

Evangelical group urges Trump not to rescind DACA

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WASHINGTON (BP)—A group of evangelical Christian leaders have asked President Trump to hold off on another effort to rescind a program for certain undocumented immigrants brought to the United States as children.

In a July 8 letter, leaders of the Evangelical Immigration Table urged the president to maintain Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals until Congress provides a permanent solution. They encouraged Trump to sign such a bill into law.

The letter followed by three weeks a U.S. Supreme Court decision that found the Trump administration acted in an “arbitrary and capricious” manner in revoking DACA, an Obama-era policy to protect from deportation undocumented immigrants who arrived in this country before their 16th birthday. The high court said June 18 the administration may revoke DACA but the manner in which it did so in 2017 failed the procedural requirements of federal law.

The day after the justices’ decision, Trump said on Twitter the administration “will be submitting enhanced papers shortly in order to properly fulfill” the high court’s ruling. The administration is expected to file new paperwork to revoke DACA in a matter of days.

Provide a pathway for Dreamers to

gain legal status

In their letter, members of the Evangelical Immigration Table asked Trump to urge leaders in Congress “publicly and consistently” to adopt a measure that establishes a pathway for Dreamers to gain legal status and ultimately citizenship if they satisfy “other necessary and appropriate qualifications.” The label Dreamers is based on the name of a bill introduced in the past to protect undocumented immigrants brought into the country as children.



Russell Moore

Dreamers’ “entire lives are at stake right now,” said Russell Moore, president of the Southern Baptist Convention’s Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission. “There is no sending these people ‘back’—in many cases, they have no memory at all of the land of their parents’ origin. Those who have lived as good neighbors, contributed so greatly to our country, should be protected from the constant threat of having their lives upended.”

Also signing onto the letter to Trump were these organizational presidents: Walter Kim, National Association of Evangelicals; Chris Palusky, Bethany Christian Services; Gabriel Salguero, National Latino Evangelical Coalition; Scott Arbeiter, World Relief; Shirley Hoogstra; Council for Christian Colleges and Universities; and Hyepin Im, Faith and Community Empowerment.

Bipartisan legislative remedy needed

The Evangelical Immigration Table called for a legislative fix in a letter sent to Congress on the same day the Supreme Court issued its opinion. In it, Moore and others asked congressional members “to act quickly and on a bipartisan basis” to approve a bill to solve the problem permanently.

Members of Congress proposed the Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act the first time in 2001. The measure gained reintroduction several times thereafter without gaining approval.

After more than a decade of congressional failures, President Obama issued an executive order establishing DACA in 2012. The program provided a two-year window of protection from deportation and made participants eligible for permission to work and other benefits. About 700,000 people participated in the program.

In September 2017, Elaine Duke, acting secretary of the Department of Homeland Security, issued a memorandum rescinding DACA. The order provided a window of opportunity, however, for Congress to pass a legislative solution. Congress failed to do so.

In its ruling, the Supreme Court said DHS violated the Administrative Procedure Act, which governs the manner in which federal agencies establish and issue rules.

In 2011, messengers to the annual Southern Baptist Convention meeting approved a resolution on immigration reform that called for the advancement of the Gospel of Jesus while pursuing justice and compassion. The measure urged the government to make a priority of border security and hold businesses accountable in their hiring. It also requested public officials establish after securing the borders “a just and compassionate path to legal status, with appropriate restitutionary measures, for those

undocumented immigrants already living in our country.” It specified the resolution was not to be interpreted as supporting amnesty.

At the 2018 annual meeting, SBC messengers again requested reform that secures the borders and provides a pathway to legal status “with appropriate restitutionary measures.” The resolution also called for “maintaining the priority of family unity.”