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Rubio's fake DREAM Act does little to help citizenship process

Mario T. García | May. 2, 2012 NCR Today

I want to pick up from my last blog [1] concerning Florida Sen. Marco Rubio and the speculation that Mitt Romney might select him as his vice-presidential running mate specifically to court Latino voters.

Possibly positioning himself for such a selection or to become more nationally known, Rubio recently has suggested his own version of the DREAM Act that Latinos across the board support.

The DREAM Act that has been debated in Congress for some time but never enacted would concern the position of the undocumented children of undocumented parents. These children, many of them now young adults, entered the U.S. with their parents at a very young age or as teenagers. Most of them have literally grown up in this country, have been educated here, speak English and culturally are more American than Mexican. Moreover, though technically in violation of U.S. immigration laws -- a misdemeanor for not having legal resident papers -- they, unlike their parents, had no control, much less were part of a decision to cross the border without papers. They are innocent. The proposed DREAM Act -- in the past supported by even some Republicans -- would allow the DREAM Act generation to legalize their status by going on to college or to the military and as a result would make them eligible to obtain legal resident status in preparation for citizenship.

Like the DREAM Act, Rubio's suggestion would affect those DREAM Act people who go on to college or join the U.S. military; but, unlike the DREAM Act, only make them eligible to apply for a green card or workers' visa and not citizenship, or at least not immediately, and then only after applying behind many others who have already applied for both a visa and citizenship.

This means that the DREAM Act people would have to wait many years before even possibly becoming citizens. It takes years to get a work permit in addition to literally going to the back of the line. Moreover, it is not just to still deny citizenship, as Rubio would do, to these people who for all practical purposes are U.S. citizens in a cultural sense. There is such a thing as cultural citizenship, and it means that these people, as noted, have been raised in this country and act already as citizens, even though legally they are not. In good conscience, we should not deny them this adjustment, and as soon as possible. They should not have to live with the constant fear of deportation hanging over them.

Think of this in personal terms. What if these were your children? Would you be as callous as Rubio and Romney and deny them legal citizenship even if for many, their whole lives have largely been in this country? I don't think so, and Romney and Rubio should not also. The original DREAM Act needs to be passed, and both Democrats and Republicans need to support it. It is an American act.

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[1] http://ncronline.org/node/29993