



The Dignity Act of 2025: Bill Summary

Rep. Maria Elvira Salazar (R-Florida) introduced the [Dignity Act of 2025](#) (H.R. 4393) in the U.S. House of Representatives on July 15, 2025, a bipartisan effort to strengthen border security in the United States, provide undocumented individuals with an opportunity to obtain legal status if they meet certain requirements, and update aspects of the U.S. legal immigration system. The bill is co-sponsored by Rep. Veronica Escobar (D-Texas), and an additional [10 original Republican co-sponsors](#). It is a revised version of the [Dignity Act of 2023](#).

This bipartisan effort comes as new polling indicates that [eight out of ten Americans](#) believe immigration is a good thing for the U.S. and support allowing undocumented immigrants to earn legal status if they meet certain requirements over a period of time. The bill's title stands for "Dignity for Immigrants while Guarding our Nation to Ignite and Deliver the American Dream" or the "DIGNIDAD (Dignity) Act."

The bill is divided into the following three sections:

- A. Border Security for America Act.**
 - a. Border Security.*
 - b. Asylum reform.*
 - c. Mandatory E-Verify.*
 - d. Criminal Provisions.*
- B. Dignity & American Promise.**
 - a. Dream Act.*
 - b. Dignity Program.*
- C. American Prosperity & Competitiveness.**
 - a. American Families United Act.*
 - b. Fairness for Legal Immigrants.*
 - c. Employment & Student Visas.*

This analysis details the main provisions within the bill. While it is not a comprehensive summary, it does underscore key takeaways from the legislation.

Division A: Border Security for America Act

The bill requires the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to deploy physical barriers, tactical infrastructure, technology, and personnel along the border where it is most effective. It also reforms the U.S. asylum system to make a final determination of asylum eligibility for most asylum seekers at the border within 60 days.

Border Security

- **Border Security: Barriers and Technology.** Authorizes the construction and/or deployment of physical barriers, tactical infrastructure, and technology to "achieve situational awareness and operational advantage of the border." This system would include physical barriers and barrier levees. It would also include associated detection technology, roads, lighting, and technology to fully secure the border.

- The bill provides the DHS Secretary with an updated authority to “waive all legal requirements the Secretary determines necessary to ensure the expeditious design, testing, construction, installation, deployment, and integration of the physical barriers, tactical infrastructure, and technology.”
- The bill would effectively facilitate the process of using existing funds to build physical barriers and deploy technology at U.S. borders. Congress approved \$46.5 billion as part of the reconciliation bill ([H.R. 1](#), known as the One Big Beautiful Bill Act) for the “[c]onstruction, installation, or improvement” of physical barriers, access roads, and “barrier system attributes.”
- **Ports of Entry.** Authorizes \$10 billion over fiscal years (FYs) 2026 to 2030, or \$2 billion each year, for improvements, including the construction of new ports or modernization and expansion of current ports as needed.
- **Personnel.** The bill increases the minimum pay for Border Patrol agents at the GS-12 level by at least 14 percent.
- **Immigration Infrastructure & Debt Reduction Fund.** Establishes a fund to pay for the costs incurred by the Dignity Act. Under the bill, a fee of one percent would be levied from the income of individuals provided with work authorization under the Dignity Program (described in Division B). That money would then be deposited into the fund. This provision is expected to raise \$50 billion, providing a net surplus to the Treasury.

Asylum Reform

The bill would reform the U.S. asylum system to adjudicate most asylum claims made at the border via an asylum officer within 60 days and prevent the release of most individuals from custody while they wait for a final determination on their claim.

