



## **American Dream Employment Act: Bill Summary**

Rep. Pete Aguilar (D-CA) [introduced](#) the American Dream Employment Act of 2023 ([H.R. 1381](#)) on March 7, 2023. This bill would allow Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipients, Temporary Protected Status (TPS) holders, and Deferred Enforced Departure (DED) recipients to work in the U.S. Congress. The bill was introduced with [one original co-sponsor](#), Rep. Greg Stanton (D-AZ).

Former-Rep. Ann Kirkpatrick (D-AZ) introduced a similar version of this bill in previous congressional sessions, also called the American Dream Employment Act ([H.R.2029](#)). Rep. Kirkpatrick retired in 2022.

### **What would the American Dream Employment Act do?**

This bill would allow people who have Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), Temporary Protected Status (TPS), or Deferred Enforced Departure (DED) to work as an officer or employee for an office in the U.S. Congress.

- These categories of status would “be treated in the same manner as an individual who is a citizen of the United States” for purposes of determining eligibility to work in the U.S. Congress.
- The bill would become effective starting in fiscal year (FY) 2024, which begins on October 1, 2023.

The bill would effectively allow Members of Congress to hire DACA recipients, TPS holders, and DED recipients as staffers for their congressional and district offices. It would ensure that the following individuals have an equal opportunity to be considered for and, if selected, employed in staff and officer positions in the U.S. Congress:

- **[DACA Recipients](#)**. DACA is a program that prevents the deportation of approximately [578,680](#) undocumented immigrants who came to the U.S. as children (known as “Dreamers”), and it allows them work legally in the U.S. To qualify for the program, individuals must have arrived in the United States before the age of 15 and before 2007.
- **[TPS Holders](#)**. TPS is granted by the Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to eligible foreign-born individuals who are unable to return home safely due to conditions or circumstances preventing their country from adequately handling their return. There are currently 610,000 people with TPS who are living in the United States, and more than 400,000 TPS-eligible individuals.
- **[DED Recipients](#)**. DED is a form of relief from removal and a temporary immigration benefit. This program allows certain individuals from designated countries and regions facing political or civic conflict or natural disaster to stay in the United States. Approximately 3,600 Liberians were eligible for DED.

## Why would the American Dream Employment Act be beneficial?

DACA recipients, TPS holders, and DED recipients are generally not allowed to work in the U.S. federal government, including as employees or paid interns in the U.S. Congress. This bill would allow those individuals to apply and be considered for open staff positions and internships in the U.S. Congress, putting them on the same level playing field as U.S. citizens and Lawful Permanent Residents (LPRs).

Congress is responsible for passing and changing immigration laws in the U.S., yet some of the people most impacted by these policies – in many cases growing up and living more than 15 years in the U.S. - are not allowed to work in the institution. The American Dream Employment Act would allow DACA recipients, TPS holders, and DED recipients to work in the U.S. Congress and likely have a set of beneficial impacts:

- **Unique Perspective.** The unique perspectives of DACA recipients, TPS holders, and DED recipients would help inform the conversation and debate in Congress as they related to immigration and other important issues that impact their communities, including housing, health, education, and workforce mobility. Their lived experience would be a value add to finding common-sense solutions.
- **Workforce Talent.** The bill would provide Congress with a previously untapped pool of talent to consider for paid positions and internships. The bill does not require Congress to hire DACA recipients, TPS holders, or DED recipients, but instead allows them to be considered and hired if they are the best candidate.
- **Dedication to Public Service.** The bill would allow DACA recipients, TPS holders, and DED recipients who are passionate and dedicated to public service to pursue that field of work within Congress.
- **Representation.** Allowing DACA recipients, TPS holders, and DED recipients to work within these roles in Congress would help better reflect America's diverse immigrant community. There are [45.3 million foreign-born individuals](#) living in the U.S., including approximately [11.2 million immigrants](#) in the U.S. without authorization. The American Dream Employment Act would help individuals with lawful presence in the U.S. who have family or community ties to the undocumented or non-LPR community to be a part of policy debates in the U.S. Congress.

*The National Immigration Forum would like to thank Mikesha Withanachchi, Policy and Advocacy Intern, for developing this bill summary.*