



DAPA Matters

The Growing Electorate Directly Affected
by Executive Action on Immigration

By Manuel Pastor, Tom Jawetz, and Lizet Ocampo November 2015

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Introduction and summary

In the year since President Barack Obama's November 2014 executive actions announcement,¹ much has been written about the potential beneficiaries of these executive actions and the effect that these initiatives would have on the U.S. economy and various states.² The expansion of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, or DACA,³ and the creation of Deferred Action for Parents of Americans and Lawful Permanent Residents, or DAPA⁴—together with the original DACA program that was announced in June 2012—would allow approximately 5 million⁵ unauthorized parents and DREAMers to gain temporary protection from deportation and the opportunity to apply for a work permit.

Previously, the Center for American Progress demonstrated that DACA, DAPA, and expanded DACA would dramatically raise the wages of all Americans by a cumulative \$124 billion over a decade.⁶ Over this same period, the U.S. gross domestic product would increase cumulatively by \$230 billion, and an average of 29,000 jobs would be created each year.⁷ Similar benefits would be realized in states all across the country.⁸ The Center for the Study of Immigrant Integration, or CSII, additionally demonstrated in a March 2015 report that increased wages for DAPA-eligible families would lift American children out of poverty—more than 40,000 children in California alone—and improve educational outcomes for these future workers and voters.⁹

But little has been written to date about the political impact that U.S. citizen family members of DAPA-eligible individuals—an often-overlooked population—might have on future elections. By definition, many of the people who would receive protection through DAPA have children who are U.S. citizens who are now, or who soon will become, eligible to vote. Many also have other relatives and loved ones who are U.S. citizens.

This report represents the most extensive effort to date to analyze the impact that these U.S. citizen family members could have on the 2016 and 2020 elections. The report builds upon CAP's previous electoral simulations that demonstrate that

changing demographics throughout the country give voters of color in general greater potential to influence elections in key battleground states,¹⁰ and it uses new state-by-state projections by CSII of the number of U.S. citizens who are related to DAPA-eligible individuals.

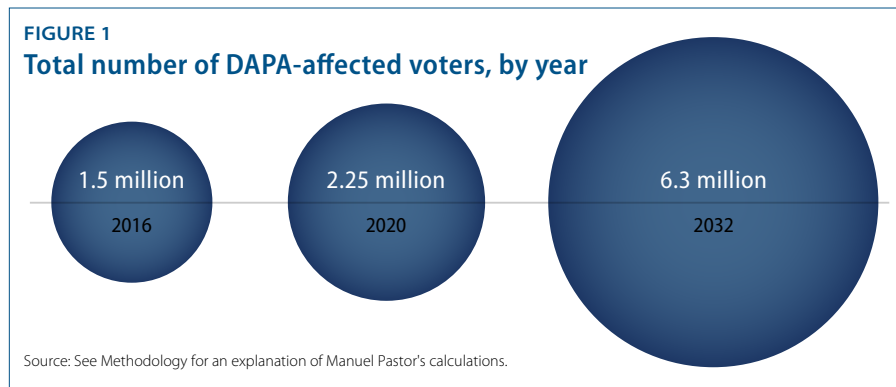
What is DAPA?

Under DAPA, the Department of Homeland Security, or DHS, would make case-by-case decisions regarding whether to grant deferred action to certain parents of U.S. citizen children and lawful permanent residents, or LPRs. With deferred action, such parents would be protected from deportation temporarily—for renewable three-year periods, for example—and would be permitted to apply for work authorization. To qualify for DAPA, individuals would have to meet a number of initial requirements, such as having a child who is a U.S. citizen or an LPR as of the date of the announcement and having already lived in the United States for five years.¹¹ To be eligible, applicants also must not fall within any of DHS' enforcement priorities, which include threats to national security, border security, and public safety.¹² Finally, an individual determination must be made that there are no other reasons to deny deferred action as an exercise of discretion.¹³

Approximately 3.7 million unauthorized immigrants could qualify for DAPA.¹⁴ In November 2014, the Migration Policy Institute estimated that the vast majority—more than 3.5 million—are the parents of U.S. citizens, while the remainder—an estimated 180,000—are the parents of LPRs.¹⁵

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, a component of DHS, planned to begin accepting DAPA applications on May 19, 2015.¹⁶ But on February 16, 2015, a federal court in Texas issued a preliminary injunction barring the administration from taking any steps to implement DAPA or expanded DACA.¹⁷ On November 9, 2015, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 5th Circuit upheld the injunction blocking implementation of these programs.¹⁸ The Department of Justice has announced that it will be petitioning for certiorari in the U.S. Supreme Court.¹⁹

This report looks at the number of U.S. citizens of voting age who live with unauthorized family members who would be eligible for DAPA under the president’s plan—DAPA-affected voters. We estimate that 6.3 million U.S. citizens live in the same household as a DAPA-eligible relative. More than 5.3 million of these citizen family members are the children of those eligible for DAPA, and about 1 million are their spouses and other relatives. By 2016, 1.5 million of these 6.3 million citizen relatives will be eligible voters, and by 2020, that figure will rise to 2.25 million as additional children and family members reach voting age.



This report further provides state-by-state DAPA-affected voter data for 36 states. To best understand the significance of these voters, we compare the margins of victory in recent elections with the proportion of this margin that DAPA-affected voters will comprise in 2016 and 2020. For instance, President Obama won the state of Florida in 2012 by slightly more than 74,000 votes;²⁰ by 2016, 80 percent of that margin of victory—nearly 60,000 votes—may be cast by DAPA-affected voters in the state, and by 2020, there will be nearly 85,000 DAPA-affected Florida voters, exceeding the 2012 margin of victory entirely.

We find that DAPA-affected voters will comprise sizable and potentially decisive portions of key and emerging battleground state electorates by 2016 and beyond. These states include both those President Obama won in 2012 and states where former Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney (R) claimed victory—suggesting that they could swing either way in upcoming elections. Furthermore, DAPA-affected voters’ influence will increase in the 2020 election and beyond. To illustrate this, we focus particular attention on three states that President Obama won in 2012—Florida, Nevada, and Colorado—and three states that Gov. Romney won in 2012—North Carolina, Arizona, and Georgia:²¹

- In 2016, DAPA-affected voters will comprise 80 percent of Florida’s 2012 margin of victory, 40 percent of Nevada’s, and 15 percent of Colorado’s. They will comprise 26 percent of North Carolina’s 2012 margin of victory, 29 percent of Arizona’s, and 11 percent of Georgia’s.
- In 2020, DAPA-affected voters will increase significantly as a proportion of the 2012 margins of victory for these states, totaling 114 percent in Florida, 60 percent in Nevada, 26 percent in Colorado, 46 percent in North Carolina, 44 percent in Arizona, and 17 percent in Georgia.