- **Establish Three Humanitarian Campuses.** The bill would create three humanitarian campuses (HC’s) along the southern border. Migrants would be held in these facilities. Asylum officers would conduct asylum interviews and make final determinations on these campuses. Migrants would have access to medical staff, licensed social workers, mental health professionals, child advocates, and private organizations that provide humanitarian assistance and legal counsel.
 - **Hiring.** USCIS is required to hire at least 300 asylum officers to assist in expedited asylum determinations at humanitarian campuses.
- **Initial Screening (First 15 Days).** Under the bill, migrants would receive a 72-hour rest period. After that, staff at the Humanitarian Campuses would provide an initial screening within 15 days. Staff will conduct criminal background checks, analyze biometric data, verify identification, conduct medical assessments, screen for human trafficking victims, and perform an initial credible fear interview.
 - Migrants unable to establish a credible fear during an initial screening are subject to expedited removal from the U.S.
- **Secondary Screening and Asylum Determination (Days 15 to 60).** Within 45 days of passing the initial credible fear interview, two trained U.S. Citizenship and

Immigration Services (USCIS) asylum officers would review the individual's asylum claim and make a final determination. Asylum officers must deny, approve, or refer complex/uncertain cases to an immigration judge.

- The case must be referred to an immigration judge if there is disagreement between the two asylum officers whether the application should be approved or denied. Asylum officers can also select to refer the application to an immigration judge if it is a complex/uncertain case.
 - Asylum seekers would have limited options to request additional review of such decisions. Denials result in expedited removal.
- **Referral to Immigration Judge.** For those referred to an immigration judge, the bill would create a system by which asylum seekers would receive a notice to appear, be released from the humanitarian campus, take part in a case management program, and be monitored in a manner that ensures DHS can “electronically verify each person’s location.”
- **In-Country Processing in Latin America.** The U.S. would establish up to three facilities in the Western Hemisphere where migrants could be pre-screened for asylum, unmarried children under 21 with parents legally in the U.S. could be considered for family reunification, and potential noncitizen workers could learn about work visas or other pathways to citizenship.
 - As part of this section, a new humanitarian visa would be created for individuals who choose to be pre-screened for asylum and have credible cases. The visa would be capped annually at the same level as the annual refugee ceiling.
- **Sponsorship of Unaccompanied Minors.** The bill requires criminal history background checks – with biometric samples where appropriate – for potential sponsors of unaccompanied children and other adult members of the household, prohibits placement of an unaccompanied child with potential sponsors who are being tried or have been convicted of especially serious offenses, mandates regular check-ins with unaccompanied children once released, and imposes heightened criminal penalties for fraud connected to the transfer of custody of an unaccompanied migrant child.
- **Two-Strike Policy.** Under this provision, anyone who crossed between ports of entry would be logged and directed to apply for asylum at a port of entry. If they tried to cross between ports of entry again, they would be subject to expedited removal.

Mandatory E-Verify

This section implements a mandatory employment verification system for new hires to ensure all U.S. employers are hiring individuals legally authorized to work.

- **Employment Eligibility.** The bill would require employers to attest, under penalty of perjury, that they have verified that a potential employee is not an undocumented immigrant. Employers must verify workers’ employment eligibility through a new Employment Eligibility Verification System (EEVS) administered by DHS. If the employer gets confirmation that they are ineligible for employment after hiring a foreign national, the employer must terminate the employment.

- **Gradual Phase-In.** This section would become mandatory in different timeframes for employers, ranging from 6 to 24 months, depending on the number of employees: 10,000 or more employees (6 months), 500 to 10,000 (12 months), 20 to 500 (18 months), and one to 20 employees (24 months).
- Employers of agricultural workers would have up to 30 months to comply with the provisions of the law regardless of the number of employees.
- Employers with 50 or fewer employees can request a one-time six-month extension to meet the requirements of mandatory E-Verify.
- The bill would increase civil penalties for employers who knowingly hire individuals who are not legally allowed to work in the U.S. and for persons engaged in a pattern of systemic violations and creates a new penalty for employers and employees who knowingly submit false information to the verification system.

