

Bill includes 'Dreamers' and wall funding

Measure would offer 'nonimmigrant status'

Eliza Collins and Deirdre Shesgreen
USA TODAY

WASHINGTON – House Republican leaders released a draft immigration bill Thursday that would provide legal protections for undocumented young people known as “Dreamers” while providing \$23.4 billion for a wall along the border with Mexico.

That funding would be combined with \$1.6 billion appropriated to reach President Donald Trump’s requested \$25 billion for the wall.

The draft legislation, circulated by House Speaker Paul Ryan, R-Wis., and other leaders to rank-and-file GOP lawmakers, is intended to be a compromise on an issue that has bitterly divided the party. A vote is likely next week, but it is

unclear whether the legislation has the votes to pass or if Trump will back it.

On one of the most divisive issues, the draft proposal would allow about 1.8 million “Dreamers” to apply for “nonimmigrant status” – essentially a conditional legal visa – if they met certain conditions. They would need a high school diploma or GED and have to be younger than 36 as of June 15.

The GOP bill would nix a diversity lottery program and limit family-based immigration. Once the “Dreamers” took the visa slots from those two programs, they would disappear – thus reducing legal immigration.

If the “Dreamers” won nonimmigrant status, after six years, they could apply for a green card, which would set them on the path to citizenship.

“Overall, we want a permanent solution for “Dreamers”, but it should not come at the economic expense of the American worker and their family,” Ali



Undocumented immigrants brought to the country as children, known as “Dreamers,” protest at the U.S. Capitol on Dec. 6. MARK WILSON/GETTY IMAGES

Noorani, executive director of the National Immigration Forum, a group that pushes for a bipartisan immigration solution. Noorani said the cuts to legal immigration would hurt a dwindling labor force and make American businesses less competitive.

Noorani fretted that the GOP-only bill had little chance of passing the Senate. “My fear is that Speaker Ryan and House leadership are going to go through this exercise, and it will collapse under its own weight,” he said.

The measure would leave in place immigration provisions that allow adult U.S. citizens to apply for green cards for their parents, and there are no limits on how many people can receive that legal immigration status.

That sparked opposition from immigration hawks, because the “Dreamers” – once they became citizens – could seek citizenship for their parents.

Those parents would be “rewarded for bringing their kids here illegally when the whole rationale” of the bill is to help those who are here illegally through no fault of their own, said Mark Krikorian, executive director of the Center for Immigration Studies, which supports restricting immigration.

VOICES

Woman learns fate of lost love

Family contacted survivor of Stalin’s gulag after reading USA TODAY story



Kim Hjelmggaard
USA TODAY

PULA, Croatia – It’s often said that the purpose of journalism is to provide citizens with information they need to make good decisions about their lives and communities. Along the way, this journalism can be interesting, tragic, even entertaining.

Journalism also is capable of reconnecting people whose lives history conspired to tear apart.

About 18 months ago, USA TODAY published a story about how a forbidden love affair in Josef Stalin’s Soviet Union resulted in the imprisonment of Lyudmila Khachatryan.

Khachatryan was sent to one of the dictator’s notorious forced labor camps, known as gulags, in 1947. Millions died from exposure, disease and starvation in these camps.

Many of those imprisoned were innocent of any wrongdoing.

Khachatryan’s only “crime” was that she fell in love with, then secretly married, a Yugoslavian military officer who was studying in Moscow. She was 17. Sent to the subarctic climate of Siberia, Khachatryan never saw her husband, Radojica Nenezic, again.

When Khachatryan was finally released from the gulag after Stalin’s death in 1953, she did not know what had become of her “Yugoslav,” as she likes to call Nenezic. For more than 70 years, that was the end of their story.

Then, in the late spring of this year, journalism the connector intervened.

A grandchild of Nenezic’s, the result of another marriage that produced a daughter, was alerted to a sad tale published in a major U.S. newspaper of a woman who sounded a lot like the “Lyudmila” whom they’d grown up hearing about from their grandfather.

(Nenezic died more than a decade before in a car crash.)