Because elections depend on voter turnout and party preference, the large number of voters in key battleground states who have a strong personal interest in a candidate’s position with respect to DAPA could have an important impact on upcoming elections. Moreover, depending upon when and whether DAPA implementation begins, the next president may have the power to either extend or terminate the initiative or to explore alternatives to DAPA that similarly offer families temporary protection from separation. This growing segment of the electorate—critical for both parties—is likely to be watching carefully how candidates from both parties talk about DAPA and the issue of immigration more broadly.

The road to DAPA

Voters of color played a critical role in the 2012 presidential election, as did the candidates' positions on immigration reform. Following a campaign in which Gov. Romney promoted a policy of “self-deportation”—making life as difficult as possible so that millions of unauthorized immigrants would leave the country²²—he received only 27 percent of the Hispanic vote and 26 percent of the Asian vote.²³ This represented a significant drop from the 44 percent George W. Bush received in 2004 from each group.²⁴ In contrast, President Obama received 75 percent of the Latino vote²⁵ and 73 percent of the Asian American vote,²⁶ breaking all records set by previous presidential candidates for both groups.

Just two days after the 2012 election, then-House Speaker John Boehner (R-OH) described immigration reform as “an important issue that I think ought to be dealt with” and said “a comprehensive approach is long overdue.”²⁷ Vice President Joe Biden sounded a similarly optimistic note about the prospects of reform, observing in the days after the election, “it’s a different day.”²⁸ Several months later, the Republican National Committee, or RNC, issued its “autopsy report” of what went wrong in the election, describing the party’s urgent need to gain ground with minority voters.²⁹ Explicitly disavowing Gov. Romney’s self-deportation plan, the report observed that, “If Hispanic Americans perceive that a GOP nominee or candidate does not want them in the United States (i.e., self-deportation), they will not pay attention to our next sentence.”³⁰ Soon after, in June 2013, a bipartisan comprehensive immigration reform bill with a pathway to citizenship passed the U.S. Senate. However, Speaker Boehner never brought the bill to the House floor for a vote, and the House of Representatives never considered alternative proposals.³¹

With legislation stalled, in November 2014, President Obama announced a series of executive actions on immigration that were intended to jumpstart the process of fixing the immigration system under existing law. One of the central parts of those efforts expanded the successful DACA initiative announced in June 2012 by providing temporary relief from deportation and the opportunity to apply for work authorization to additional unauthorized immigrants who came to the United States as

children.³² A second part, DAPA, offered certain parents of U.S. citizens and lawful permanent residents similar work authorization and protection from deportation.³³ Up to 3.7 million parents are believed to be eligible for DAPA, and an additional 1.4 million DREAMers—unauthorized immigrants who came to the United States as children—are believed to be eligible for DACA and expanded DACA.³⁴

Weeks after the president's announcement, 26 states and attorneys general—led by Texas—brought a lawsuit to prevent DAPA and expanded DACA from going forward.³⁵ These initiatives remain on hold pursuant to a preliminary injunction issued by a federal court in Texas, which was upheld by the 5th Circuit Court of Appeals and may soon be on its way to the Supreme Court.³⁶

Changing demographics and the electorate's connection to immigration policy

Earlier this year, CAP analyzed the political implications of the demographic changes that are taking place throughout the country.³⁷ As has been well-documented, people of color are becoming an increasing share of states' electorates and are projected to make up a majority of the overall population by 2055.³⁸ What that earlier report illustrated is that—taking the demographic shifts into account—if the 2016 Democratic presidential candidate is able to retain the high turnout and voter preference among people of color that President Obama received in 2012, he or she will more easily win battleground states such as Colorado, Florida, and Nevada and will potentially even win in a state such as North Carolina, which President Obama lost in 2012. But even if the Republican candidate regains the relatively high voter preferences across all racial and ethnic groups that President Bush achieved in 2004, that candidate would still struggle to win key battleground states such as Ohio and Nevada.³⁹ This also is true in states such as Colorado, Nevada, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Virginia—even when the Republican candidate's support from voters of color reverts to 2004 levels but support from non-Hispanic white voters remains at 2012 levels.⁴⁰

The important takeaway from that earlier report is that rapid demographic changes are providing voters of color with great potential to influence future elections. And the key to realizing this potential comes down to voter turnout and party preference.

So what influences turnout and party preference for voters of color? For Latino and Asian American voters, immigration is a key litmus-test issue. According to 2014 election-eve polling by Latino Decisions, immigration was the number one issue for Latino voters.⁴¹ In similar polling by Asian American Decisions, about half of Asian American voters cited immigration as the most or one of the most important issues in deciding how they planned to vote.⁴² A subsequent Latino Decisions poll also showed that, across party affiliation, 89 percent of Latino voters supported the president's executive action on DAPA.⁴³ The Public Religion Research Institute, or PRRI, similarly showed that 8 in 10 Latinos and African

Americans support executive action on immigration.⁴⁴ While there is not extensive polling on Asian American support for executive action, the Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund found that 65 percent of “Asian American voters in 11 states strongly supported executive action.”⁴⁵

These poll numbers should come as no surprise because the vast majority of unauthorized immigrants affected by immigration reform and the executive actions are people of color. An estimated 77 percent of unauthorized immigrants are from Mexico, Central America, and South America; 14 percent are from Asia; and 5 percent are from Africa and the Caribbean.⁴⁶ Nearly two-thirds of Latino registered voters have a family member, friend, co-worker, or other acquaintance who is unauthorized.⁴⁷ These voters, then, likely care deeply about how the candidates and the parties speak about immigration reform and executive action.

The questions that this report set out to answer are: How many eligible voters have a direct, personal connection to DAPA-eligible individuals; and what influence could those voters have on the 2016 election cycle and beyond?

The potential electoral impacts of DAPA-affected voters

In our analysis, we identified the number of eligible voters—U.S. citizens over age 18—who live in the same household as a relative who would be eligible for DAPA. These family members include children, parents, spouses, siblings, grandparents, in-laws, and other relatives of such people who likely have a deep personal interest in whether their relative is able to obtain DAPA. To get a sense of their voting power, we then projected their numbers for the 2016 and 2020 election cycles.

As explained in the Methodology section of this report, to get at the number of potential DAPA-affected voters, we first estimated the total unauthorized population and the population that would likely be eligible to apply for DAPA, and then we estimated the number of family members living in the same household as these DAPA-eligible individuals. From this, we estimated the number of family members who are U.S. citizens who would be old enough to vote in the 2016 and 2020 elections. For various reasons explained in the Methodology, these numbers are likely conservative. For instance, there are surely relatives living outside the household and other voters who may be friends or colleagues of DAPA-eligible individuals who would similarly care about a candidate’s position on the issue. It also may be worth noting that we focused on DAPA-affected voters and not DACA-affected voters. While the number of U.S. citizen family members who are affected by DAPA is so much greater, identifying DACA-affected voters is similarly important. Nonetheless, these figures represent a significant, and until-now overlooked, voting population.

