

Immigration policy the right thing but also a political move

Mario T. García | Jun. 21, 2012 NCR Today

Doing the right thing, as he put it, but also with an eye on the Latino vote, President Barack Obama has decreed an administrative DREAM Act for thousands of undocumented young people.

On Friday, he announced new regulations that will legalize the status of those who have been brought into the country without documents by parents who have no documents themselves. Technically illegal, these "DREAM Act Kids" have grown up in the United States and for all practical purposes are citizens. They, through no fault of their own, are undocumented.

The administrative ruling has the following requirements for those eligible: You have to have entered the United States before turning 16; be currently 30 or younger; have lived here for the last five years; are currently in school or have a high school diploma or GED, or are serving in the military or have been honorably discharged from the military; do not have a significant criminal record; and, finally, pose no threat to public safety or national security. If one can document these requirements, then you can have access to legalizing your status by applying for a work permit that is renewable.

This does not, unfortunately in my opinion, create an access to citizenship because, according to the president, that would require an act of Congress that does not seem likely at the present time. Recent efforts to pass the so-called DREAM Act that would lead to citizenship have been blocked by mostly Republicans in the Congress.

I agree with President Obama that this is the right thing to do. As noted in earlier blogs, these young people were brought into the country by their parents without documents but had nothing to do with this action. Most were babies or young children. They did not knowingly break immigration law. Most have grown up believing they were citizens until they recently became aware of their status. Some more than likely still are unaware of this. They are Americans culturally and socially and they deserve to have their status regularized.

The president's ruling is not perfect, but at least for now will help to deal with the anxiety these people have to live with that at any moment they may be apprehended and deported to countries they have no real connection with. I believe the ruling that now goes into effect will be very difficult even for a Republican president to overturn given the reality of growing Latino political power. It also sets the foundation for passage of the DREAM Act either under a Democrat or Republican president.

As for the political calculation by President Obama, I believe this is an astute but anxious effort to raise Latino support for him in the November election. Four years ago, he won close to 80 percent of the Latino vote and swept into office. But that support has somewhat been eroded by Latino discouragement over the president's failure to fulfill his promise of passing the DREAM Act. The president clearly understands that if he can come to duplicating the Latino vote that he got in 2008, he will be re-elected. This would mean he would again win Colorado, New Mexico and Nevada. It could also be a factor in winning Virginia again, and perhaps it's a long shot, but Florida could be in sight again. Any combination of wins in these states could offset losses in Ohio, Wisconsin and possibly Florida. Latinos in general tend to be consistent in what they favor, and President Obama's new decree on the DREAM Act children could well be the most decisive campaign decision of the

election besides being the "right thing to do."

Source URL (retrieved on 07/22/2017 - 20:01): <https://www.ncronline.org/blogs/ncr-today/immigration-policy-right-thing-also-political-move>