

VETS *for* **AMERICAN IDEALS**

A PROJECT OF
 **human rights first**

VETERANS *for* **NEW AMERICANS**

January 31, 2018

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Paul Ryan
Speaker of the House of Representatives
United States House of Representatives
H-232, United States Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Democratic Leader
United States House of Representatives
H-204, United States Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Majority Leader McConnell, Minority Leader Schumer, Mr. Speaker, and Democratic Leader Pelosi:

We write on behalf of concerned U.S. military veterans to ask for your support on finding a permanent legislative solution for the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA). These are the “dreamers” – children of undocumented immigrants who are working, in countless ways, to make the United States stronger and better.

Veterans for New Americans advocates bipartisan immigration solutions that strengthen our national security, enhance our military readiness, and support our immigrant service members and their families. Veterans for American Ideals, a project of Human Rights First, is a nonpartisan group of veterans who believe America is its strongest when its policies and actions match its ideals and who advocate such policies. Our diverse national memberships include veterans who came to the United States as refugees or as immigrants, as well as first-generation Americans who joined the U.S. military because of the sense of gratitude and duty they felt toward the United States. They have served bravely in our military, deployed to the far corners of the world, and many continue to serve and to lead in their communities here at home.

As veterans, we know that diversity is part of what makes our military – and our nation – the strongest in the world. A DACA fix would allow nearly 690,000 Dreamers brought to the United States as children to continue to contribute to our communities, economy and the military. More than 97 percent of these young men and women are currently in school or in the workforce. Nearly 900 have already enlisted in our armed forces, many

already possessing skills critical to our military effectiveness, for example, medical training, language and cultural competencies that support our global strategic interests.

There are DACA recipients serving as student leaders in Junior ROTC programs across the country. There are many young Dreamers who are hoping to one day have the opportunity to enlist in the U.S. military. These individuals would make outstanding members of our military.

Time is of the essence: with every day that passes, over 120 DACA recipients lose their protection from deportation, ability to work legally in the U.S. and contribute to our economy. Without legislation, more than one-third of DACA recipients already in the Military Accessions Vital to the National Interest (MAVNI) program will lose their ability to join the military. We would also lose the potential of thousands more enlistees.

We ask Congress to pass a permanent, legislative solution that allows young undocumented immigrants who came to the U.S. as children the ability to make America their permanent home. Our years of service in defense of this country compel us to support a permanent, legislative solution for DACA recipients who wish to serve in the United States Armed Forces as proposed by legislation introduced to protect Dreamers.

As veterans, we care immensely about keeping our citizens safe. Dreamers are the next generation of patriotic and hardworking Americans. We must give these young people the opportunity to remain here and fully contribute to our nation, and if they choose, to our military.

Sincerely,

Rear Admiral James W. Partington, USN (Ret.)
Veterans for New Americans National Co-Chair

Lieutenant Colonel Margaret Stock, USAR (Ret.)
Veterans for New Americans National Co-Chair

Lieutenant Colonel Scott Cooper, USMC (Ret.)
Founder, Veterans for American Ideals