Criminal Provisions

- **Illegal Reentry.** Increases criminal penalties for unlawfully re-entering the U.S. from the current max of up to two years in prison to up to 10 years in prison, in addition to the monetary fines. This applies to individuals who re-enter unlawfully after they have been denied admission, excluded, deported, removed, or voluntarily left the U.S. due to a removal order. The penalties are further increased for individuals with a criminal record.
 - Establishes that an individual who re-enters after being removed three or more times can be imprisoned for up to 20 years.
- **DNA Testing for Family Relationship.** Allows DHS to use DNA testing to establish family relationships when individuals are apprehended in groups as a “family unit.”
- **Voting.** Increases the penalty for voting by non-citizens from up to one year in prison to up to five years in prison.

The bill also increases the mandatory minimum penalty for child sex trafficking, creates a new penalty for illicit spotting to avoid immigration officers (up to ten years in prison), and increases penalties for harboring and/or aiding undocumented immigrants to enter the U.S.

Division B: Dignity & American Promise

The bill provides Dreamers, including DACA recipients, with an opportunity to obtain legal status and, if they remain in good standing, eventually apply for U.S. citizenship. It also establishes the Dignity Program, which allows undocumented immigrants to obtain legal status - with no path to citizenship - if they meet certain requirements.

Dream Act

The bill incorporates a version of the [Dream Act](#), which allows young undocumented immigrants who were brought to the U.S. as children and have lived in the U.S. for most of their lives to obtain

legal status. This section could allow up to [2.5 million Dreamers](#), including the roughly [525,000 DACA recipients](#), to continue to live and work in the U.S.

Conditional Permanent Resident

- Dreamers and DACA recipients would be eligible for a “conditional permanent resident” status valid for up to 10 years that would protect them from deportation, allow them to work legally in the U.S., and permit them to travel outside the country.
- To qualify as a “conditional permanent resident,” Dreamers and DACA recipients must have continuously lived in the U.S. since **January 1, 2021**, entered the U.S. at **18 years old or younger**, undergo a criminal background check, and graduated high school, obtained a GED, and/or be admitted or enrolled in secondary school.
- DHS may require an application fee that does not exceed \$1,140. Individuals who participated in a criminal gang would not be eligible for this status.

Lawful Permanent Resident

- Dreamers and DACA recipients can remove the conditional basis of their status to become a lawful permanent resident (LPR, also known as a Green Card holder) if they achieve one of the following:
 - Obtain a college degree or a postsecondary credential from a career and technical education school;
 - Serve in the U.S. military for at least three years; and/or,
 - Demonstrate employment for at least four years and at least 75 percent of the time the individual has had a work permit.
- Individuals can apply to remove the conditional basis of their legal status once they achieve one of the criteria described above. Most DACA recipients should be able to adjust immediately to LPR status without the conditional basis.

Dignity Program

The Dignity Program will allow undocumented immigrants in the U.S. to earn legal status if they pass a criminal background check, pay back any taxes owed, and meet other requirements. Participants must also pay restitution to be eligible.

- **Dignity Program.** The bill establishes a seven-year deferred action program that would grant employment and travel authorization to undocumented residents who have been continuously in the U.S. since December 31, 2020.
 - DHS estimates there were [10.5 million](#) undocumented immigrants in the U.S. in 2020. Of this group, 84 percent had lived in the U.S. for more than 10 years.
- **Fines.** Under the program, participants must pay a \$7,000 total fine in restitution over the seven years of the program. The fines are deposited in the American Worker Fund.

- **Requirements.** The program requires participants to pay taxes (including some taxes owed from previous years), pass a criminal background check, and enroll in health coverage, while barring use of any federal means-tested benefits or entitlement programs. Individuals must report to DHS every two years.
- **Program Participation.** During the duration of the program, participants would need to be gainfully employed or in school for at least four years of the seven years, with limited exceptions.
- **Dignity Status: Continued Legal Presence.** Those who successfully complete the Dignity Program must apply for the Dignity Status. This legal status is renewable every seven years. Individuals can renew the status in perpetuity, as long as they remain in good standing. The status **does not provide a path to U.S. citizenship**. It allows individuals to stay and continue living in the U.S., while barring use of any federal means-tested benefits or entitlement programs.
- Within 12 months, all noncitizens who are present in the U.S. without lawful status are directed to depart if they do not apply or qualify for the Dignity Program or participate in other alternatives.
- **American Workers Fund.** The bill establishes a fund with contributions from the Dignity Program. The fund would manage grants to states and organizations to help U.S. citizens looking for work or transitioning to different careers. The grants would cover apprenticeships, work-based earn-and-learn programs, and educational opportunities for high-demand careers. The bill aims to cover the upskilling costs or to retrain at least one American worker for every participant in the Dignity Program.