TABLE 1
2016 and 2020 DAPA-affected voters nationwide

Citizen children of DAPA-eligible parents	Citizen spouses and additional relatives of DAPA-eligible parents	Total number of DAPA-affected voters by		
		2016	2020	2032
5,338,000	942,000	1,488,000	2,252,000	6,280,000

Note: The numbers in this table are rounded to the nearest 1,000.
Source: See Methodology for an explanation of Manuel Pastor’s calculations.

We found that the estimated 3.7 million individuals who are DAPA eligible have nearly 6.3 million family members who are U.S. citizens living in the same household. Out of this number, more than 5.3 million citizens are the children of DAPA-eligible individuals, and about 1 million citizens are their spouses and other relatives.

Because the majority of these citizen relatives—mainly, the children of those that are DAPA eligible—are under age 18 and thus not yet eligible to vote, the full voting power of this population will not be realized for some time. As shown in Figure 1, we estimate that nearly 1.5 million family members of DAPA-eligible individuals will be eligible to vote in 2016, and as more citizen children turn 18 and become eligible to vote, this number is projected to increase dramatically. In 2020, DAPA-affected eligible voters are estimated to exceed 2.25 million in number—a 50 percent increase from 2016. The vast majority of DAPA-affected voters are Latino or Asian American and Pacific Islander—82 percent and 8 percent, respectively, in 2016.⁴⁸

And these are just the medium-term electoral dynamics and consequences. At least 4 million remaining family member voters will reach age 18 by 2032, and our estimates do not include DAPA-affected relatives who are currently lawful permanent residents and who may choose to naturalize, in part, as a result of their concern about the tone of the debate and the need to find solutions that better the lives of their families.

DAPA-affected voters in the states

The significance of this growing electorate is most notable at the state level. In Table 2, we estimate the number of DAPA-affected voters in 22 states and compare that number with the margin of victory in each state's presidential contest in 2012 to illustrate the potential impact that those voters could have in 2016 and 2020. In Table 3, we show 14 additional states that were not captured in Table 2 that will have more than 5,000 DAPA-affected voters in either 2016 or 2020, ordered by number of voters in 2016.

TABLE 2

2016 and 2020 DAPA-affected voters and 2012 presidential election margins of victory, by state

State	Electoral votes	2012 margin of victory, in votes	2016 DAPA-affected voters	2016 share of 2012 margin of victory	2020 DAPA-affected voters	2020 share of 2012 margin of victory
Florida	29	74,000	60,000	80%	85,000	114%
Nevada	6	68,000	27,000	40%	41,000	60%
Arizona	11	208,000	60,000	29%	92,000	44%
North Carolina	15	92,000	24,000	26%	42,000	46%
Texas	38	1,262,000	276,000	22%	428,000	34%
New Mexico	5	80,000	15,000	19%	22,000	28%
California	55	3,014,000	531,000	18%	784,000	26%
Colorado	9	138,000	21,000	15%	36,000	26%
Virginia	13	149,000	20,000	13%	29,000	20%
Georgia	16	305,000	34,000	11%	53,000	17%
Illinois	20	884,000	77,000	9%	120,000	14%
Oregon	7	216,000	15,000	7%	25,000	11%
Washington	12	465,000	28,000	6%	45,000	10%
Iowa	6	92,000	5,000	5%	8,000	9%
New Jersey	14	648,000	32,000	5%	47,000	7%
Pennsylvania	20	310,000	12,000	4%	16,000	5%
Kansas	6	250,000	10,000	4%	16,000	6%
New York	29	1,995,000	79,000	4%	115,000	6%
Ohio	18	166,000	7,000	4%	9,000	5%
Indiana	11	269,000	9,000	4%	15,000	5%
Minnesota	10	226,000	7,000	3%	11,000	5%
Wisconsin	10	213,000	6,000	3%	12,000	5%

Note: The numbers in this table are rounded to the nearest 1,000.

Source: See Methodology for an explanation of Manuel Pastor's calculations.

TABLE 3
2016 and 2020 DAPA-affected voters by state

State	Electoral votes	2016 DAPA-affected voters	2020 DAPA-affected voters
Maryland	10	16,000	22,000
Michigan	16	10,000	18,000
Utah	6	11,000	18,000
Massachusetts	11	14,000	20,000
Arkansas	6	7,000	11,000
Connecticut	7	7,000	11,000
Nebraska	5	5,000	8,000
Idaho	4	6,000	8,000
Hawaii	4	4,000	6,000
Oklahoma	7	10,000	15,000
South Carolina	9	4,000	7,000
Tennessee	11	10,000	16,000
Missouri	10	5,000	7,000
Alabama	9	5,000	8,000

Note: This table presents states with more than 5,000 DAPA-affected voters that were not included in Table 2 for 2016 or 2020. States not included in either Table 1 or Table 2 had fewer than 5,000 DAPA-affected voters for 2016 or 2020. The numbers in this table are rounded to the nearest 1,000.

Source: See Methodology for an explanation of Manuel Pastor’s calculations.

Below, we delve into six current and emerging battleground states. President Obama won the first three that we discuss—Florida, Nevada, and Colorado—in 2012, and Gov. Romney won the final three states—North Carolina, Arizona, and Georgia. We explain the extent to which DAPA-affected voters—who likely have strong motivations to care about candidates’ immigration positions—could play a critical role in determining which way states’ electoral votes go. Importantly, all of these states, with the exception of Colorado, joined Texas as a plaintiff in the lawsuit that is currently preventing implementation of DAPA.⁴⁹ DAPA-affected voters in these states may therefore have additional motivation to be engaged in upcoming elections.

Providing in-depth analysis of DAPA-affected voters in these states is particularly relevant given that immigration has become a prominent topic in the 2016 presidential race.⁵⁰ Political analysts opine that anti-immigrant stances may affect the presidential race, as Proposition 187⁵¹ did in California. Proposition 187 was a highly controversial ballot initiative championed by then-Gov. Pete Wilson (R)

that denied public services, including health care and education, to unauthorized immigrants. The initiative played a key role in Gov. Wilson's 1994 re-election campaign, helping mobilize the civic engagement of minority voters and significantly weaken the Republican Party's standing in California.⁵²

In all six states, voters will be considering not only candidates for the presidency but also for the U.S. Senate. And many of these Senate races are expected to be very close.⁵³ Consequently, the results of these elections will help determine which party has control of the Senate and how strong that control is. Republicans won control of the Senate in the 2014 election cycle and currently hold a four-vote majority.⁵⁴ However, because the two independent senators caucus with Senate Democrats, Republicans need to gain six seats to make themselves filibuster-proof. To regain control of the chamber in 2016, Democrats would need to gain four or five seats, depending on the outcome of the presidential election. In 2016, Republicans have 24 seats to defend, while Democrats have only 10.⁵⁵ And voter numbers presented here could affect the 2020 Senate races as well, which will see elections in many states with high DAPA-affected voter influence.

