

What do you think of the President's plan to put a hold on deportation of undocumented children of immigrants, and how will it impact Florida?



Holly R. Skolnick

PRESIDENT OF THE AI JUSTICE BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND A SHAREHOLDER IN THE LITIGATION DEPARTMENT AT GREENBERG TRAUIG, P.A.

Just a few weeks ago, the conventional political wisdom was that another year would go by without any type of relief for DREAMers, young undocumented immigrants who have been raised in the United States. Although various DREAM Act proposals have been introduced in Congress in the last decade and many enjoyed bipartisan support, none overcame Senate filibusters. Even U.S. Sen. Marco Rubio's bill offering DREAMers limited relief was unlikely to go anywhere this year. Republican leaders never supported it, and Democrats criticized it because it didn't offer a path to citizenship.

Americans for Immigrant Justice (formerly "FIAC") represents many Dreamers who couldn't wait. They lived in legal limbo for years, fear deportation to countries barely known, can't get driver's licenses, and face limited opportunity to access higher education, the military or employment. We didn't just listen to their concerns; we joined with DREAMers and other national advocates taking a leading role in urging the Administration to grant temporary relief pending congressional action.

In April, AI Justice Executive Director Cheryl Little published a column in The Miami Herald commending Rubio for opening a political door to DREAM Act issues. She noted that the kind of temporary relief proposed by Rubio could be accomplished administratively: The President and DHS had discretionary authority to allow provisional legal status for DREAMers. In the absence of congressional action, she challenged the Administration to act. White House and DHS officials read the column the day it ran, and news stories referenced the op-ed.

AI Justice also drafted a legal memo on the authority to grant provisional relief and went to the White House with DREAMers to discuss the issue in May. Meanwhile, nearly 100 immigration law professors nationwide wrote President Obama clarifying his authority to act. Less than three weeks later, the Obama Administration made its historic announcement. DHS would stop deporting DREAMers who met

certain criteria. It offered them provisional legal status and a chance to get work permits and driver's licenses.

The positive effect of this policy cannot be overstated. Florida DREAMers come from all corners of the world. Some arrived by boat from the Caribbean. Others, including Africans and Central and South Americans, arrived by plane. Central and South Florida also host a growing Eastern European and Asian population. Florida is positioned to tap this homegrown immigrant talent. DREAMers with diverse talents and heritage will redouble their contributions to the place they call home.

The new policy has limits. There is still no path to permanent legal status. It can be revoked at any time and ignores the other 10 million people currently living in this country without legal status. Yet the Administration's action remains an important first step toward a rational and humane immigration policy. Congress needs to work toward sensible, long-term immigration solutions that honor our nation's values as they promote our prosperity

<http://www.floridavoices.com/florida-politics/breezes/what-do-you-think-presidents-plan-put-hold-deportation-undocumented>