

After roughly eight months in office, President Trump is leaning toward ending the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, the Obama-era program shielding undocumented immigrants who came to the United States as children from deportation and allowing them to work legally in the country, *Politico* reported on Sunday night. Multiple outlets reported that the decision is not yet final; the president will meet again with advisers on Monday, ahead of Tuesday's announcement.

The move would not take effect for six months, a window designed to give Congress time to find the legislative solution it has thus far proven unable to enact.

The DACA program, announced by President Obama in June, 2012, provided recipients with protection from deportation for two years, which could be renewed, and allowed them to work. To qualify, applicants had to have entered the country before the age of 16 and lived in the United States since 2007. Today, nearly 800,000 immigrants benefit from the program.

Trump's decision follows weeks of internal deliberations. Trump has wavered on his position on DACA, saying he would "immediately terminate" the program on the campaign trail, while expressing sympathy for the group once in office. During his administration, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services has also continued to grant work permits to thousands of undocumented immigrants, to the frustration of immigration restrictionists and Republicans who argued Obama lacked the authority to implement the program in the first place.

Tuesday's anticipated announcement is a direct response to Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton and other state attorneys general, who threatened to take the administration to court if they didn't sunset the program by September 5. Administration officials had reportedly considered asking for an extension of that deadline as they decided what to do. It's not the first time DACA has been met with legal challenges. In 2014, Obama expanded DACA and rolled out a new program called Deferred Action for Parents of Americans, or DAPA, prompting 26 states to sue the administration in an attempt to halt the programs. In 2016, in a 4-4 ruling, the Supreme Court blocked the expansion of DACA and kept DAPA from taking effect.

Earlier this month, more than 100 law professors signed a letter to Trump arguing "that the executive branch has legal authority to implement" DACA. Still, it was unlikely that the administration would go to court over the program given that they'd be in a position to defend it.

The president's decision is likely to appeal to his base, which has supported his immigration agenda. It's unclear whether the administration will continue to process renewals and new permit applications, potentially leaving the future of hundreds of thousands of undocumented immigrants in the balance. Without the protection of the program, they're eligible for deportation, raising the same question the Obama administration grappled with years ago: How do you address the segment of the population who entered the country illegally with no say of their own and otherwise have no criminal record?

Obama's election in 2008 was a watershed moment for immigrant advocates. For years, supporters of immigration reform had been pushing for legislation to help undocumented youth brought to the country illegally by their parents obtain legal status. But time and again those efforts fell through. Obama, who had campaigned on the promise of immigration reform, gave advocates a new sense of hope.

"In that wave of confidence, it's really easy to shed some of your fear because now you know that you at least have a president who's not out there, despite the fact that federal law still exists, he's not actively pursuing you as a priority for deportation," said Juan Escalante, the digital campaigns manager at America's Voice and a DACA recipient.

“It was a shift in many ways from the past, which was mainly closed-door meetings and members of Congress sharing our stories sometimes with different names, or covering our faces with media, etc.,” said Cristina Jimenez, the executive director and co-founder of United We Dream, the largest immigrant-youth organization in the country.

Immigrant advocates had been putting pressure on Congress to pass the DREAM Act, a measure first introduced in 2001 that would allow undocumented immigrants who attend college or serve in the military to eventually gain legal status. Chances of passing legislation seemed promising under Obama, a supporter of the Dream Act, and a Democratic-controlled Congress. Its failure would mark a turning point in the fight to shield undocumented immigrants from deportation.

Shortly after Obama took office, immigrant advocates were disillusioned to see the number of deportations creep up. According to the Department of Homeland Security, Immigration and Customs Enforcement removed nearly 390,000 people in fiscal year 2009, more than any previous president. In 2010, ICE Director John Morton released a memo outlining priorities for enforcement with the goal of directing resources toward those who were seen as a threat to public safety.

For the administration and advocates, 2010 proved a pivotal year. Immigration reform up until that point had been largely sidelined as the president focused his attention on passing a health-care reform bill. Activists and lawmakers slammed Obama for not trying harder to fix the country’s immigration system. Later that year, the president lobbied for the DREAM Act, but to no avail. The measure received majority support in both houses of Congress, but fell short of receiving the needed votes to avoid a Senate filibuster, effectively killing the bill. Obama later conceded that the vote was “maybe [his] biggest disappointment.”

The failure of the DREAM Act prompted a strategic shift among the immigrant advocacy community. “Our calculation was that Obama promised this to our people, he made this public commitment when he ran for president, and we assumed that it would be one of his campaign issues,” recalled Jimenez. “We also knew the path forward for legislation wasn’t there from our analysis.”

DACA was never intended to be a permanent solution. Obama addressed this himself in his 2012 address announcing the program: “This is not amnesty, this is not immunity. This is not a path to citizenship. It’s not a permanent fix. This is a temporary stopgap measure that lets us focus our resources wisely while giving a degree of relief and hope to talented, driven, patriotic young people.” Congress is the only entity that can alter the nation’s immigration laws. Prior to 2012, Obama himself had repeatedly explained his lack of executive action by insisting that Congress alone held the power to address the issue. The announcement of DACA was immediately met with a chorus of critics insisting that it was unconstitutional, and spurring a host of legal challenges.

“I believe that this is something Congress has to fix,” House Speaker Paul Ryan said on Friday. *Politico* reported over the weekend that Ryan was informed of Trump’s decision Sunday morning. Republicans like Senators Orrin Hatch and Jeff Flake have urged the administration to leave the program alone for now, and allow Congress to provide a permanent solution.

If the administration discards their advice and moves ahead with its plan to cancel DACA, it will add the contentious issue to an already overcrowded congressional calendar. There are 12 Republican cosponsors for a measure in the House that would institutionalize much of the DACA program, and the legislation also enjoys significant Republican support in the Senate. It remains unclear, though, whether the bill could attract enough GOP votes to clear the House, sufficient support to survive a Senate filibuster, or a presidential signature if it does. And already, there is opposition to the bill. Senator Tom Cotton, an immigration hardliner, is insisting that any move to aid Dreamers be coupled to stricter enforcement and the constriction of legal immigration.

So if Trump announces the end of DACA as anticipated on Tuesday, it will leave hundreds of thousands of people in limbo, waiting to see if Congress can achieve consensus on an issue that has long resisted it.

Possible Response Questions:

- Share your thoughts on the president’s plan to end DACA.
- Pick a passage from the article and respond to it.
- Discuss a “move” made by the writer in this piece that you think is good/interesting. Explain.