Florida

For the past four presidential elections, Florida's electoral votes have been won in extremely close elections. Many recall the 2000 presidential election in which George W. Bush won the state by a mere 537 votes after a recount and a controversial Supreme Court ruling.⁵⁶ In 2012, President Obama won the state by only about 74,000 votes—once again the smallest margin of any state in the nation at 0.9 percent.⁵⁷

The proportion of voters of color in Florida is one of the largest in the nation, and it is an increasingly significant share of the state's electorate. In the last election, people of color made up 33.6 percent of Florida's eligible voters⁵⁸ and will reach 37.9 percent in 2016.⁵⁹ In 2016, Latino voters will comprise 20.2 percent of the state's electorate, and Asian voters will comprise 2.2 percent.⁶⁰

CAP previously demonstrated that if the 2016 Democratic presidential candidate retains the same level of support from Florida voters of color that President Obama achieved in 2012, the Democratic presidential candidate would more easily win the state based solely on its changing demographics.⁶¹ But if the 2016

Republican presidential candidate can regain the high level of support from voters of color that President Bush received in 2004, the Republican candidate would take back Florida by a narrow margin of less than 1 percent.⁶²

Not surprisingly, party preference among voters of color in Florida has tracked with the victorious party: In 2004, President Bush earned 56 percent of the Latino vote and 44 percent of the Asian American vote; however, in 2012, support for the Republican candidate fell to 39 percent and 26 percent, respectively.⁶³ Florida, then, is truly a swing state, and the turnout rates and party preferences of voters of color could make all the difference.

It is notable, therefore, that DAPA-affected Florida voters in 2016 will comprise 80 percent of the 2012 margin of victory in the state. By 2020, DAPA-affected voters in the state will make up 114 percent of the 2012 margin of victory.

In 2016, Florida voters also will decide who will replace Sen. Marco Rubio (R), who has stated that he will not run for re-election.⁶⁴ Florida's last statewide election was for governor in 2014, where the Republican candidate received less than 1.1 percentage points more than the Democratic candidate—a vote difference of slightly more than 64,000 votes.⁶⁵ Given that nearly 60,000 voters in Florida's 2016 election will be personally affected by DAPA, they could play a major role in deciding this Senate race and determining the balance of power in the U.S. Senate.

Nevada

Nevada is another battleground state in which DAPA-affected voters may have a substantial effect on upcoming elections. While President Obama won the state's six electoral votes in 2012 by 6.7 percentage points,⁶⁶ Nevada remains a swing state that President Bush won in 2004 by just 2.6 percentage points.⁶⁷

Nevada is experiencing rapid demographic changes, and voters of color are comprising a larger portion of the electorate each year. From 2012 to 2016, voters of color will jump from 31.4 percent of the state's electorate to 37 percent.⁶⁸ The Latino vote share will reach 18.8 percent, an increase of 2.9 percent over that time period, and the Asian American vote share will grow 1.4 percent, to 8.1 percent of the electorate.

Nevada's changing demographics will have particularly significant electoral implications for future presidential campaigns. If racial and ethnic groups have the same turnout and party preference rates as they did in 2012, the 2016 Democratic presidential candidate can easily win Nevada by more than 9 percentage points, based on CAP's previous simulations. But even if the Republican candidate were to secure the party's 2004 level of support from voters of color—regardless of whether the candidate secures the party's 2004 or 2012 level of support from non-Hispanic white voters—the candidate would still lose the state. Essentially, for the Republican presidential candidate to be competitive in Nevada, that candidate would need to exceed President Bush's support among voters of color or Gov. Romney's support among non-Hispanic white voters—or both.

Candidates from both parties likely could increase support from voters of color by backing implementation of DAPA. In 2016, the more than 27,000 Nevada voters who live in the same household as a DAPA-eligible family member will make up 40 percent of the state's 2012 margin of victory. The number of voters in Nevada who will be personally affected by DAPA in 2016 is itself greater than President Bush's 2004 margin of victory in the state.

Nevada's 2016 DAPA-affected voters are not only significant for the presidential race but for a key Senate race as well. Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid's (D) decision not to seek re-election opened up a competitive Senate seat.⁶⁹ When Sen. Reid last ran for re-election in 2010, Republican candidate Sharron Angle ran ads that were widely criticized as anti-immigrant.⁷⁰ Political analysts believe that these ads helped mobilize voters of color in the state and are partially responsible for the fact that Hispanic voters accounted for a record 16 percent of voters.⁷¹ In Nevada's most recent Senate race in 2012, Republican Dean Heller won his Senate seat by a little more than 11,000 votes.⁷² In 2016, there will be nearly 2.4 times that number of DAPA-affected voters in the state. And voter turnout and party preference may be further affected by the fact that one Democratic candidate, former Nevada Attorney General Catherine Cortez Masto, who is vying to replace Sen. Reid is poised to become the first Latina to serve in the U.S. Senate if elected.⁷³

These voters will be heading to the polls with the backdrop of their state helping block DAPA and DACA expansion. Earlier this year, Nevada Attorney General Adam Laxalt (R) joined the lawsuit led by the state of Texas to block implementation of these programs. The decision was made without the support of the state's Republican governor, Brian Sandoval, who has largely avoided taking a position with respect to DAPA itself.⁷⁴

Those who are vying for statewide election in Nevada also should take note of the increased influence that Nevada's DAPA-affected voters will have over time. In 2020, DAPA-affected voters will comprise 60 percent of Nevada's 2012 margin of victory, with nearly 41,000 voters. Given the importance of DAPA to voters in Nevada, it is little surprise that President Obama chose a Las Vegas high school as the site of his 2013 speech to launch the campaign for comprehensive immigration reform and that he returned to that high school in November 2014 to make his pitch for DAPA and expanded DACA.⁷⁵

Colorado

Colorado had one of the smallest margins of victory of any state in 2012. President Obama won the state's nine electoral votes by less than 140,000 votes—a 5.4 percent margin of victory.⁷⁶ The 2014 race for the U.S. Senate was even closer, with Republican Cory Gardner beating out incumbent Democratic Sen. Mark Udall by less than 40,000 votes.⁷⁷ In both elections, political analysts looked to the Latino vote to explain the outcomes.⁷⁸

