

RIGHTMARCH.COM CLAIMS DREAM ACT WOULD PROVIDE AMNESTY TO TWO MILLION ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS

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Body

The **DREAM Act** the "would give **amnesty** to over **two million illegal aliens**."

RightMarch.com on Wednesday, December 1st, 2010 in a chain e-mail

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THE RULING: FALSE

The **DREAM Act** -- which would **provide** a path to permanent citizenship for children brought to the United States by **illegal immigrants** -- is on the agenda for possible action in the final days of the 111th Congress.

With Democratic leaders hoping to bring the issue to a vote in the lame-duck session, opponents of the **DREAM ACT** have amped up their efforts to derail it.

In a message posted to Conservative Action Alerts, and copied and circulated via chain e-mail, a group called **RightMarch.com** warns that the **Dream Act** "would give **amnesty** to over **two million illegal aliens**."

As the name implies, **RightMarch.com** is a conservative group that boasts being "on the front lines of fighting against **amnesty** for **illegal immigrants**." The message was signed by RightMarch.org president William Greene.

The Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors (**DREAM Act**) would allow children brought to the United States by **illegal immigrants** to obtain permanent legal status if they complete **two** years of college or enlist in the military. There are currently several versions of the **DREAM Act** kicking around in Congress, but under the version introduced in March 2009, people under 35 who arrived in the United States before the age of 16 and have lived here at least the last five years would be able to apply for legal permanent resident status on a conditional basis if they have obtained a U.S. high school diploma or GED. That conditional status would be upgraded to permanent after six years if they successfully complete at least **two** years of college or military service and if they maintain "good moral character."

It is a matter of debate whether that can accurately be called "**amnesty**." The difference between "**amnesty**," "legalization," and "earned legalization" is more about framing and semantics than anything else, said Marc Rosenblum, a senior policy analyst at the nonpartisan Migration Policy Institute.

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"That said, 'amnesty' emphasizes the fact that an unauthorized immigrant is being forgiven for having been here illegally," Rosenblum said. "There is an element of that in the DREAM Act given that supporters emphasize that DREAM beneficiaries were brought here by their parents and should not be held strictly accountable/responsible for becoming unauthorized immigrants."

The 1986 immigration bill -- which allowed many illegal immigrants who entered the United States before 1982 to earn temporary, and eventually permanent, residency and citizenship -- explicitly included an "amnesty." Supporters of the DREAM Act, however, do not describe it as "amnesty," partly because "amnesty" has become a politically toxic term in the debate, Rosenblum said.

The bigger issue here is the claim that the DREAM Act would provide citizenship to more than two million people.

In July, the Migration Policy Institute (MPI) completed an analysis of the potential Dream Act beneficiaries and concluded there are about 2.1 million people who would be potentially eligible for citizenship.

Using Census data, here's how MPI broke it down:

- 114,000 qualified people with at least an associate's degree. Those people would be eligible for conditional status, and permanent status within six years.
- 612,000 with a high school diploma or GED eligible for conditional status; but who would need to complete two years of college or enlist in the military to obtain permanent status.
- 489,000 between the ages of 18 and 34 with no high school degree, and who would not therefore, be eligible for conditional status unless or until they got a GED.
- And 934,000 under the age of 18 who would be eligible for conditional status in the future if they obtain a high school degree.

So that's the universe of the 2.1 million people who would potentially be eligible for citizenship under that version of the DREAM Act. But according to the MPI report, "historical trends indicate that far fewer are likely to actually gain permanent (or even conditional) status, due primarily to the bill's education attainment requirements."

In fact, when considering factors such as English language ability, income levels, the presence of children and employment status, MPI estimated that only about 38 percent of that 2.1 million would likely obtain permanent legal status. That comes to 850,000 people.

Several newer versions of the DREAM Act have been proposed in recent months, all of which would be more restrictive (such as lowering the eligible age from 35 to 30). Therefore, MPI's Rosenblum said, the newer versions would decrease the number of those likely to gain citizenship (to about 750,000, depending on the version).

One factor not considered is how much that number might increase due to the incentive it creates for undocumented youth to go to college in order to obtain citizenship.

"It's difficult to predict how big a carrot that is," Rosenblum said.

But even the folks at the Center for Immigration Studies, a group critical of illegal immigration, acknowledge that it's unlikely that 2.1 million people would achieve citizenship.

Because of the educational requirements, "it doesn't seem likely that anywhere close to that number would ultimately qualify," said Steven Camarota, director of research at the Center for Immigration Studies. "Nobody thinks all of the people would get it."

We called RightMarch.com to confirm the "more than 2 million" figure was obtained from the MPI analysis. We did not hear back from them, but we couldn't find any other reputable group that has analyzed the DREAM Act to

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estimate the number of people it might affect. And data from MPI is regularly cited by all sides in the immigration debate.

The **claim** by **RightMarch.com** is that the **DREAM Act** would give **amnesty** to 2.1 **million illegal immigrants**. That's very definitive. In fact, though, that's the number of people who would be potentially eligible to earn citizenship. The RightMarch.org figure assumes every single child of an **illegal immigrant** who meets the age requirements will complete **two** years of college or join the military. That's not realistic. In fact, the Migration Institute estimates the number of people likely to obtain permanent citizenship is actually less than half that. It's in the same report. We rate the RightMarch.org **claim** False.

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About this statement:

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