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DREAM Act: Basic Information

What is the DREAM Act?

The Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act is bipartisan legislation that 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, stayed in school, and kept out of trouble.

Each year about 65,000 U.S.-raised students who would qualify for the DREAM Act's benefits graduate from high school. They are young people who have lived in the U.S. for most of their lives and desire only to call this country their home. Even though they were brought to the U.S. years ago as children, they face unique barriers to higher education, are unable to work legally in the U.S., and often live in constant fear of detection by immigration authorities.

Our immigration law currently has no mechanism to consider the special equities and circumstances of such students. The DREAM Act would eliminate this flaw. By enacting the DREAM Act, Congress would legally recognize what is de facto true: these young people belong here.

New Mexico Supports Immigrant Students

New Mexico has taken a strong stand on this issue. In 2005, the State Legislature, with bipartisan support, passed one of the most progressive immigrants' rights laws in the country by making undocumented students eligible for in-state tuition and financial aid at New Mexico's public colleges. Hundreds of students have since qualified and have excelled in college, training to become our future bilingual, bicultural professionals.

Now we need a full return on our investment. These students need to be able to work and practice what we have taught them in their communities. US Congress has an opportunity to enact a law that demonstrates this country's best ideals of fairness and equal opportunity. The DREAM Act embodies the spirit of personal perseverance *and* community values exhibited by these students. These young people have succeeded not only because of their hard work and determination, but also because their families, teachers, counselors, mentors and advocates have encouraged and supported them in overcoming obstacles and reaching their full potential. These are New Mexico's children. They are products of our community's best efforts to build up our state and advance the American DREAM. Let's not turn our backs on them now.

What is the DREAM Act's Current Status?

Support for the DREAM Act has grown each year since it was first introduced in 2001 during the 107th Congress. In past years it has garnered 48 Senate cosponsors and more than 152 Republican and Democratic House cosponsors, more than one-third of the House, and it continues to attract bipartisan support. It currently enjoys the strong backing of the House and Senate leadership, all of the relevant committee chairs, and President Obama. Sen. Dick Durbin (IL) and Rep. Howard Berman (CA) reintroduced the DREAM Act in late March, 2009.