

The Honorable Shelley Berkley
U.S. Representative of Nevada (1999–2013)

Special Exhibit: A Century of Women in Congress

Citizenship for High Schoolers

Representative Berkley describes a challenge faced by young immigrants in her district.
Interview recorded July 22, 2019

I started noticing a pattern. Came March, April, May of every year. We had a rash of calls from people, youngsters, that were graduating high school. There's a Millennium Scholarship in the state of Nevada that you get if your grades are—if you're going to Nevada University or community college and your grades are exemplary, you are eligible for the Millennium Scholarship. So we had a rash of kids that were graduating from local high schools, planning to go on to college, and applying for the Millennium Scholarship. The Millennium Scholarship requested that you attach your birth certificate. These kids went home. They're as American as you and I. These kids went home, asked their mother or father for their birth certificate. That's when they find out for the first time that they are, they weren't born in the United States and that they weren't American citizens. And for a lot of these parents who were American citizens, they, they mistakenly thought that they're becoming citizens inured to the benefit of their children. They did not know that their children had to seek separate citizenship. So here you had, you know, a bunch of very successful high school graduates that were smart enough to, to be eligible for the Millennium Scholarship, that are planning to go to college the following year, and finding out for the first time that they're not American citizens. It was, it was a shock to them. And after seeing this time and time again, I knew that we had to do something about this, and those, those youngsters ultimately became the Dreamers as we know them now.