

The DREAM Act

In 2001, the DREAM Act, or the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act, was first introduced in Congress. The bill addressed the large population of undocumented immigrants who were children when they first arrived in the United States. The DREAM Act sought to change immigration law in two ways: 1) undocumented immigrant students who receive their high school diploma and plan to attend college would be eligible for public financial assistance to help them pay for school; 2) a path to citizenship would be made available to these students. Although the bill did not pass in 2001, it has been reintroduced every few years.

Opponents of the bill argue that the DREAM Act will encourage "criminal" behavior and reward undocumented immigrants. Supporters of the bill, including student groups called DREAMers, argue that as the children of undocumented immigrants they did not have a say in where they grew up. Furthermore, they consider themselves Americans and believe their education and work will benefit the country. In 2010, the bill passed in the House of Representatives, but it failed in the Senate. Frustrated with the outcome, President Obama (2009-) established the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals Process. The president's executive action allows undocumented immigrants up to age thirty-one who were brought to the country as children to pursue higher education and jobs without the risk of deportation. Legislators and activists continue to demand broader legislation that will provide a clear path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants.