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OBAMA HOSTS 'DREAMERS,' VOWS TO BLOCK ANY ROLLBACK OF IMMIGRATION ACTIONS

By Byron Tau
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President Barack Obama held a meeting with six illegal immigrants in the Oval Office Wednesday, vowing to veto any legislation that would roll back his executive actions on immigration.

The White House played host to the "Dreamers," people brought to the United States by their parents as children, in an effort to put a human face on immigration policy.

"I will veto any legislation that got to my desk that took away the chance of these young people who grew up here and who are prepared to contribute to this country, Mr. Obama said, adding that he's confident such a veto would be upheld by Congress.

House Republicans last month approved legislation ending a 2012 program that allowed young people to remain in the U.S. and apply for work permits. The legislation also killed a similar program for parents of U.S. citizens or permanent residents announced in November. Mr. Obama vowed that such a measure wouldn't become law on his watch and urged members of Congress to consider the human costs of their actions.

The House tied those measures to legislation needed to keep the Department of Homeland Security funded. The funding expires at the end of this month, setting up a potential showdown between the new GOP Congress and Mr. Obama.

The funding bill is now before the Senate, where Democrats have vowed to block it.

"I don't think there's anybody in America who had a chance to talk to these six young people, or the young Dreamers all across the country, who wouldn't find it in their hearts to say, 'these kids are Americans just like us and they belong here and we want to do right by them,'" the president said in brief remarks to reporters. "So often in this immigration debate, it's an abstraction. We don't really think about the human consequences of our positions."

Congressional Republicans and the White House have long been divided over Mr. Obama's unilateral immigration actions. In 2012, the president launched a program that lets many young people brought to the U.S. illegally before their 16th birthday to win work permits and protection from deportation.

In November, Mr. Obama again bypassed Congress. He expanded the Dreamer program to cover more young people, and created a similar shield for some four million illegal immigrants who have been in the U.S. for at least five years and have children who are U.S. citizens or permanent residents.

House Republicans are finalizing a plan to sue the administration over its actions on immigration, arguing that the president has overstepped his constitutional authority and has

failed to enforce laws on the books. States led by Texas have also sued to block the program.

The White House says its actions are well within the law.