As was the case with Florida, either party could win Colorado depending upon whether the party preference of voters of color resembles the 2004 or the 2012 election, based on CAP's previous election simulations.⁷⁹ In the former scenario, the Republican candidate is projected to win back the state by a narrow 1.3 percent margin. In the latter scenario, the Democratic candidate's margin of victory could exceed 6.5 percent.⁸⁰

This is why the 21,000 family members of DAPA-eligible individuals who will be eligible to vote in 2016 could make such a difference. DAPA-affected voters made up 15 percent of the 2012 margin of victory, and that amount will jump in 2020 to 26 percent of the 2012 margin, with more than 36,000 voters. That's nearly the entire margin of victory in the 2014 senatorial race. As with Florida and Nevada, Colorado voters also will have the opportunity to vote in a Senate race that could have national significance. Sen. Michael Bennet (D), one of the co-sponsors of the Senate bipartisan immigration reform bill⁸¹ and a strong proponent of the executive actions, is up for re-election.

In 2014, Colorado Latino voters rated immigration reform as the most important issue facing the Latino community that politicians should address.⁸² Nevertheless, nearly half of these Latino voters did not know the candidates' exact positions on

immigration reform.⁸³ Sen. Udall's failure to strongly embrace the issue of immigration in his re-election campaign and Gardner's ability to portray himself as supportive of immigration reform broadly—though not of the president's immigration executive actions—may explain why Sen. Udall received a significantly smaller share of support from Latino voters in the state than President Obama received in 2012 and Sen. Bennet received in 2010.⁸⁴ Sen. Gardner will be up for re-election in 2020, when the number of DAPA-affected voters in the state—more than 36,000—will make up nearly three-quarters of his 2014 margin of victory of nearly 50,000.⁸⁵ Because DAPA-affected voters in 2016 likely will have strong, personal connections to DAPA-eligible individuals and may be highly motivated to learn the candidates' positions on this policy, they have the potential to play an important role in the election.

North Carolina

North Carolina is a key battleground state. The state's 15 electoral votes, which Gov. Romney won in 2012, were decided by the second-smallest margin of any state—only 2 percent, or about 92,000 votes. The close nature of the race was no fluke. President Obama won the state in 2008 by only 0.3 percent of the vote, or less than 15,000 votes—then the second-smallest margin of victory in the race.⁸⁶ But North Carolina is often overlooked as a state in which Latino or Asian American voters—or a candidate's position on the issue of immigration—could make the difference. That needs to change.

North Carolina is undergoing major demographic changes. In 2012, voters of color made up 26.5 percent of the electorate, and they are estimated to increase to 29 percent in 2016.⁸⁷ Of those voters, Latinos are expected to grow to 4.5 percent of the eligible voting population, and Asian Americans are expected to increase to 1.8 percent of the overall electorate.⁸⁸ These numbers underscore rapid growth among these communities: Between 2000 and 2010, the share of the Latino population in the state increased nearly 79 percent, and the Asian American population increased 57 percent.⁸⁹

CAP's previous election simulations demonstrated that if the 2016 Democratic presidential candidate can retain the same turnout and level of support from voters across all racial and ethnic groups that President Obama secured in 2012, that candidate could win back North Carolina based upon these demographic changes alone. However, if party preferences for voters across all racial and ethnic groups

return to 2004 levels, North Carolina would swing entirely out of reach of the Democratic candidate. Interestingly, if party preference for voters of color reverts to 2004 levels, but party preference for non-Hispanic white voters mirrors 2012 levels, the race actually would tighten up compared with the latter scenario above. This appears to be the result of increased Democratic support in 2012 among non-Hispanic white voters in the state compared with 2004.⁹⁰

Given the prominence of immigration in the 2016 election to date, the importance that Latino and Asian American voters place on a candidate's position with respect to immigration, and the broad support within those communities for DAPA, the stage is set for either party to capitalize on these demographic changes. It is therefore striking that, according to our projections, in 2016, there will be more than 24,000 potential voters in North Carolina who are living with a relative who is DAPA eligible. By 2020, that number is projected to grow to more than 42,200. That means that in 2016, potential voters who may be uniquely sensitive to a candidate's position on DAPA will make up 26 percent of the 2012 margin of victory, and by 2020, they will make up 46 percent of that margin of victory.

In 2014 election-eve polling, a greater percentage of North Carolina Latino voters—57 percent—ranked immigration as the most important issue facing the Latino community than in any other state.⁹¹ Sixty-two percent of North Carolina's Latino voters also expressed that executive action on immigration would make them more enthusiastic about the Democratic Party.⁹² The strong, personal connection that these voters have to DAPA could affect their turnout in the 2016 race, and the positions that the candidates adopt with respect to DAPA could play a key role in determining whether their party preference in upcoming elections mirrors 2004 or 2012 levels. As a result, the data presented here are highly relevant to whether the Democratic candidate for president will pick up North Carolina or the Republican candidate will hold the state.

North Carolina's upcoming senatorial race is equally interesting. In 2014, a midterm election year when Democratic turnout traditionally lags behind Republican turnout,⁹³ the Republican candidate for the U.S. Senate, Thom Tillis, won by about 1.6 percentage points.⁹⁴ In 2016, incumbent Republican Sen. Richard Burr—who voted against the Senate's bipartisan comprehensive immigration reform bill and voted to defund the president's immigration executive actions, including DAPA—is up for re-election.⁹⁵ Half of Sen. Tillis' 2014 margin of victory will be comprised of DAPA-affected voters during the upcom-

ing election.⁹⁶ And Sen. Tillis, who also voted to defund DAPA,⁹⁷ is himself up for re-election in 2020. By that point, DAPA-affected voters will make up 87 percent of his 2014 margin of victory.

The gubernatorial race is equally interesting, as it involves a Republican incumbent, Gov. Pat McCrory, who opposes state legislation to provide temporary driver's licenses to unauthorized immigrants⁹⁸ and who is a named party to the lawsuit preventing DAPA implementation. Just last month, Gov. McCrory signed H.B. 318 into law, an anti-immigrant measure that is being described as North Carolina's S.B. 1070.⁹⁹ The law restricts the acceptance of identification documents for immigrants, mandates the use of E-Verify by state institutions, and overrides the ability of cities and counties to enact community trust policies.¹⁰⁰ These anti-immigrant actions by state leaders could affect whether tens of thousands of DAPA-affected voters go to the polls and which candidates they choose to support.

