



Unitarian Universalists for Social Justice

Write Here! Write Now! April 9, 2019 Advocacy Day

Issue: American Dream and Promise Act - HR 6 Focus: U.S. House of Representatives

Contact: advocacy@uusj.org or 703-786-5206; www.uusj.org click on Advocacy

Delivery of Letters - Congregation Organizer: emailed letters must be received by 12 noon ET April 8 to advocacy@uusj.org. All mailed letters must be received by April 5 to UUSJ, 7750 16th St. NW, Washington, DC 20012.

Write Here! Write Now! Tell your US Representative to support H.R.6 - a pathway to citizenship for Dreamers and immigrants with protected status.

Key Message, Background and UU Grounding

Key Message: The House of Representatives should move quickly to act on H.R.6, the “American Dream and Promise Act of 2019.” Urge your representative to co-sponsor (if not already co-sponsoring see link on page 2 -- no Republicans currently cosponsoring) and support passage of H.R.6.

Background: During its first two years in office, the Trump administration worked to dismantle major aspects of the U.S. immigration system. Of particular note are its attempts to terminate the legal protections relied upon by multiple groups of immigrants who have lived in the U.S. for decades. This includes Dreamers (undocumented immigrants who came to the U.S. years ago as children that are recipients of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA); those who hold Temporary Protected Status (TPS); and beneficiaries of Deferred Enforced Departure (DED).

While challenges to the Trump administration’s actions are making their way through the courts, the House of Representatives has the opportunity to pass legislation addressing these programs. **H.R.6, the American Dream and Promise Act of 2019**, was introduced in the House on March 12 by Rep. Roybal-Allard (D-CA-40) and would create a path to conditional permanent residency, lawful permanent residency, and eventual citizenship for DACA recipients and DED and TPS holders. An estimated 2.5 million immigrants could be permanently protected under the bill.

Despite multiple Congressional attempts to pass the Dream Act since its first introduction in 2001, such a bill has never been signed into law. UUSJ’s Immigration Task Group has shared with Congressional offices a statement of our positions on various immigration and refugee issues, including advocating for permanent protections for DACA, TPS and DED holders. The UUSJ Advocacy Corps has visited Congressional offices on the Dream Act and DACA several times.

Terms:

- **Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA)** - an immigration option for undocumented immigrants who came to the U.S. before the age of 16. Although DACA does not provide a pathway to lawful permanent residence, it does provide temporary protection from deportation, work authorization, and the ability to apply for a Social Security number
- **Temporary Protected Status (TPS)** - a program that offers a temporary legal status to certain immigrants in the U.S. who cannot return to their country of origin due to ongoing armed conflict, natural disaster, or other extraordinary reasons.
- **Deferred Enforced Departure (DED)** - a program that temporarily allows certain individuals from designated countries and regions facing political or civic conflict or natural disaster to stay in the U.S. Liberia is currently the only country designated under this program.

UU Grounding: In 2013 our UU General Assembly passed a Statement of Conscience on “Immigration as a Moral Issue” which states: **“Our UU Principles and Sources compel us to affirm that all immigrants, regardless of legal status, should be treated justly and humanely.”**

No one is illegal. As people of faith and conscience, grounded in UU principles, we affirm the inherent worth and dignity of all people. For years UUs have fought for compassionate immigration reform and an end to mass detention and deportation.

We strongly support a just and equitable reform of our nation’s immigration laws. While the reform process is pending, we ask Congress to take action that can immediately alleviate the suffering of thousands of immigrants.

(See other side for Facts and Talking Points, and a Sample Letter)

Facts and Talking Points:

- **Most DACA recipients and DED and TPS holders have been in the U.S. for years, even decades, and are well-embedded in our communities and economy.** They contribute greatly to our society, culture and economy. Many now form part of mixed-status families with U.S. citizens (usually youth or young adults).
 - **Deporting these persons is inhumane, short-sighted and not in line with our UU values (or American values).** We have historically welcomed immigrants when they were needed to build the nation and keep its economy functioning, or uniting families. Studies show 4 out of 5 Americans think the Dreamers should be allowed to stay. Poll after poll shows that Americans are united in support of legislation that would offer a pathway to citizenship for Dreamers.
 - **Dreamers contribute to our economy.** Annually, households that include Dreamers generate \$15.5 billion in federal taxes and \$8.5 billion in state and local taxes, and they hold \$66.4 billion in spending power. Collectively, Dreamers own 144,000 homes and pay \$1.5 billion each year in mortgage payments.
 - **TPS and DED holders have long-established lives in the U.S. On average,** Salvadorans with TPS have lived here for 22 years, Hondurans for 23 years, and Haitians for 17 years. Approximately 620,000 individuals live in a household with a family member that TPS protects. That number includes 448,000 U.S. citizens, 279,000 of whom are U.S.-citizen children under the age of 18. Studies show that our economy would lose billions (\$4.5 billion) a year if just the TPS status individuals were deported.
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Suggestions for Writing Your Letters:

- **Focus on the topic** – Co-sponsor and support passage of a clean H.R.6, the American Dream and Promise Act of 2019. [Link](https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/6/cosponsors) to names of co-sponsors: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/6/cosponsors>
- **Be brief, be courteous, be specific** - clearly state the issue and your position.
- **Be original and speak from the heart.** If possible, describe a personal experience or story, or select 1-2 provided talking points, **in your own words**, to support the main message.
- **Include a clear and specific action request.** “I urge you to…” Focus on the topic - pass a clean American Dream and Promise Act to provide a path to citizenship for Dreamers, and those with protected status. And, if not already a co-sponsor, become a co-sponsor of the bill.
- **Include your name and complete address** - to be counted it proves that you are a constituent.

Sample Letter to Your Representative

[Today's date]

Dear Representative _____, *[name of your U.S. Representative]*

I am a Unitarian Universalist from *[optional: name of congregation and location]*. Guided by my faith, I believe in the inherent worth and dignity of all people and that no human being is illegal. I stand in solidarity with Dreamers, young immigrants who arrived here as children without authorization.

I urge you to take immediate action to pass a clean American Dream and Promise Act (H.R.6) to support the Dreamers, and TPS and DED holders *[acronym is spelled out and defined on page 1]*. Provide these people who have been part of our communities and contributed to our economy for years with a path to citizenship so they can stop living in fear of deportation or of losing their educational opportunities, jobs and families. The U.S. is their home.

[To support the message, include in your own words a personal experience, story, or pick 1-2 talking points (see above). If you know that your Representative has not co-sponsored H.R.6 (as of this writing, the bill has no Republican co-sponsors) ask them to co-sponsor or ask their position which should solicit a response.]

[PERSONALIZED closing such as “Thank you for your consideration of my [concerns/story].] I look forward to your response.]

Sincerely,

YOUR NAME and COMPLETE ADDRESS

(See other side for Instructions on Key Message, Background & UU Grounding)