



USA Act Bill Summary: A Bipartisan Solution for Dreamers

Reps. Will Hurd (R-Texas) and Pete Aguilar (D-California) introduced the Uniting and Securing America Act (USA) Act, [H.R. 4796](#), on January 16, 2018 with [48 bipartisan original cosponsors](#). The bill would provide Dreamers who have lived in the U.S. for at least four years, including Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipients, with the opportunity to earn permanent legal status if they pursue higher education, enlist in the military or are gainfully employed, and meet other requirements. The bill would also strengthen America's border security through the use of technology, investments in ports of entry, and development of a comprehensive southern border strategy, among other effective border security measures.

A Solution for Dreamers

- The bill would create a renewable eight-year conditional permanent resident status that would allow Dreamers to earn the ability to be protected from deportation, work legally in the U.S., travel outside the country and apply to be a lawful permanent resident if they meet certain requirements.
- To qualify for conditional permanent resident status, Dreamers would need to meet the following conditions:
 - Establish that they came to the U.S. before the age of 18 and have continuously lived in America since December 31, 2013;
 - Pass government background checks, demonstrate “good moral character” with no felony or multiple misdemeanor convictions and register for the Selective Service (if applicable);
 - Meet one of the following requirements:
 - Have been admitted to an institution of higher education;
 - Have earned a high school diploma or equivalent; or
 - Be enrolled in secondary education (high school) or an equivalent; and
 - Pay a fee to cover the cost of the application.
- The bill would automatically grant conditional permanent resident status to DACA recipients who continue to meet the requirements needed to obtain DACA.
- Recipients of conditional permanent resident status could apply to become lawful permanent residents (green-card holders) if they meet the following conditions:
 - Maintain continuous residence in the U.S. and pass government background checks;
 - Complete one of the following three tracks to permanent legal status:
 - Have graduated from an institution of higher education or completed at least two years in such an institution (education track);
 - Have served honorably in the military for at least the period of time the individual was obligated to serve (military track); or

- Have been employed for periods totaling at least 3 years and at least 80 percent of the time that the individual has had valid employment authorization, except periods in which the individual was enrolled in school (worker track);
- Demonstrate an ability to read, write and speak English and an understanding of American history, principles and form of government; and
- Pay a fee to cover the cost of the application.

Smart Border Security

- The bill would implement an expanded version of Rep. Hurd’s (R-Texas) [Secure Miles with All Resources and Technology \(SMART\) Act](#) to strengthen border security through the following measures:
 - **Deploy Technology at the Border.** The bill would direct the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to deploy “the most practical and effective” technology along the border, such as sensors and radar surveillance systems, to reach situational awareness and operational control of the border by January 20, 2021.
 - **Invest in Ports of Entry Infrastructure.** The bill would authorize the DHS Secretary to construct new ports of entry along the northern and southern borders. The bill would also authorize the secretary to expand and/or modernize high-volume ports of entry in the southern border in order to increase security at such ports of entry and facilitate trade and commerce.
 - **Develop a Comprehensive Southern Border Strategy.** The bill would direct the DHS Secretary to submit within 12 months a comprehensive, mile-by-mile border strategy containing a list of physical barriers, technologies and tools that can be used to secure the border and their projected per mile cost estimate.
 - **Eradicate Carrizo Cane and Salt Cedar Along the Rio Grande.** The bill would direct DHS to eradicate such invasive plants by January 20, 2019, providing the Border Patrol with greater visibility and access along the Rio Grande Valley.
 - **Authorize Operation Stonegarden.** The bill would authorize \$110 million for each of fiscal years 2018 through 2022 to increase collaboration between U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and state and local law enforcement entities to support border security operations.
 - **Improve Conditions in Central America.** The bill would modernize the coordination of federal efforts to improve the economic and security conditions in El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras.

Immigration Court Backlog Problem

- The bill would increase the number of immigration judges by 55 each year from fiscal years 2018 through 2020, along with necessary support staff, to reduce the immigration court backlogs, which currently stands at about 660,000 cases. The average wait time for a case to be heard is about 670 days.

- The bill would also increase the number of Board of Immigration Appeals staff attorneys by 23 each year from fiscal years 2018 through 2020, along with necessary support staff.

Why the USA Act Works

- **The USA Act is a Bipartisan, Legislative Solution.** Reps. Hurd (R-Texas), Aguilar (D-California) and a number of other [co-sponsors](#) support the USA Act because it is a bipartisan solution to provide a permanent solution for young undocumented immigrants who were brought to the U.S. as children and have lived in the U.S. for most of their lives.
- **The USA Act Supports our Country's Values.** The USA Act treats Dreamers fairly by allowing them to earn the opportunity to stay in America. The bill protects Dreamers from deportation if they pursue higher education, military service or are gainfully employed, allowing them to reach their full potential and have the opportunity to become American in the eyes of the law, contributing to a brighter future for all Americans and our communities.
- **The USA Act Makes Our Country Safer.** The USA Act makes important and effective investments in key technologies and infrastructure along the border, giving Border Patrol agents and Office of Field Operations (OFO) officers the tools they need to safely and efficiently enforce our country's immigration laws. Hiring more immigration judges and attorneys will also ensure our immigration court system operates more efficiently and stems the growth of the court case backlog.