Arizona

While Gov. Romney secured Arizona's 11 electoral votes by 9 percentage points in 2012,¹⁰¹ Arizona remains a state to watch because of its rapidly changing demographics.¹⁰² In 2012, voters of color comprised 27 percent of the electorate. By 2016, this share will reach 30.9 percent, with Latino voters making up 22.7 percent and Asian American voters making up 3 percent of the state's electorate.¹⁰³ Given these changes, if turnout and party preference among all racial and ethnic groups holds constant from 2012 to 2016, Arizona's Republican margin of victory decreases to 6.8 percent. Furthermore, if party preference among all racial and ethnic groups reverts to 2004 levels of support, holding 2012 turnout rates, the Republican margin of victory shrinks to 4.1 percent.¹⁰⁴ A 4.1 percent margin would mean that, if 2012 margins stayed constant for 2016 for all other states, Arizona would have the fifth-closest margin of victory in the country, closer than Colorado.¹⁰⁵

And this potential margin is even more striking when looking at voters who are directly affected by the DAPA policy. According to our findings, in 2016, Arizona will have about 60,000 DAPA-affected eligible voters. This is 29 percent of the 2012 margin of victory, giving Arizona the third-largest share of the 2012 presidential margin that is made up of DAPA-affected voters in 2016. In 2020, these voters will reach 44 percent of the 2012 margin at more than 92,000 voters.

Anti-immigrant activity in Arizona's past has already resulted in voter mobilization and organization.¹⁰⁶ In 2010, Arizona enacted S.B. 1070, state legislation that, among other things, required police to check and detain anyone who was suspected of being an unauthorized immigrant; authorized the warrantless arrest of any person who was believed to have committed a removable offense; and made it a crime—rather than a civil penalty—for a person to fail to carry immigration documents.¹⁰⁷ Although the U.S. Supreme Court struck down much of the law in 2012, it allowed the part of the law that requires officers in the course of a stop, detention, or arrest to make efforts to verify a person's immigration status with the federal government.¹⁰⁸ Similar to the outcome in California after Proposition 187, this anti-immigrant legislation, strongly supported by Gov. Wilson, led to a backlash among Latino voters. In 2012, not only did voting preferences change considerably for Arizona's Latino voters—from being more Republican than Latinos nationwide to being more Democratic—Latino turnout increased as well.¹⁰⁹ This time around, in 2016—in addition to the national debate—Arizona voters will have seen their state participating in the lawsuit to block the implementation of DAPA and DACA expansion. They also will decide the re-election of Sen. John McCain (R), who was a champion of the bipartisan reform legislation but who also voted to defund DAPA.¹¹⁰

Georgia

Like Arizona and North Carolina, Georgia is often overlooked as a battleground state in which the issue of immigration policy could make a difference. However, the competition for Georgia's 16 electoral votes will intensify as a result of demographic changes throughout the state.¹¹¹ The 2012 presidential election and the 2014 senatorial and gubernatorial races were each decided in favor of the Republican candidate by approximately 6.8 percentage points to 7.8 percentage points.¹¹²

In 2012, voters of color made up 38 percent of Georgia's electorate, and this will increase to 41 percent in 2016. While Georgia's African American vote makes up the bulk of these voters, the rapid growth of Latino voters is notable. From 2012 to 2016, the size of the Latino electorate is projected to grow nearly 50 percent, reaching 5.6 percent of the state's electorate in 2016. Asian American voters are also becoming an increasing part of Georgia's electorate, growing from 2.2 percent to 3 percent between the presidential cycles.

This growth is reflected in the DAPA-affected voter population as well. In 2016, Georgia will have nearly 34,000 voters with strong familial ties to DAPA-affected individuals, 11 percent of the 2012 margin of victory. These numbers will grow to more than 52,000 voters in 2020, nearly one-fifth of the 2012 margin of victory.

As with all but one of the other states highlighted in this report, Georgia is a plaintiff in the lawsuit to block the implementation of DAPA. Georgia is also the site of a senatorial election in which the Republican incumbent voted to defund DAPA and voted against the bipartisan comprehensive immigration reform bill that passed the Senate with a supermajority of support.¹¹³ All of this comes against the backdrop of several anti-immigrant legislative efforts in the state. Following Arizona's lead, Georgia enacted in 2011 H.B. 87,¹¹⁴ a wide-ranging anti-immigrant law. As with S.B. 1070, federal courts struck down the most nefarious provision of the bill, which made it a state crime to transport or harbor unauthorized immigrants, but allowed the so-called show me your papers provision to go into effect.¹¹⁵ In 2012, Georgia continued to consider a variety of anti-immigrant measures, including making it more difficult for unauthorized immigrants to sign up for water services and prohibiting access to state colleges.¹¹⁶

Conclusion

As the country's demographic makeup continues to evolve, the power that voters of color have in future elections will only increase. But because elections ultimately are decided based upon turnout and party preference, the actual effect that this rising electorate will have in future elections remains to be seen.

Immigration is broadly understood as an issue that could motivate voters to come to the polls and could shape their preference for a particular candidate or an entire party. As the Republican National Convention's autopsy report observed, "Hispanic voters tell us our Party's position on immigration has become a litmus test, measuring whether we are meeting them with a welcome mat or a closed door."¹¹⁷ This litmus test is true for both parties. Following the Democratic Party's electoral defeats in 2014, many observers expressed that key losses were due to Democratic candidates' insufficient attention to immigration reform, especially in places with influential Latino electorates.¹¹⁸ The Democratic National Committee's task force analysis of these midterm elections acknowledged that the party must "excite key constituencies" and "mobilize the broadest coalition of voters possible" to win elections.¹¹⁹

A candidate's position on immigration broadly, or executive action specifically, speaks to how that candidate proposes to treat the family members of real voters. As this report demonstrates, DAPA-affected voters have the potential to exert significant influence on elections in the years to come.

Methodology

Estimating the DAPA population—and their families and voters

This appendix briefly explains the method that the Center for the Study of Immigrant Integration uses to estimate the unauthorized and DAPA-eligible populations. It explains how the authors then calculated the potential voting power of those individuals who are in the same household and have a familial relationship with someone who might qualify for DAPA and who might therefore be interested in and motivated by candidate stances on the implementation of the Department of Human Services directives on immigration.

Developing the underlying database

Estimating the unauthorized immigrant population is, of course, the first step to estimating the DAPA-eligible population. In this exercise, we adopted an increasingly common strategy¹²⁰ that involves two steps. The first involves determining who among the noncitizen population is least likely to be unauthorized due to a series of conditions that are strongly associated with documented status—a process called “logical edits.”¹²¹ The second involves sorting the remainder into authorized and unauthorized status based on a series of probability estimates applied to reflect the underlying distribution of probabilities. The specific technique below was applied to a pooled 2011–2013 version of the American Community Survey, or ACS; the actual data used came from annual ACS surveys that were provided by Integrated Public Use Microdata Series-USA, with self-pooling into a single sample done by CSII.¹²²

Estimating the unauthorized: Logical edits

We started the estimation by assuming that the aggregate total of unauthorized adults in the United States in 2012—the median year of our sample—was similar to that reported in the most recent estimate from the Office of Immigration

Statistics, or OIS,¹²³ or the Migration Policy Institute.¹²⁴ Given that the 2011–2013 ACS is the most recent data that are available, and because most estimates suggest that the aggregate number of unauthorized immigrants has remained essentially unchanged for the past several years, this is likely a good snapshot of the 2014 population as well—the period when the DAPA policy was announced.

