

Democrats sock it to Trump compromise on Dreamers and wall



Donald Trump is presented with a pair of socks by American workers in the Oval Office yesterday during a meeting to discuss his \$US1.5 trillion in tax cuts. Picture: Getty Images

- AFP
- 12:00AM February 2, 2018
- [Save](#)
-

Stubborn Democratic Party resistance yesterday greeted Donald Trump's immigration plan, which offers citizenship to 1.8 million so-called "Dreamers" in exchange for sharp overall cuts to immigration and \$US25 billion (\$31bn) for the Mexican border wall.

As Democrats attacked what the US President had sold in his State of the Union address as a compromise, the Department of Homeland Security extended a special protected status for Syrians.

Two weeks after Democrats forced a three-day shutdown of the government over the Dreamers, Democrat senator Chris Murphy yesterday accused Mr Trump of using as "political pawns" more than 700,000 people who came to the US with their parents illegally as children and are set to lose their protection from deportation on March 6.

"The President doubled down on his rhetoric, demonising immigrants and trying to make Americans afraid of people who are crossing our border to come here to seek a better life," he told NPR.

"We didn't get any closer to a deal on immigration or on the federal budget. We got further away."

Democrat representative Steny Hoyer described as draconian Mr Trump's proposed sharp cutback to family-based or chain migration and the abolition of the green card lottery.

“His immigration proposal betrays family values and uses Dreamers as a bargaining chip to harm other families,” he said.

With activists saying Mr Trump’s plan would reduce overall immigration by as much as half, Democrat representative Jackie Speier said Mr Trump’s stance was a non-starter.

“I think we are nowhere,” she told CNN. Without a “clean” Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals scheme fix, and a budget bill without Mr Trump’s immigration demands, “I think we will be teetering on another shutdown, which is horrible”.

“Nobody wants a shutdown. What we need to do is be responsible adults and realise we’re not going to get everything we want, and carve a pathway forward.”

In exchange for the cutback to chain migration, the abolition of the green card lottery and \$US25bn for the Mexican wall, Mr Trump is offering a 12-year pathway to citizenship for 1.8 million Dreamers, 700,000 of whom registered under DACA are set to lose their protection after Mr Trump cancelled the Barack Obama program with a six-month stay of execution last September.

The stalemate with the Republicans on the Dreamers led Democrats to block a one-month budget extension on January 19, forcing a partial shutdown of the federal government, and the same threat looms over the new deadline for a long-term budget, February 8.

In his annual speech before congress on Tuesday, Mr Trump again portrayed legal and illegal immigration as a threat to the country, highlighting murders by gang members from other countries and terror attacks by people who entered the US legally. In the Democrat response, representative Joe Kennedy, made a paean to new foreign arrivals and their contributions to the country.

The extension of protection status yesterday by the DHS keeps about 7000 Syrians from being deported back to their war-racked country. The Trump administration has stripped protection from hundreds of thousands of immigrants from Central American countries, raising fears among Syrians that they might be next.

“After carefully considering conditions on the ground, I have determined that it is necessary to extend the Temporary Protected Status designation for Syria,” Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen said.

“It is clear that the conditions upon which Syria’s designation was based continue to exist, therefore an extension is warranted under the statute.”

The extension lasts until September 30 next year and Ms Nielsen will review conditions ahead of that date to determine whether it should be extended again or ended. The government has stripped similar protection from some 200,000 Salvadorans, 59,000 Haitians and 5300 Nicaraguans — some of whom had been in the country for decades.

AFP