What Is DACA? Who Are the Dreamers? Here Are Some Answers (slightly abridged)
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What is DACA?

The program was introduced in 2012 by President Barack Obama as a stopgap measure that would shield from deportation people who were brought into the United States as children. The status is renewable, lasting two years at a time. The program does not provide a pathway to citizenship.

Participation in the program comes with a range of benefits. Along with permission to remain in the country, recipients can also get work permits, through which many have obtained health insurance from their employers.

The ability to work has also allowed them to pay for school, pursue higher education and, in some states, drive legally. The program also opened up access to in-state tuition and state-funded grants and loans in some states. And depending on where they live, recipients can also qualify for state-subsidized health care.

Who are the Dreamers?

DACA recipients are often referred to as Dreamers, after a similar piece of legislation called the Dream Act, which was introduced in 2001 and would have given its beneficiaries a path to American citizenship. They now fall between the ages of 16 and 35; the vast majority came from Mexico, though many others were born in Central and South America, Asia and the Caribbean. The status has been issued to roughly 800,000 people.

Recipients must be enrolled in high school or already have a diploma or G.E.D. in order to qualify. Anyone with a serious criminal history (defined as a felony or serious misdemeanor conviction, or three misdemeanor convictions) is not eligible.

Why was the DACA program introduced?

It came about after more than a decade of failed negotiations in Congress over how to deal with the Dreamers. The Dream Act never passed, but it gained widespread popularity among the American electorate and, at various points, both houses of Congress, hatching much of the political activism that is propelling the current debate.

Why was DACA eliminated?

President Trump ended the program in September after nine conservative state attorneys general with hard-line views on immigration threatened to sue him over the policy, arguing that it represented an overreach of presidential power. Mr. Trump had equivocated publicly over the program, but ultimately, he called on Congress to come up with a replacement within months.
Are the Dreamers in danger of being deported?

Not just yet. Under the gradual drawdown of DACA, the first group of beneficiaries to lose their protection would do so in March. But another lawsuit also stands in the way of any recipients being deported.

That case, brought by a group of immigrant advocates and Democratic local and state officials, alleges that the White House acted improperly and did not follow necessary legal procedures in eliminating DACA. A judge in California agreed, issuing a nationwide injunction earlier this month, which caused a stampede of recipients to apply to renew their statuses one last time.

The Trump administration plans to appeal the decision, and has also taken the rare step of asking the Supreme Court to rule on the appeal before the circuit court decision comes down. If the Supreme Court agrees, it could delay the potential deportations of beneficiaries even further because the injunction will remain in place until a decision is made.

What’s going on in Washington?

Despite vacillating over the program after his decision to end it last fall, Mr. Trump proposed [on Jan. 25] a path to citizenship for DACA beneficiaries and others in exchange for tough concessions, including family-based migration policies and funding for a border wall.

On the left, many progressives, immigrant advocates and DACA recipients themselves have been hoping for a “clean” Dream Act — that is, a law that would offer Dreamers a path to citizenship, and would not be tied to any other policies, immigration-related or not.

Previously, the White House and many Republican lawmakers have said that they would not agree to such a policy without concessions from Democrats, which could come in the form of funding for a border wall or more enforcement officers, or a restructuring of the current visa distribution system to favor work skills over family ties.

The other solutions that lawmakers have been debating contain various combinations of these concessions, as well as other demands that are being made by Democrats.