In the first logical edit step, we considered every noncitizen, foreign-born respondent—with the exception of Cubans, who are automatically granted legal status upon arrival to the United States—in our pooled ACS sample and assigned to each an initial documentation status based on certain characteristics. For example, we assumed that any noncitizen, non-Cuban immigrant with military experience must be a lawful permanent resident. Other characteristics that led us to tag a respondent into LPR status included whether the respondent worked for the public sector; had an occupation, such as police officer, that required documentation; received Social Security or disability payments; or was a household head or spouse in a household that received “food stamps”¹²⁵ but did not have a child in the house who could have been the legal source of the assistance. We assumed that those who immigrated as adults and were currently enrolled in higher education were likely student visa holders and not among the unauthorized population. We assumed, as do others,¹²⁶ that any immigrant who arrived before 1982 reached legal status through the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986. Finally, we placed respondents in the LPR category if they received Medicare, Veterans Affairs care, or assistance from the Indian Health Service.¹²⁷

Estimating the unauthorized: Determining the probability of being documented

That initial assignment left us with an unauthorized immigrant population significantly larger than it should be, according to estimates by OIS and others—that is, that logical edits were not enough to sort out the authorized from the unauthorized, so the remainder of the population still needed to be sorted by LPR or unauthorized status. To assign the rest, we first determined the probability of being unauthorized by using a technique that is similar to that used by researchers at the Migration Policy Institute.¹²⁸ Following the very clear directions kindly provided by those authors, we started with Wave 2 of the most recent available Survey of Income and Program Participation, or SIPP, from 2008, in which respondents offered answers with regard to whether they had LPR status upon arrival or whether they ever achieved it later; those who answered “no” to both were considered to be unauthorized.

In our estimation of the probabilities, we reduced that sample of immigrants in two ways. To understand why, it is important to realize the purpose at hand: to take the estimates of the impact of various variables on the probability of being unauthorized and apply those to data in the ACS. But recall that the sample to which we applied the estimates was a sample created after logical edits that excluded all pre-1982 immigrants and all those likely on student visas. Thus, we first dropped from the SIPP sample the same potential individuals, slicing the sample down to those who arrived after 1980—because that is the break in the SIPP coding—and removing all foreign-born residents who arrived in the past five years and were currently enrolled in undergraduate university or graduate school—and so were highly likely to be on student visas.¹²⁹

Next, we utilized a logistic regression strategy in which the probability of being unauthorized is determined by an equation in which the right-hand side variables include gender; age; years since arrival; education level; marital status—whether never married and if married, whether married to a U.S.-born or naturalized citizen—whether the respondent has his or her own children in the house; English ability; and several dummy variables for broad region. This specification is based on discussion by Jennifer Van Hook, James D. Bachmeier, and their collaborators.¹³⁰ Finally, we applied the coefficients from that regression—basically, the probability that an individual could be unauthorized—to the observations in the pooled ACS data.

Estimating the unauthorized: The role of country controls and undercounts

With probabilities assigned to our ACS pooled data, the next step in the process was to utilize “country controls”—a method also deployed by Robert Warren of the Center for Migration Studies¹³¹—to get a better fit.¹³² Country controls essentially mean adjusting the number of unauthorized immigrants in each country of origin to fit the total number of unauthorized immigrants from a given country that most observers believe to be the case. We took advantage of the fact that the OIS offers a breakdown of the top 10 nations of origin of the unauthorized.¹³³ According to the OIS, for example, there were 210,000 unauthorized immigrants from China in 2012, and we used this total number to adjust our estimates. For the remaining countries, we used a variety of approaches.¹³⁴

More precisely, the totals we utilize are close to the OIS numbers, assuming a degree of undercount. There is a widely shared assumption that the unauthorized are undercounted by around 10 percent in the decennial census—and by more in other samples.¹³⁵ Robert Warren and John Robert Warren of the Minnesota Population Center contend that the undercount might be as high as 20 percent in recent years because the ACS is perceived as a more voluntary survey by respondents than is the census.¹³⁶ We settled on an undercount estimate of 12.5 percent, which recognizes that 10 percent is likely too low but also recognizes that 20 percent is likely too high.¹³⁷ To account for the undercount, we initially set the targets below the target adult numbers nation by nation so that when we reweighted all of those observations with the undercount factor, we would arrive at the correct total number.

Assigning individual observations to legal status

From the pool of remaining individuals—people who were not identified as LPRs during the logical edits—we then assigned individuals in the ACS as having either authorized or unauthorized status until we reached the country controls. To ensure that we did not end up with an unauthorized immigrant population falsely skewed younger and more male than the actual population as a result of using a straightforward probability approach—sorting who we will assign by their likelihood of being unauthorized—we adopted a more complicated approach that took into account the probability of being unauthorized, but in a way that is similar to multiple imputation.¹³⁸

To understand the strategy, note that each individual who has not yet been assigned to LPR status through logical edits has a particular probability of being unauthorized. We rounded these to the second decimal and wound up with just more than 60 possible groups—that is, individuals who share the same probability of being unauthorized. Essentially, we tried to mimic the underlying probability distribution of the unauthorized from each country.

To simplify things for explanatory purposes, say we were to divide the pool of potentially unauthorized people with assigned probabilities into only four groups:

- **Group 1:** people with a 60 percent probability of being unauthorized
- **Group 2:** people with a 50 percent probability of being unauthorized
- **Group 3:** people with a 20 percent probability of being unauthorized
- **Group 4:** people with a 10 percent probability of being unauthorized

How do we then create a sample of unauthorized immigrants from China from these four groups until we hit the presumed country control total of 210,000?¹³⁹ If we pulled everyone from Group 1, then everyone from Group 2, and so on, until we hit the total, we have the problem of a biased sample, weighted toward, for example, single men who recently arrived—who are likely among those with the highest probability of being unauthorized in our sample. A simple alternative to ensure that some people from the lower-probability categories would be included is to pull out 60 percent of people from Group 1, 50 percent of people from Group 2, and so on, until we hit the country control total. But this also creates the possibility that too few individuals from lower-probability groups would make it into our sample; this is less biased than a straightforward probability pull but still problematic.