“We just want to tell Lyudmila that our grandfather never stopped loving her and that even we know the story about his love for her,” this grandchild wrote to me in a Facebook message from Croatia, a country that was part of Yugoslavia until a series of political crises caused that nation to break apart in the early 1990s.

A few weeks later, there was a more formal request: Would I pass along to



Lyudmila Khachatryan survived Josef Stalin’s gulag, where she was imprisoned for loving a Yugoslavian military officer. KIM HJELMGAARD/USA TODAY



Lyudmila Khachatryan secretly married Radojica Nenezic, who was studying in Moscow, when she was 17 years old. She was sent to Siberia as punishment.

Khachatryan a letter from Nenezic’s daughter? It was addressed to “Dearest Lyudmila.”

It read, “I was a child, but very close to my father. ... He told me a lot about you ... that you were a great and beautiful ice skater. ... It is very important for

me to let you know he had never forgotten you. ... I have always considered you a part of my family.”

Nenezic’s family produced photos and documents to substantiate their claims. USA TODAY visited with them in London and at their home in Pula in northwest Croatia.

Khachatryan was shocked.

At 89, she lives alone in a drab apartment block on the outskirts of Moscow. Her life got no easier when she was released from the gulag at 24. A second marriage ended in a premature death, and a small child was taken by leukemia.

She remains haunted by her labor camp experiences. She thought often of Nenezic and the life they could have had, and she is traumatized by the sudden end to their time together. One of the last things he said to her was that

the snow smudged her mascara. This has been hard to forget. Had he, too, been imprisoned? Was he dead?

Now she has her answer. She feels it has changed her life. She has certainty.

The revelation is bittersweet.

“I thought there is nothing that could be worse than prison and the gulag camp in the world. But now I know, it can be. It is possible to kill a person twice,” she wrote in reply to the letter from Nenezic’s daughter, referring to confirmation of his death years earlier.

“It is to kill me a third time,” Khachatryan wrote in that letter.

Nenezic’s daughter told Khachatryan her father had abandoned his search for his wife with the smudged mascara – but only because he thought she was dead.

Journalism the connector. Journalism the tearer-apart.

Teens take fewer risks in some areas, but face new dangers

Kim Painter
Special to USA TODAY

Today’s high school students have less sex and take fewer drugs than those of decades past, but they face some newly recognized risks, according to a report released Thursday.

The findings, from a set of surveys updated every two years by the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, paint a picture of teen life that is safer than it used to be, but still fraught with risks.

Condom use is one area where teens are taking more risks: Use among sexually active teens fell to 53.8 percent in

2017, down from a peak of 62.8 percent in 2005.

In general, the results show slight changes in sex and drug use since the last survey in 2015, but major changes since the start in 1991 and even in the past decade. It also shows that some newer risks, including online bullying and texting while driving, are not decreasing.

Among the findings, based on a nationwide survey of nearly 15,000 students in grades 9-12:

■ 39.5 percent said they have had sex, down from 54 percent in 1991 and 48 percent in 2007.

■ 14 percent had used cocaine, heroin, methamphetamine, inhalants, halluci-

“Emerging adulthood can be a risky period.”

Kathleen Ethier
CDC’s division of adolescent and school health

nogens or ecstasy, down from 22.6 percent in 2007.

■ 14 percent had used prescription pain medications without a prescription or in ways different than prescribed. This was the first time the survey asked about such drugs.

■ 19 percent had been bullied on school property in the past year, about the same as in 2009. Nearly 15 percent

had been bullied online, about the same as in surveys taken since 2011.

■ 31.5 percent said they felt “sad or hopeless” for at least two weeks at time – a symptom of possible depression – up from 28.5 percent in 2007.

■ 17.2 percent had seriously considered suicide, down from 29 percent in 1991, but up from 14.5 percent in 2007. Other CDC data show completed teen suicides have been rising in recent years.

The survey noted the 15 percent of students who identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual or unsure of their sexual identity face increased risks on several fronts, including those related to violence, substance use and suicide-related behaviors.