

In latest attack on immigrants

Trump administration suspends DACA applications and renewals

Sam Dalton
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On Tuesday, July 28, Chad Wolf, the acting secretary of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), announced a new round of attacks on the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program. He declared the agency would not accept new applications and would only grant one-year extensions to the current recipients on a case-by-case basis. Some 66,000 children and young people who would have been eligible to apply this year are now facing deportation.

Wolf said the program “presents serious policy concerns that warrants its full rescission” (i.e., its complete destruction), a step that requires “additional careful consideration.” Wolf went on to absurdly frame the vicious attacks as a cautious move while the DHS considers its next steps. In reality, the DHS is only postponing mass deportations of tens of thousands of young people, most of whom have lived nearly their entire lives in the United States, until after the November 3 election.

Instituted through an executive order by Barack Obama at the end of his first term in 2012, the DACA program offered limited rights to around 700,000 undocumented immigrants who were brought to the US as children. In order to qualify, immigrants must have been under 16 at the time of arrival, have lived in the US for the previous five years, have been enrolled in or graduated from high school or served in the military, and not have committed any serious crimes.

The program provides eligible youth a temporary immigration status that protects them from deportation and gives them the right to hold a job or go to college. Depending on the state they live in, DACA recipients could be eligible for drivers’ licenses, pay tuition rates charged to in-state residents, and receive state-funded

educational grants and loans, as well as state-subsidized health insurance. Once obtained, DACA status has to be renewed every two years.

At its inception in 2012, the program was cynically conceived as a vote-catching device for the Obama re-election campaign, giving a pro-immigrant veneer to a reactionary Democratic administration that had accelerated anti-immigrant policies, as Obama deported more undocumented immigrants than any previous president. Significantly, DACA offered no pathway to citizenship and meant that the 700,000 youth who registered with the federal government were at the mercy of the capitalist state. Under the impression they were forging themselves a future in the US, the recipients of DACA status had to supply the government with their address, employment status, and other basic information, to be used against them when a new administration took office.

After initially declaring support for the program in early 2017, President Trump sought to use DACA as a bargaining chip in his wrangling with the Democrats over funding for the border wall and other attacks on immigrants and refugees. In September 2017 he rescinded Obama’s executive order, but immigrant rights groups filed suit, claiming, among other things, that the DHS had violated federal administrative procedures in its haste to put DACA recipients in jeopardy.

Currently 450,000, or 2 percent, of students in the US are undocumented, and around half of those are eligible for DACA. Without these protections, many students might be deported before they finish their studies. It is also estimated that around 15,000 educators in the country are able to work on account of their DACA

status.

During the pandemic many undocumented students and workers, including applicants and previous recipients of DACA status, have been illegible for government relief. The latest coronavirus relief package proposal unveiled by Senate Republicans on Monday will continue to exclude undocumented students from aid.

The administration's latest move against DACA also leaves many immigrants fearing separation from their families. Many of those who are currently on the DACA program have children or partners who are citizens, and without a renewal of their status they face the prospect of being forcefully stripped away from their loved ones.

The latest attack comes little over a month after a Supreme Court ruling nominally protected DACA from the administration's attacks. In June, the Supreme Court blocked the DHS's plan to "immediately end" DACA in a 5-4 majority opinion. However, the majority opinion, authored by conservative Chief Justice John Roberts, despite describing the DHS's plan as "arbitrary and capricious," rejected the move primarily on the basis of administrative mishandling. This meant that the Trump administration could revisit the issue and make a new attack on DACA as long as it followed the proper procedures.

At that time the WSWs warned:

"Far from using these cases as an opportunity to expand the struggle for democratic rights, the majority opinions are framed in such a way as to block the most reactionary aspects of the Trump administration's policies in the narrowest possible fashion."

With the Supreme Court's limited administrative ruling opening the door for the fascistic Trump administration to ramp up its attacks, the DHS has wasted little time. Despite the fact that the ruling should have compelled a return to running the program as it had been in early 2017, the *Los Angeles Times* reported the government continued to reject applications in the days immediately following the decision. Since July 22, nearly a week before Wolf's announcement, the DACA website declared that the program "is not accepting requests from individuals who have never before been granted deferred action under DACA."

Under the cover of the COVID-19 pandemic and with

the crucial support of the Democratic Party and US legal system, the Trump administration continues its unrelenting assault on immigrants' rights in the US. Since the beginning of the pandemic, the Trump administration attempted to deport international students who were unable to attend in-person classes this fall, suspended applications for H1B work visas and Green Cards, a Supreme Court ruling that left asylum seekers with no right to habeas corpus or due process, and continued attacks on Chinese students.

The right of all immigrants regardless of the circumstance of their birth to full citizenship in any country, including full rights to education and work, must be defended. DACA recipients should not only have their status protected but should be given full citizenship rights immediately.



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