To remedy this situation, we could start with half of this sample, taking 30 percent of people from Group 1, 25 percent of people from Group 2, 10 percent of people from Group 3, and 5 percent of people from Group 4. If after one round—pulling people from Groups 1 through 4 in this manner—we still have not hit the 210,000 target, then we would continue with multiple rounds, moving from Group 1 to Group 4 until we reach the targeted total of unauthorized individuals from China.

In practice, what we did was a bit more complicated: We followed this procedure for 159 nations, 60 possible probability categories, and 20 separate runs at the data. But the most important point is that the process described above corrects for the bias of sorting by high probability and more or less simulates a multiple imputation procedure; thus, it is no surprise that our numbers are relatively close to those of the Migration Policy Institute.

With individual adults tagged as unauthorized, we turned to youth, assigning noncitizen, foreign-born minor children as unauthorized if one of their two parents was unauthorized. After adding that number to the adult count, we made some minor adjustments to weights by state to better fit our data to state totals also available from the OIS. We ultimately came up with a total of 11,375,000 unauthorized immigrants, a bit below the 11,400,000 estimated by the Migration Policy Institute in 2014¹⁴⁰ and the 11,430,000 estimated by the OIS for 2012.¹⁴¹

Estimating the DAPA-eligible and their families

We next moved to calculate the DAPA-eligible numbers. Here, we first considered the children, regardless of age, living with an unauthorized parent. If at least one of

the children was a citizen or an LPR, we then investigated the time that the parent had been in the country; if that time exceeded five years, roughly the requirement for DAPA eligibility, we assigned the parent as DAPA eligible.

Given the alignment in terms of the more difficult part of this general procedure—estimating the total number of unauthorized residents with a combination of logical edits and calculated probability—it is unsurprising that our U.S. totals for DAPA-eligible parents are close to those of the Migration Policy Institute: We both project about 3.7 million DAPA-eligible parents.¹⁴² With the number of DAPA-eligible parents in hand, we can now estimate the number of individuals with ties to a DAPA-eligible person, then count the voters among them.

We do this in two ways. In the first method, we counted based on families: We assumed that a person with familial ties to the DAPA-eligible individual would be most affected by that person's fate, so we counted all family members living in the same household as the DAPA-eligible individual—excluding, of course, the DAPA-eligible individuals and any relatives who are themselves DAPA eligible. To understand how we identify the family members, note that a single household can have multiple family units living under the same roof—and an individual family can have subfamilies, such as when an adult child lives with a parent and has his or her own spouse and children.

In the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series, or IPUMS, version of the ACS, tagging people in the first family unit is straightforward because the relationships are very clearly specified: The database identifies the household head, a spouse, children, children-in-law, parents, parents-in-law, siblings, siblings-in-law, grandchildren, or any other relatives; if any of those individuals are DAPA eligible, all the other members of the family unit are tagged as relatives.

The second—and third, etc.—family unit is more complex: IPUMS does not generally identify the relationships of people living in families beyond the primary family. And because we required a mother or father to have a citizen or an LPR child to be counted as DAPA eligible, without these family relationships, we could not know who in these families had a connection to a DAPA-eligible individual, and we also likely somewhat understated whether individuals in those families were themselves DAPA eligible.¹⁴³ Fortunately, this is a small share of the total sample, but it still implies that our numbers are likely somewhat conservative, undertagging some potential individuals.

There is another source of downward bias in our family relative numbers. Because this estimation procedure relies on individuals who are living in the same household, relatives of DAPA-eligible immigrants—such as adult married citizen children of DAPA-eligible parents—who live elsewhere are not counted. On the other hand, when we aged our population of relatives to see who might be eligible to vote in future years, we did not make adjustments for mortality or emigration, which we did in earlier work to calculate naturalization scenarios.¹⁴⁴ On balance, we believe that our family relative numbers are likely conservative overall.

In a second method that was used as a benchmark, we assumed that other people living in the same household—which could include committed domestic partners and roommates—would also be sensitive to what happens to the DAPA-eligible person regardless to which family unit they belong. To account for these additional individuals, we estimated another set of numbers that included all members living in the same household as the DAPA-eligible individual regardless of any family ties.

While in theory, this should give a larger radius of influence of the DAPA program outside family members, in practice it does not have a large impact in regard to the number of voters for this study because most households are a single family unit, and many of the second family units are mostly noncitizen. For example, when all the members of a household are included, we find that there about 7.8 percent more DAPA-affected individuals overall when compared with counting just family members in the household. When just citizens in the household are calculated regardless of relations to the DAPA-eligible individual, there are only about 2 percent more citizens in households with a DAPA-eligible resident than citizens who are relatives of DAPA-eligible individuals. We chose to present the more conservative family relative numbers in the text above on the grounds that understatement is preferred to overstatement of the potential electoral consequences.

After all the estimation was done, we found that there are about 6.2 million children of DAPA-eligible parents, about 5.2 million of whom are minor children.¹⁴⁵ These are significant numbers, but there are another 2.4 million members of the same family units who are either spouses of the DAPA-eligible individual—and not themselves DAPA eligible—or other relatives. Of course, for this exercise, what really matters is not the aggregate numbers of relatives but instead the percentage who are citizens old enough to potentially vote.

Estimating potential DAPA-affected voters and projecting their voting power

We then move to the crux of our study: How many citizen family members and household members—people who will be watching carefully how both political parties talk about the DAPA program—do these DAPA-eligible parents have?

Nearly all—4.8 million, or 92 percent—of the minor children are U.S. born and therefore U.S. citizens. Nearly 550,000, or 60 percent, of the adult children are U.S. citizens—native born or naturalized—and about 950,000, or 40 percent, of the spouses and other relatives are U.S. citizens.

To calculate what this number might mean for voting power in the future, we took all the citizen relatives and household members who were at least age 18—virtually all the spouses and other relatives, as well as all the adult children who were citizens—and then also aged the young population—the minor citizen children—forward and added them in to come up with a total number of potential voters.

To understand mechanically how we did this, recall that we are essentially using the 2011–2013 ACS as a representation of the population in November 2014, when the DAPA policy was announced. So anyone in November 2014 who was a citizen, had a DAPA relative, and was at least 16 years old—so would be at least 18 two years later—was considered to be a potential voter in the 2016 election. Similarly, anyone who was 12 and a U.S. citizen was a potential voter in 2020.

Finally, along with the national estimates and projections of the DAPA-affected voters, we also estimated these numbers for all states. Then, using data from Dave Leip’s “Atlas of Presidential Elections,”¹⁴⁶ we compared the number of DAPA-affected voters with the margins of victories in various states in the 2012 election to project what percentage of this margin DAPA-affected voters would make up in 2016 and 2020.

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