

## Model Essay #1

### President Obama's *Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals*

This student does an excellent job justifying claims with evidence. The student does a very good (though not outstanding) job considering multiple perspectives.

President Obama's *Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals* order granting employment and educational opportunities as well as temporary relief from deportation to illegal immigrants, though far from eradicating their negative economic impacts, is overall a beneficial policy. Obama's order is essentially a demand from the highest executive in the country to stop the deportation of a specific group of illegal immigrants who have been deemed to not be a major threat to the country. Illegal immigrants under the age of 31 as of June 15, 2012 who came to the US before age 16, have been living in the US for at least five years, are in school, have graduated from high school, earned a GED (Platt), or have been honorably discharged from the military, and have not been convicted of any felonies or major crimes, are eligible for work visas and can be granted a two year period in which they cannot be deported (Preston). There are approximately 11.2 million illegal immigrants in this country ("Immigration") and with this order, as many as 1.7 million may be eligible to apply for work visas and live without fear of deportation (Preston). The illegal immigrants who are currently living in the US, however, are a major economic drain on the country. While illegal immigrants pay property, excise, and sales tax along with income tax in many situations, this group of people still causes a net drain of funds. According to a 2002 study, illegal immigrants paid \$16 billion in taxes but cost the government \$26.3 billion, leaving a deficit of \$10.4 billion to be paid by the taxes of American citizens ("Cost"). A worry regarding Obama's order is that the benefits to illegal immigrants will encourage more people to come to this country, furthering straining the economy. Although some studies, for example analysis of the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act, conclude that amnesty acts do not encourage more immigration (Linder), there are continuing problems in Mexico and other countries such as governmental corruption, militarization in the name of fighting the war on drugs, social inequalities and limited opportunities (Mendieta), that are always present and make people desirous to emigrate to the United States. If Obama's order increases the appeal of the US and spurs more illegal immigration to this country, then the cost to the US government and therefore tax payers will rise. There is no way to know if this will happen, but the possibility exists and if it should occur, there would be large economic consequences for this country, possibly making this order more detrimental than beneficial. In the short term, however, this plan is good immigration policy.

### *New Employment Opportunities and Impact on Welfare Costs*

One of the most advantageous parts of Obama's order for these particular illegal immigrants is that because they are now able to apply for work visas, they have the opportunity to work legally and to better support themselves and their families. Prior to Obama's order, illegal immigrants were often limited to low paying, menial service jobs that paid in cash or tips such as working the restaurant business, gardening or cleaning homes, since they did not have the legal qualifications to hold other positions. Now, however, if they are granted visas, they will have better opportunities to find jobs in other fields. Also, illegal immigrants with education qualifications for higher level jobs will no longer be restricted to low paying jobs and can now find jobs in their area of expertise where they can benefit financially as well as supplement the workforce with their abilities. Contrary to common belief that many illegal immigrants are lazy and rely solely upon government aid, studies indicate the inaccuracy of this claim. First of all, many welfare or other aid programs such as food stamps are not available for illegal immigrants right away, if at all, and data shows that US citizens are more likely to be dependent on these programs than illegal immigrants. To illustrate, a 2006 study showed that 13.1% of natives compared to 11.6% of non-citizens used Medicaid and 7.7% of natives versus 6.2% of non-citizens used food stamps (Anderson). Illegal immigrants do not receive social security and are not included under President Obama's healthcare plan, neither of which will change due to this new order. Benefits they receive from the federal government are significantly less than those of natives since they only receive aid in the form of emergency medical care or disaster relief, soup kitchens or crisis counseling

centers, some housing assistance for those already in programs by 1996 and some testing and treatment for communicable diseases (Bank). Secondly, regarding work ethic, studies show that in 96% of illegal immigrant households there is at least one person who works, compared to 76% of households of US citizens (Camarota), indicating that immigrants are indeed working to support themselves and their families. Data also shows that the income of citizen households is 39% higher than that of illegal immigrant households and that the families of illegal immigrants are usually about 56% larger than native families (Camarota), illustrating the difficulties illegal immigrants have in supporting their families from their often low-income jobs. The lesser income is clearly not due to idleness but rather to the fact that either their level of education is not high enough for them to attain high paying jobs, or without work visas, they are unable to find quality work even if they do have the skills. With the *Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals* order and the ability to work legally, immigrants will continue to expand their proven willingness to work, increase their potential as contributing members of society, and possibly reach higher paying jobs enabling them to better financially support themselves and their families.

