

Why Brown's decision is good for the US

Mario T. García | Oct. 14, 2011 NCR Today

Gov. Jerry Brown of California on Oct. 8 signed into law what is called the California Dream Act. This state version (of the proposed Dream Act that has been unsuccessful in the federal legislature) allows undocumented students who have successfully attended high school, been accepted into a California college and are attempting to legalize their status to be eligible for state financial aid.

This legislation -- shepherded by Assemblyman Gil Cedillo, Democrat from Los Angeles -- affects a few thousand young men and women, mostly Latinos, who as babies or young children were brought into the U.S. by their undocumented parents.

These children have grown up without legal status. Yet for all practical purposes they are Americans except for that piece of paper. They have gone to our schools and they culturally, including the dominance of English, are Americans. To deny them the financial means to a good college education is not only unfair to these young people -- who through no fault of their own are not legalized -- but it, as Gov. Rick Perry of Texas has said, is impractical.

By furthering their education, these young people will contribute much more to society and be economically more productive citizens.

In California (as in Perry's Texas), undocumented students also have the opportunity to pay in-state tuition. Not only have they grown up educationally and culturally as Americans, but also as Texans and Californians.

Brown, like Perry, did the right thing. To borrow a word from Perry, it is "heartless" for those who stand on a legal soapbox and decry the opportunity for these innocent young people to acquire a good education. What if it was your child or grandchild?

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