



Trump Appears to be Negative Toward McCain-Coons Immigration Plan

Senator Christopher Coons (D-Del.) introduced an immigration bill (S.2367), of which Senator John McCain (R-Ariz.) was an original cosponsor, on February 5 that would grant relief from deportation and a path to citizenship for the nearly 800,000 young illegal aliens known as “Dreamers,” whose work permits are set to expire March 5. These youthful illegal aliens had been granted protection from deportation and the right to work legally in the United States under former President Obama’s Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program.



The official description of S.2367 states that in addition to providing “relief from removal and adjustment of status” of the young illegal aliens, it also seeks to improve border security and foster United States engagement in Central America.

As of February 6, the text for S.2367 had not been listed as received at the congress.gov website, but the *Washington Post* reported that the measure does not authorize spending the \$25 billion that President Trump is seeking to fortify the U.S.-Mexican border with a new wall and fence construction.

The *Post* also reported that the McCain-Coons legislation additionally would grant legal status to so-called Dreamers who have been in the country since 2013, which amounts to a greater number of illegal aliens than the 1.8 million President Trump now supported legalizing.

Apparently, the bill says nothing about ending chain migration or the visa lottery program — two of the four pillars of the immigration plan Trump said he would offer to Congress during his State of the Union speech.

Coons told reporters on February 5 that he has not heard from top congressional leaders about the bill he and McCain introduced, and that he considers it one of several proposals that could earn a vote.

Coons said that “a broader solution” introduced by Senators Richard Durbin (D-Ill.) and Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.) is one possible compromise for senators to support. However, CNN reported back on January 17, the day that bill was introduced, that Trump and his top advisers told reporters that the bill was not what the White House was looking for, virtually assuring the measure had no chance of moving forward as it was drafted.

With the Graham-Durbin bill apparently dead in the water, Coons said his proposal with McCain could be a “fresh start” and a “strong starting place” for the Senate to consider during the upcoming efforts to pass an immigration bill.

In a statement quoted by the *Post*, McCain said the bill “would address the most urgent priorities” of legalizing the status of Dreamers and make changes to border security — and allow Congress to



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move on.

“It’s time we end the gridlock so we can quickly move on to completing a long-term budget agreement that provides our men and women in uniform the support they deserve,” the Arizona senator added.

A report in *The Hill* observed that although McCain and Coons believe their bill could be a starting point for negotiations among a wider group of senators, Trump voiced criticism of the measure before it was even formally introduced.

The president said it was a non-starter to offer a fix for the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program without providing funding for the border wall.

“Any deal on DACA that does not include STRONG border security and the desperately needed WALL is a total waste of time,” Trump wrote in a tweet. “March 5th is rapidly approaching and the Dems seem not to care about DACA. Make a deal!”

Attorney General Jeff Sessions announced on September 5 that the DACA program will end in six months, giving Congress time to find a legislative solution for people enrolled in the program. That period ends on March 5, when roughly 800,000 DACA recipients will begin to face deportation without action by Congress.

The Hill cited a statement from Marc Short, the White House director of legislative affairs, who said on February 5 that the Coons-McCain proposal fell short of what the president requires. Asked if it should be the base for the Senate’s legislation, he shook his head no, saying “a lot” needed to be added to it. “Look at our [the White House’s] framework,” he told reporters, “I think we’d advocate our framework to be the base bill.”

While Trump may appear to be uncompromising and inflexible in being reluctant to embrace the McCain-Coons bill, he has in fact already compromised much more than congressional conservatives like. As was observed in a [recent article](#) in *The New American*, Senator Ted Cruz (R-Texas) said on January 25, “I do not believe we should be granting a path to citizenship to anybody here illegally. Doing so is inconsistent with the promises we made to the men and women who elected us.”

Cruz’s statement, though it did not mention Trump by name, was an apparent response to remarks made by the president that he was open to the “Dreamers” obtaining citizenship eventually.

When former President Obama issued DACA, he said it was a temporary stop-gap until Congress took action to [develop](#) a permanent solution. In his executive order, he only granted permission for DACA “Dreamers” to remain in the country. He did not propose to make them citizens.

Cruz seized upon this distinction and stated:

For some reason that to me is utterly inexplicable, we see Republicans falling all over themselves to gallop to the left of Obama in a way that is contrary to the promises made to the voters who elected us. We need to honor the promises we made. And that is what I am energetically urging my colleagues to do.

While campaigning for the presidency, candidate Trump promised that he would “immediately terminate” DACA after being elected. However, in recent months, he has increasingly demonstrated a willingness to compromise with Democrats by supporting legislation that would offer the same protection from deportation and extended work authorization that the Obama administration granted. Furthermore, as Cruz noted, Trump is now going beyond what Obama offered with DACA by offering a



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path to citizenship to the Dreamers. Trump appears to have rejected the immigration proposal by McCain and Coons, tweeting: "It's a total waste of time." If he truly feels that way, the president would do well to consider Cruz's statements, which should be well worth his time.

Photo: AP Images

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