On the downside to President Obama's order in regards to jobs, the prospect of attaining higher paying jobs through legal work visas and hence making more money, might cause more immigration and a flooding of the job market causing job displacement for natives. According to a 2006 study, 28% of Americans believed that "immigration has a negative impact on the availability of jobs in their communities" and 29-36% of people thought that illegal immigrants in particular limited availability of certain jobs (Murray, Batalova, Fix). This study illustrates the negative mentality held by many Americans regarding immigration and that they feel it threatens our country. While some of this could be attributed to hostile feelings towards illegal immigrants, studies have actually shown that there is a correlation between an increased number of immigrants and job displacement of US citizens. For example, a study done by David Card from 1985-1990 revealed that additional immigrants lowered the employment rates of natives and former immigrants. During the span of the study, the overall employment rate of low skilled male citizens fell 1-2 percent, but in areas such as Los Angeles and Miami where there were high numbers of immigrants, the employment rate of citizens declined 5-10 percent, giving evidence to the theory of job displacement of citizens caused by immigrants (Murray, Batalova, Fix). Also, if illegal immigrants who have a college degrees are able to work legally in esteemed positions, this might increase the competition for citizens as well. In these cases, this order would negatively affect US citizens of all education levels by increasing competition and making it more difficult for them to find work because of illegal immigrants.

With President Obama's *Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals* order, affected illegal immigrants will be allowed the chance to work legally and possibly attain higher paying jobs, but in reality, the low educational level of many of the immigrants might not enable them to reach the upper level, profitable jobs. In this country there are over 11 million illegal immigrants and only 80,000 currently have college degrees (Emmanuel). While this educated group of illegal immigrants who fit the stipulations will have the opportunity to put their education to work and will probably earn more money, the rest will be able to work legally and maybe find higher paying jobs if they have the skills, but many will remain in the same low situation because of their lack of education. Speculatively, the amount of money spent on welfare for illegal immigrants could be reduced by this order but probably will not change drastically. More illegal immigrants who do not understand that they would not qualify for these benefits may also be drawn to the US by the prospect of working legally in higher paying jobs resulting in even greater competition for jobs and further burden on the US government. While this executive order gives opportunities to some illegal immigrants in the workforce who will greatly be benefitted, the financial expenditures for the government will probably not be greatly altered and competition for jobs will increase, making this order beneficial for the immigrants themselves but negative for the government and native workers.

### *Educational Benefits in Comparison with Financial Expenditures*

Another key facet of illegal immigrant life affected by the *Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals* order is education. With no restrictions based on citizenship or legal immigrant status placed on education in this country, most illegal immigrant children have the opportunity to go to school if their

families can afford to send them. There are about 1.3 million illegal immigrant children ages 5-17 who are currently attending school, which makes up approximately 2.4% of the total number of children in school in the US. If this statistic is expanded to include all of the children of illegal immigrants born in the US attending school, the number of children is 3.9 million, 7.2% of the school population (Camarota). These children are being educated in American school systems and there are programs in place to help them learn English (such as English as a Second Language courses which are common at many schools), helping them integrate into this country. After high school, many of these students wish to continue their education in college and currently there are 140,000 illegal immigrants enrolled in college in the US (Emmanuel). For many of the students who successfully finish high school however, the financial obligations of attending college are simply too overwhelming since their status as illegal immigrants makes them unable to receive federal grants or loans and they must pay out-of-state tuition (Emmanuel). With Obama's executive order in place, these students are able to apply for scholarships that can help them to continue their schooling and obtain college degrees which will make them better contributors to society. For the 80,000 illegal immigrants in this country who managed to overcome the financial burdens and have been able to attend college, there are great difficulties in finding a job in their field which will accept someone of illegal immigrant status (Emmanuel). With Obama's act however, they can apply for work visas, giving them a fair chance at jobs in their fields and the opportunity to put their education to work without being denied outright based on their illegal status. Allowing these illegal immigrants this chance to gain a valuable education and apply it in jobs that typically pay higher might help them to gain greater economic independence and rely less on government aid. These students will now be contributing members of the workforce, positively affecting the country as a whole.

There are also disadvantages of Obama's *Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals* order in regards to education. The US is already paying \$39 billion per year to educate young illegal immigrants and US born children of illegal immigrants (Camarota). If more immigrants and their children come to the country because they are drawn by the prospect of working, the number of children present and therefore the cost of education will undoubtedly be driven higher. In addition, allowing illegal immigrants to apply for scholarships and loans will take away financial aid from native students who struggle with paying for college. Admitting more students into colleges and into the competitive job market after college graduation might increase competition with native students as well, limiting the opportunities for US citizens to attain profitable jobs.

While there are both benefits and detriments from this *Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals* order in regard to education, the benefits are greater overall. With the ability to attain a formal education, illegal immigrants will be in much better situations to find profitable jobs and be able to make a decent living in this country that could help to reduce their reliance on government funding. Although there are significant costs associated with educating illegal immigrants, only through education will progress towards their self-sufficiency occur. Also, if more students are able to earn college degrees and more intelligent minds of any ethnic background are available to contribute to the American society and economy, the entire country will be benefitted.

