



A Union of Professionals

FAQs on PRESIDENT OBAMA'S EXECUTIVE ACTIONS ON IMMIGRATION

Q: Why did President Obama take action now?

A: Years of congressional inaction and failure to develop comprehensive reforms have forced millions of families and individuals to live in the shadows and have undermined our economy. After the Senate passed a bipartisan comprehensive immigration reform bill (S. 744) in 2013, the Republican leadership in the House of Representatives refused to bring the bill before the full Congress for consideration in 2013 and 2014. The president's executive actions are a result of that inaction.

Q: What do the executive actions do?

A: The president's Immigration Accountability Executive Actions plan increases security at our nation's borders, promotes our future economic prosperity, keeps families together and streamlines the process for legal immigration.

More specifically, the plan:

- Strengthens interior enforcement practices by increasing collaboration and rebuilding trust between law enforcement agencies and communities.
- Cracks down on illegal immigration at the border.
- Focuses on the deportation of felons—not families—targeting for deportation those individuals who threaten national security and public safety.
- Registers millions of undocumented immigrants and authorizes them to work so they can begin paying their fair share of taxes and can stay temporarily in the United States, without fear of deportation, for three years at a time.
- Keeps families together by ending the separation of families for those waiting for legal permanent status.
- Opens the door of opportunity for millions of aspiring American students, DREAMers and parents of children who are U.S. citizens or lawful permanent residents.
- Creates an interagency working group composed of the Department of Labor, the Department of Homeland Security, the Department of Justice, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and the National Labor Relations Board to promote effective enforcement of federal labor, employment and immigration laws that promote the consistent enforcement of those laws and protects all workers in the United States.

Q: How will the plan affect AFT members and the communities we serve?

A: AFT members understand the importance of keeping families together, protecting workers from exploitation, and ensuring that students who work hard and play by the rules have the opportunity to attend college. Some specific elements of the executive actions that are important to AFT members and our communities include:

- **Increasing academic opportunity and stability by keeping families together.** The president's actions will end the separation of families where parents of U.S. citizens or lawful permanent residents are waiting for lawful permanent resident status, and will expand provisional waivers to limit the time families must be separated while they attend visa interviews. This will create greater stability for children, who will no longer

have to fear that their families will be ripped apart. That kind of stability leads to better academic performance and opportunity.

- **Providing alternatives for educators and school employees.** The president's executive actions prioritize deporting dangerous criminals rather than families. It's a critical step to help rebuild trust between communities and local law enforcement agencies.
- **Establishing a new Deferred Action for Parental Accountability (DAPA) program:**
 - DAPA will help ensure families are kept together by allowing the parents of children who were born in the United States or are lawful permanent residents to apply for and obtain temporary lawful status and a three-year renewable work permit. The costs for DAPA are funded by application fees and do not come out of the federal budget.
 - DAPA applications are not yet available. The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services will begin accepting applications by May 2015. For more information regarding DAPA, visit: www.uscis.gov/immigrationaction.
- **Expanding the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program and opportunities for DREAMers.**
 - The DACA temporary relief program was established in 2012. Currently, the program allows immigrants under 30 years old who arrived as children to apply for temporary protective status. Under the expanded DACA program (DACA-plus), age restrictions of DACA have been eliminated provided the individual arrived in the United States before his or her 16th birthday and has continuously lived here since Jan. 1, 2010.
 - Among other benefits, the expansion of DACA will increase opportunities for immigrant youth to go to school, obtain a three-year renewable work permit, and contribute fully to their communities without the threat of deportation.
 - Applications for DACA-plus are expected to be available in February 2015.
- **Expanding the Optional Practical Training (OPT) program for STEM graduates of U.S. universities.** As a union that represents tens of thousands of highly skilled immigrants, the AFT believes the proposal to expand and extend the use of existing OPT programs has the potential to benefit many graduate assistants and their families.
- **Strengthening our economy.** The president's actions will increase the gross domestic product of the United States from an estimated \$90 billion to \$210 billion over 10 years.

Q: Some in Congress are threatening lawsuits or government shutdowns to block the executive actions. Does the Obama administration have the legal authority?

A: Yes. Like every U.S. president—both Democratic and Republican—since Dwight Eisenhower, President Obama exercised his legal authority to address an issue of great national consequence.

Q: What else needs to be done?

A: While President Obama's actions represent an important first step, we must continue the fight forward toward a permanent solution by pressing Congress to pass a comprehensive, compassionate and commonsense immigration reform bill.