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Attachments:

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **The American Legion opposes passage of DREAM Act**

WASHINGTON (Dec. 13, 2010) -- Because the DREAM Act proposed by Congress would provide amnesty to the children of illegal immigrants, displace American citizens in the limited college classrooms throughout our country and give these "conditional non-immigrants" an opportunity for federal financial aid, The American Legion announced today it opposes passage of the bill.

"By resolution, our membership is opposed to illegal immigration into this country," said Jimmie Foster, the Legion's national commander. "We don't understand why so many members of Congress feel compelled to provide for amnesty for a portion of illegal immigrants before securing our borders and tackling the broken immigration system."

"Our states and communities are struggling to meet the needs of tomorrow's generation forcing increased tuitions and fees on those already attending. So why is Congress putting even more pressure on the universities and colleges by pushing these children into our already crowded classrooms?" Foster said.

The American Legion calls upon Congress to finally address the overall immigration problem. "Both parties have been guilty of allowing this problem to fester way too long," Foster said. "Action upon the DREAM Act, a stopgap piece of legislation that deals with one symptom of the problem, doesn't address the underlying issues such as employment, pathways to citizenship, and securing the borders."

The Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act of 2010 was passed Dec. 8 by the House of Representatives and awaits a vote in the Senate. The bill would grant "conditional non-immigrant status" to those who entered the U.S. illegally before their 16th birthday and have been here for at least five years. They must be persons "of good moral character" who are not deportable under the Immigration and Nationality Act, and have to be younger than 30 when the DREAM Act is passed.

To qualify for the bill's provisions, illegal immigrants must also satisfy one of the following requirements: have a high school diploma, be enrolled in a college or university, or be a service member for at least two years.

Under the new legislation, conditional non-immigrant status would be granted to those who qualified for five years and could be extended another five years. In this status, they would be eligible for student loans and federal work-study grants. Upon earning a college degree, or after serving two years in the military, they could then apply for permanent residence.

The American Legion objects to the use of military service as a pathway to citizenship. "No public policy reason exists that would justify the acceptance of illegal immigrants into America's armed forces," said Peter Gaytan, executive director of The American Legion in Washington. "Over 30,000 non-citizens are members of our military, why do we need further to incentivize service when our military continues to meet recruitment and retention goals?"

"Every parent wants the best opportunities for their child, yet the DREAM Act forces us to provide opportunities for the children of those who entered the country illegally at the same level of our own citizens," said Tim Tetz, legislative director of The American Legion. "It is unfair the American taxpayers would be forced to subsidize the education of children of illegal aliens," he concluded.

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