

# Measure Would Offer Legal Status to Illegal Immigrant Students

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WASHINGTON, Sept. 19 — A bill to offer legal status to illegal immigrant students who have graduated from high school was revived this week in the Senate, the first effort to advance a piece of broad immigration legislation that failed in June.

Senator Richard J. Durbin, the Illinois Democrat who is an author of the student measure, said Wednesday that he would try this week to offer it as an amendment to the military authorization bill under debate in the Senate. The measure would provide a path to permanent legal status for illegal immigrant students who came to the United States before they were 16 years old, graduated from high school in good standing and agreed to serve in the military or attend college for at least two years.

Both supporters and opponents of the measure said it would serve as a test on whether legislation giving legal status to illegal immigrants can pass Congress this year, in light of the strong opposition from conservative voters who defeated the larger bill. Opponents rejected that bill as an amnesty that would reward immigrants who broke the law.

Mr. Durbin, speaking Tuesday on the Senate floor, described his measure as “narrowly tailored” and said it would help resolve “a very serious recruitment crisis” for the military.

Supporters, who called the measure the Dream Act, said it could pass the Senate because it is intended to benefit young people who grow up in the United States and are illegal immigrants as a result of decisions by their parents.

But Steve Elliott, president of Grassfire.org, a conservative Web site whose members mobilized against the June bill, sent out an alert last week calling the student measure a “blatant deception on the part of the Senate to get a massive amnesty passed.”

In coordinated action, high school and college students who support the Senate measure staged “teach-ins” and visited lawmakers’ offices today in Florida, Idaho, New York, Oregon and Wisconsin. Twenty illegal immigrant students from California came to Washington to lobby for the bill, dressed in white coats and business suits to signify the medical and legal careers they hope to pursue. They held a news conference offering only their first names.

One high school graduate who said he was encouraged by the Senate debate to publicize his situation this week was a 20-year-old illegal immigrant from Venezuela named

Carlos. In telephone interviews in recent days, from Miami, where he lives, Carlos said his parents brought him to the United States when he was 2, originally entering on legal visas.

Although his father had inherited property in the United States, Carlos said, his father's attempts to gain legal residence had failed. Carlos asked that his last name not be published after his lawyers told him he could face deportation.

Carlos said he first approached military recruiters while he was a student at G. Holmes Braddock Senior High School in Miami. Later, he learned from military Web sites that being a legal United States resident was a requirement for enlistment.

Carlos said his life stalled after he graduated from high school in 2005. He could not apply for scholarships or admission to Florida colleges at tuition rates for state residents. Although he has skills in basic engineering, Carlos said, he has difficulty applying for jobs because he does not have a Social Security number and cannot get a driver's license.

Frustrated, Carlos said he started again to look for ways to enlist, setting his sights on the Air Force, which he hoped might help him finish his college education in engineering.

"I'm the ideal guy you want for the military," Carlos said. "I know the dangers, but I would actually like to do it."

Although Mr. Durbin in his speech cited several other cases of immigrant students hoping to join the armed forces, most of the illegal immigrant students who were in Washington yesterday said that if the measure passed, they hoped to finish their college education, not join the military.

Another illegal immigrant student, Juan Sebastian Gomez, received an indefinite delay of his deportation this week as a result of a private bill on his behalf introduced in the Senate by Christopher J. Dodd, Democrat of Connecticut.