



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on December 9, 2010

House Narrowly Passes DREAM Act

The lame duck session of the 111th Congress is determined to make a reputation for itself as it continues to pass unpopular legislation for self-satisfactory purposes. The latest installment is the DREAM Act, which was passed by the U.S. House of Representative on Wednesday evening by a vote of 216-198.

The [L.A. Times](#) reports:

The legislation would give hundreds of thousands of illegal immigrants a chance at becoming legal. The requirements state that to be eligible, a person must have been brought to the United States before he or she was 16, been in the United States for five years, earned a high-school degree and be attending college or be in the military.



The DREAM Act youth merely need to complete two years of their higher education program or military service in order to qualify and must remain in good standing after those ten years they would be eligible to apply for permanent residency as legal immigrants.

However, as noted by [Senator Jeff Sessions](#), the bill will ultimately give illegal aliens citizenship status, which then permits them to sponsor their parents and extended families for citizenship. Likewise, it will provide illegal aliens that qualify for legal status under the DREAM Act access to federal student loans, items for which American students already face difficulties applying.

A number of different [versions](#) of the bill circulated, but the passed version reflects the Democrats' attempts to obtain Republican support by reducing the maximum eligible age from 35 to 29 in the most recent bill. The passed Act also extends the waiting period for a green card from six to 10 years and eliminates the requirement that the DREAM Act immigrants pay in-state tuition fees instead of out-of-state ones.

Despite the minor changes, the bill draws ire, particularly since it evidently includes a loophole that allows immigrants with criminal records to qualify for legal status. [Fox News](#) reports, "According to a memo circulated by GOP aides on the Senate Judiciary Committee, there are a host of crimes illegal immigrants would be allowed to commit and still qualify — assault, domestic violence, sexual abuse, reckless driving, and various types of fraud among them."

Stephen Miller, a spokesman for the Judiciary Committee Republicans, remarked on the loophole, "Talk about misplaced priorities. In the middle of a deep recession, with taxes about to increase, Democratic leaders in Washington are asking Americans to pick up the tab for a proposal that would offer amnesty to millions — including those with criminal records."

Critics of the bill contend that it is a "backdoor grant of amnesty that would encourage more foreigners



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to sneak into the United States in hopes of being legalized eventually,” reports the *Associated Press*.

Republican Representative Lamar Smith of Texas summarized the overall issues with the bill as follows: “The bill subsidizes education for illegal immigrants, grants them amnesty, encourages more illegal immigration and inevitably takes jobs from American workers. In short, the DREAM Act is a nightmare for the American people. American voters want to see our immigration laws enforced, not ignored.”

The issue of immigration reform was a prominent one for Democrats, as many campaigned on the promise of passing comprehensive immigration reform, especially Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, who is believed to have won this year’s midterm elections as a result of Latino support. Upon returning to office following the elections, Reid indicated that passage of the DREAM Act would be his top priority.

The *Christian Science Monitor* writes, “The Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act has been making the rounds since 2003, but has yet to make it through Congress. The last time the Senate voted on the DREAM Act was last September when it failed to get the 60 votes required to overcome a filibuster that Republicans were threatening. The vote was 52-44.”

The Obama White House has articulated strong support for the bill. In a statement delivered on Wednesday, the White House remarked, “While the broader immigration debate continues, the administration urges the Senate to take this important step and pass the DREAM Act.”

The DREAM Act is now on its way to the Senate, where most believe it will be laid to rest as it will likely not have the 60 votes to overcome Republican opposition. The vote is scheduled for today.

If it fails, the *Christian Science Monitor* explains, “The DREAM Act will be sent back to the House and tabled until 2011 at the earliest.”

But immigration advocates have asserted their determination to see to it that the bill is passed, including Representative [Luis Gutierrez](#).

Photo: Supporters of the Federal DREAM Act participate in a candlelight procession and vigil in downtown Los Angeles Tuesday, Dec. 7, 2010.: AP

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