### *Ethical Discretion versus Logistical Cost Analysis*

When looking at the issue of illegal immigration as a whole and how Obama's order addresses the problems, the question of ethics versus logic arises. During his term in office, President Obama has deported nearly 1.2 million illegal immigrants (Preston), many of whom were forced back to countries where they have few if any job or educational opportunities (Mendieta). In example, for the young illegal immigrants deported to Mexico, continuing their education or finding a quality job requires official verification of their schooling in the US which is difficult to attain, particularly during the often short duration of their deportation process (Mendieta). Difficulties integrating into a foreign culture added to the woes of few educational and job opportunities, makes the situation grim for deportees. The deportation of motivated and hardworking young people who have lived in the US for much of their lives to poor situations in their native countries is ethically unsound. This past summer however, the Obama administration and the Department of Homeland Security determined that the people who meet the requirements of this order do not pose a significant threat to the country. As the Secretary of

Homeland Security Janet Napolitano stated, the government should use “discretion” so that they are not deporting “productive young people to countries where they may not have lived or even speak the language” (par. 2). Instead of deportation of anyone in general, the government will now be deferring deportation measures for those who meet the requirements of the order and focusing on the deportation of illegal immigrants who are a greater risk to the general public and national security (par. 3). For the many illegal immigrants who have been living in this country for many years and have committed no crimes, (being brought here as children was not their choice or their crime), this deferment is welcome and well deserved news. As President Obama said when announcing the order, these children of illegal immigrants “study in our schools, play in our neighborhoods, befriend our kids, pledge allegiance to our flag. It makes no sense to expel talented young people who are, for all intents and purposes, Americans” (CNN). Ethically, the people who fit the guidelines of the *Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals* order deserve to be treated as Americans rather than as second class citizens who are denied opportunities as consequence for their parents’ actions. For many of these young illegal immigrants who are practically Americans in all but legal status, this executive order allowing deferment of deportation and ability to apply for work visas gives them opportunities that they deserve but had previously been denied.

Looking on the logistical side of Obama’s order however, there are definite negative economic consequences for the country. The government already spends over 10 billion dollars per year on welfare for illegal immigrants and granting this temporary stay allows illegal immigrants to stay in this country and continue to drain the nation’s funds (“Cost”). Money earned by hardworking American citizens and paid to the government in taxes is being spent on supporting and educating people who are here illegally. For a country that is over \$16 trillion in debt, (“The Debt”) supporting people who are living in the country illegally does not seem to be an intelligent economic choice. There is also the concern about the major cost of health care for illegal immigrants. According to one study, 53% of illegal immigrant children and 25% of US-born illegal immigrant children are uninsured, presenting a large problem when it comes to health care (Wolf). They are ineligible for federal healthcare plans such as Medicaid and other public benefits because of their illegal status, and purchasing private healthcare is too expensive for many to afford (Wolf). Only in emergency situations can illegal immigrants receive health care since emergency rooms are required by law to treat anyone who arrives regardless of legal status (Bernstein). Since illegal immigrants do not have private healthcare, federal and state governments bear the burden of paying for their healthcare treatment which according to one estimate could be as high as \$10.7 billion (Cover). The illegal immigrant population clearly creates a large expense for the country since they are not eligible for government healthcare, something that will not change under President Obama’s executive order. Additionally, there is also between \$1.5 and \$1.6 billion per year being spent on housing illegal immigrant criminals in the nation’s prisons (Pear). In 2009, there were 296,000 illegal immigrant criminals in state and local prisons, and in 2010, there were 55,000 in federal prisons, all of whom continue to drain money from the government (Pear). All of these aspects along with others make illegal immigrants a major financial drain on the US economy, straining both the financial security of the country and taking away funds that could aid American citizens.

As is typical, the ethical and logistical arguments about President Obama’s *Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals* order point to opposite opinions, the former illustrating the benefits and the latter illustrating the detriments. Ethically, this order is a good policy since it allows illegal immigrants the opportunity to remain in the US to gain an education and hold a quality job rather than being social outcasts with no opportunities in a foreign country. Purely analyzing the costs, there is no doubt that illegal immigrants create a large financial burden, but the *Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals* order itself will not alter these expenses. With this order, the government is still deporting people but is simply being more focused on a certain group rather than a broad spectrum of people, and in theory, the same number of people will be deported, keeping the costs the same as before. A larger problem in consequence to this executive order would be if more illegal immigrants were drawn to the country because of the job potential, creating a larger financial burden. The immediate effects, however, make deportation procedures more ethically sound without financial harm, making the overall ethics vs. logics dilemma point to this executive order as being an advantageous policy.

## *Final Resolution and Pathway to Permanence*

Although there are both positive and negative consequences of President Obama's *Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals* order regarding illegal immigrants, overall it is beneficial since they will be given new opportunities they rightfully deserve and it will not cause new economic detriments. An important issue, however, is that the order is only valid for two years and there is the question of what will happen after the deferral ends. There is no change in legal status given by this order meaning that after two years the illegal immigrants will again be plagued by the constant fear deportation and unsure of what the future holds. For this country to properly deal with problems regarding illegal immigrants, permanent legislative changes need to be made. Legislation such as the DREAM Act which gives permanent residency and provides definite answers to illegal immigrants is the type of reform necessary, but debate in Congress has made this legislation unable to pass into law for the past 11 years ("The DREAM Act"). For the time being, President Obama's *Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals* order is a beneficial policy that provides necessary relief to illegal immigrants until Congress can agree upon legislation to permanently address the issues of illegal immigration.

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