

American Citizens First

Julia Stradinger • 9 • editorial

On Tuesday, February 12, 2019, hundreds of immigrants and their families who are currently citizens of the U.S. began a large protest in Washington, D.C. As they marched to the Trump Hotel, they declared that permanent residency should be given to thousands of immigrants fleeing into the U.S. from war or natural disasters back home (Lang). These immigrants entering the U.S. would have the option to become TPS (Temporary Protected Status) recipients. First, a TPS recipient must be from one of ten specific countries to apply for the protected status. Then, if accepted, they are granted a time period of usually 6-18 months in which they can legally live and work in the U.S. (Wilson 2). Once that time period ends, I believe that extended time should not be given an immigrant, even if they claim they need it to complete the citizenship process or other matters.

I agree with the TPS program, which gives granted applicants safety and time. After their 6-18 month period is up, however, I think that immigrants must either return to their home country or already have completed the citizenship process. The Washington immigrant protesters and liberal Americans take a

more permanent approach to the TPS program, arguing that if a TPS recipient needs more time after their status has expired, it should be given to them. Jose Aleman, a former El Salvador immigrant, declared, "We cannot live our lives hoping that in 18 months we will be allowed to stay in our homes, with our children, working at our jobs" (Lang). While I understand what a difficult situation this is, I also believe that American citizens are the first and foremost priority.

In my opinion, we can't let thousands of immigrants continue to live for free and work in the U.S. while struggling American citizens cannot find jobs.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics Survey, the U.S. unemployment rate is 4.0%, having raised 0.3% since September of 2018 ("U.S. Unemployment"). With 6,535,000 American citizens unemployed, we can't afford to have more jobs taken away by immigrants from warring countries who are already staying longer than provided to them. I believe that 6-18 months of time in the U.S. is generous enough of our country.

Letting immigrants overstay their 6-18 months also brings about the issue of money. As of December 31, 2018, the national debt of the United States of America is 21.9 trillion dollars. It's also predicted to grow another trillion dollars in 2019 ("The National Debt Explained"). That's a very large sum of

money growing by the minute. With the amount being this much, can we really afford to support the TPS program any more than we already do? I don't think so. YES, we should let immigrants coming from bad situations utilize the TPS program; but NO, they should not be allowed to extend their stay for a long duration of time. That's just not realistic.

Some argue that the citizenship process is too lengthy and hard for the time period the TPS program offers. While it is a long process, things like this can and should be fixed. Currently, it takes around 6 months from the time your application is submitted to become an American citizen, due to the many steps ("How to Become a U.S. Citizen"). I believe that this is still no excuse for letting TPS recipients overstay their time.

In 1920, my then four-year-old grandfather and his family of eight came to America from Lebanon with barely anything. Though it was hard and they were poor for a very long time, they went through the lawful process to obtain citizenship, and after doing so, began a new life in the U.S. as legal citizens. I am here because they chose to do it the right way, even if it was hard. Yes, we are a country that welcomes others, but if there are no regulations for extending time and money to thousands of immigrants entering the U.S., only chaos can result. Programs like TPS are great, but when they are abused or simply extended, it's not beneficial to our country.

Works Cited

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