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TRUMP'S DEMAND IMPERILS PLAN TO PROTECT 'DREAMERS'

President's new demand for border-enforcement measures threatens talks in Congress to help young immigrants

By Laura Meckler
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WASHINGTON – President Donald Trump's demand that Congress **approve dozens of immigration-enforcement measures** threatens to derail sensitive negotiations on Capitol Hill over legislation that would help young people brought to the U.S. illegally as children.

Most of the demands released Sunday pleased his core supporters, but drew opposition from Democrats and even some Republicans, including funding for a southern border wall, making it easier to deport people and new limits future legal migration.

Several people involved in the issue said Monday they weren't sure whether Mr. Trump and his aides were trying to kill the so-called Dreamer legislation by setting conditions that they know can't be met. Another possibility, they said, was that the president is trying to signal to his strongest supporters that he is with them in spirit but that he would in fact be willing to settle for something much less sweeping.

One GOP leadership aide said the Trump move was unhelpful because it gives conservatives "false hope about what can be achieved" and also upsets Democrats whom they need to pass any measure.

"The Trump administration created a crisis by terminating the DACA program," said Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D., Calif.), using the program's official name, Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals. "Now it's demanding draconian changes to our immigration system in exchange for fixing that crisis. It's wrong to play with people's lives and DACA recipients shouldn't be a political football."

Administration officials said Monday that the president believes in the proposals laid out Sunday and thinks most of them can pass Congress. Still, they said he is willing to negotiate. "There is always room for discussion with the president," a White House official said.

Democrats could try to force the GOP's hand by insisting that Dreamer protections be included in **a government spending bill that Congress must pass by Dec. 8**, which will need Democratic votes to be approved.

For now, immigration hard-liners were thrilled that Mr. Trump had taken a tough line, particularly after a White House dinner last month **where he agreed with Democratic leaders on the contours of a much narrower deal to continue the protections provided by DACA.**

At that dinner, Mr. Trump agreed with Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D., N.Y.) and House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D., Calif.) on a package that would include a

legalization program for Dreamers and border security measures, not including the border wall, according to all three people and their aides.

That **alarmed immigration conservatives** both inside and outside the White House. People familiar with the situation said the response prompted Mr. Trump's top domestic policy aide, Stephen Miller, to begin developing new principles to toughen Mr. Trump's position.

Last week, Mr. Miller participated in a White House dinner with key congressional Republicans and made clear he was putting together the immigration principles that were released Sunday, according to a person familiar with the dinner.

A former aide to Attorney General Jeff Sessions when he was in the Senate, Mr. Miller has long taken a hard line on immigration and against any sort of legalization, or "amnesty," for illegal migrants. He and Mr. Sessions both pushed the president to end the Obama-era DACA program, which now gives work permits and protection from deportation to about 690,000 young people.

One Senate GOP aide said that the general consensus among Republicans who want to get a deal done is that the principles were an effort by Mr. Miller to "box in" the president and make it tougher for him to compromise later.

With the new immigration principles in writing, it will be difficult for Mr. Trump to backtrack, said Mark Krikorian, executive director of the Center for Immigration Studies, which backs strict limits on legal and illegal immigration.

"He can't at this point do the sellout that I had worried about, where he traded DACA for some phony-baloney border stuff," he said. "It really would be seen as a betrayal for him to sign something that doesn't include some significant portion of these items."

The move was also welcomed by the House Freedom Caucus, a group of about three dozen of the House's most conservative lawmakers. "We look forward to the administration's insistence on these principles in any deal that is signed into law," said Rep. Mark Meadows (R., N.C.), the group's chairman.

Other Republicans worry that Mr. Trump has now raised the expectations of immigration hard-liners for a deal that cannot pass either the House or Senate. They are also concerned that Republicans will get the blame if Congress fails to approve Dreamer protections.

For their part, Democrats were dismayed by the evolving debate. Rep. Luis Gutierrez (D., Ill.) called the demands "a laundry list of recycled anti-immigration policies" and said the president wasn't a trustworthy negotiating partner.

"Any decision the president makes one day is likely to be completely reversed another, depending on which extremist adviser he is listening to that day," he said.

- Eli Stokols contributed to this article.