Division C: American Prosperity & Competitiveness

The bill updates aspects of the U.S. legal immigration system with an aim towards protecting family unity, reducing backlogs, and improving employment-based opportunities.

American Families United

The bill incorporates a version of the [American Families United Act](#), introduced by Reps. Salazar and Escobar. This provision establishes a presumption that family separation constitutes hardship.

- **Spouses and Children of U.S. Citizens.** Provides DHS with the authority, on a case-by-case basis, to maintain family unity in immigration cases in which the individual does not have lawful status but is the spouse or child of a U.S. citizen. In these cases, DHS may take one of the following actions: 1) waive the grounds of inadmissibility or deportability, 2) decline to issue a notice to appear (NTA), 3) decline to reinstate an order of removal, and/or 4) grant the individual permission to reapply for admission to the U.S. DHS may take these actions if it deems that the family separation may cause hardship for the U.S. citizen relative.
- **“Family Purposes” visa.** Creates a new nonimmigrant visa category for relatives of U.S. citizens and lawful permanent residents (LPRs) to travel to the U.S. This is a 90-day visitor visa for social occasions (weddings, birthdays, family reunions, and/or funerals). The term

“relative” is defined as the “spouse, child, son, daughter, grandchild, parent, grandparent, sibling, uncle, aunt, niece, and nephew” of a U.S. citizen or LPR.

- **Military naturalizations.** Streamlines the [military naturalization process](#), creating an uniform path for military naturalizations during both “peacetime” and “periods of hostilities.”

Fairness for Legal Immigrants

- **Elimination of Backlogs.** The legal visa backlog is reduced to a maximum of ten years. Individuals who have been waiting in the backlog (either family or employment-based) for over ten years can pay a premium processing fee of \$20,000 to receive that visa. The bill aims to clear out the backlog of individuals waiting over 10 years in the legal immigration visa backlog by 2035.
- **Per-Country Caps.** This provision raises the green card per-country cap from 7 percent to 15 percent of the total number of employment-based or family-sponsored preference visas each year. This provision aims to reduce and eventually eliminate country-specific backlogs when combined with other reforms.
- **Documented Dreamers.** The bill includes a version of the [America’s Children Act](#), which protects Documented Dreamers – children who grew up in the U.S. as derivative beneficiaries under the work visa of their parent(s) - from aging out of status once they turn 21 due to delays in visa availability. Provides Documented Dreamers who have maintained lawful presence in the U.S. for at least 10 years, cumulative, with an opportunity to obtain lawful permanent resident (LPR) status.

Employment and Student Visas

- **Employment-Based Visas: Derivatives.** The bill would prevent derivatives (children and spouses) from being counted against annual visa totals. Under this provision, only the principal applicant would count as part of the total visa numbers. This provision could increase the annual number of high-skilled visas without raising visa caps.
- **F-1 Visas for International Students.** The bill would amend F student visas, reserved for international students, to be dual intent visas. International students would no longer be required to demonstrate their intention to go back to their home countries after completing their studies. Those who remain in the U.S. must still qualify, on their merits, for employment-based visas. The bill also requires students, working as part of the Optional Practical Training (OPT) program, to pay Social Security and Medicare taxes.
- **O-Visa Eligibility.** The bill would create a presumption of eligibility for an O visa, reserved for individuals with extraordinary ability, for students who have earned a doctoral degree in a STEM-related or medical field.
- **Immigration Agency Coordinator.** Creates a new office to oversee immigration functions at U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), and the Departments of State and Labor. Authorizes about \$3.6 billion to help improve processing and reduce visa and work authorization backlogs.

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