



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on June 4, 2014

Plan to Allow Illegals to Serve in Military Delayed, for Now

The Pentagon has approved a plan that will serve as an alternate pathway to citizenship for illegal immigrants. According to a report in the *Huffington Post*, the Obama administration intends to permit persons illegally in this country to join the U.S. military, thereby granting them an expedited path to citizenship. However, the White House has requested that the plan be delayed to allow time for Congress to pass immigration reform before the August recess.



“Pentagon officials have approved a policy that would allow a limited group of undocumented young people who came to the U.S. as children to enlist in the military, opening up a path for them to eventually become citizens,” reports the *Post*.

Legal immigrants to the United States are already permitted to enlist in the military, and through their military service, those immigrants received expedited naturalization as American citizens. As reported by the *Huffington Post*, 89,000 service members have gained citizenship through that process since September 2002.

The policy change would have an impact on young illegal immigrants under the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, which gives applicants authorization to stay and work in the United States for two years, with an opportunity for renewal.

In order to meet the requirements for DACA, applicants must have come to the United States before their 16th birthday. They must also have graduated from a high school or received their GED. They are ineligible if they have either a felony or “significant misdemeanor,” or three or more misdemeanors, or are deemed a threat to security.

The *Huffington Post* notes, “The new change, under a Pentagon recruitment plan called Military Accessions Vital to National Interest [MAVNI], would allow undocumented immigrants with critical language or medical skills to enlist in the armed forces considerably limiting the number of Dreamers [named after the DREAM Act] who would be eligible.”

Under the plan, immigrants who have advanced medical skills or who speak languages that are considered particularly strategic for the Defense Department, including Arabic, Farsi (the indigenous name for the Persian language), Hindi, or certain African languages, would be permitted to enlist.

According to the *New York Times*, “legal experts and immigrant leaders” assert that only a few would qualify under those requirements.

As of 2009, approximately 3,000 legal immigrants have enlisted through the Pentagon’s MAVNI program.

Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel informed Democratic senators last week of the decision to allow for the enlistment of DACA immigrants under the MAVNI program.



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The announcement drew ire from some senators, however, such as Majority Whip Richard Durbin (D-Ill.), who insisted that the policy should be much broader so as to apply to even more illegal aliens.

Representatives Jeff Denham (R-Calif.) and Tammy Duckworth (D-Ill.) introduced the Enlist Act, which would have allowed Dreamers to enlist in the military and eventually apply for citizenship, but the measure was blocked from receiving a vote as part of a defense spending bill. House Republicans have said they would be willing, however, to vote on the measure as a stand-alone bill.

Critics have noted that the new policy is obviously a virtual backdoor approach to legalization.

Representative Steve King (R-Iowa) voiced criticisms against the Enlist Act in April, pointing out that it was dangerous for national security and ultimately encouraged illegal immigration.

The White House is apparently confident that Congress will pass immigration reform before the August recess and has therefore asked that the Pentagon delay its plan.

Fox News reports, "The decision to postpone the narrowly drawn proposal is part of the White House effort to put off any immigration-related executive actions until August in the hope that House Republicans act on legislation to overhaul the immigration system in the next two months."

White House officials assert that they fear that taking any executive actions on the subject would upset Republicans and undermine any progress on immigration reform.

"The president is convinced there is a legislative opportunity, and that gives us the best opportunity to fix what's broken in our immigration system," White House spokesman Bobby Whithorne said Monday, according to the AP. "He wants to leave no stone unturned to make sure the House takes that opportunity, follows the Senate's lead and takes action."

As noted by *Breitbart News*, the delay is the second in two weeks that the Obama administration has requested. Last week, Obama asked the Department of Homeland Security to delay the release of its review of deportation policies, hoping that the House might pass some kind of immigration reform before recess.

White House domestic policy adviser Cecilia Munoz said, "These are both modest steps, neither of which we are taking at this time. We will reassess once we see what Congress does or doesn't do.... The president is convinced there is a legislative opportunity, and that gives us the best chance to fix what is broken in our immigration system. He wants to leave no stone unturned to let the House do what it should do."



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