

DACA deal put off to 2018 leaving 800,000 under deportation threat

Norisa Diaz

22 December 2017

Congress has put off until the new year any decision on the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrival, or DACA, the executive order to defer the deportation of individuals who came to America as minors. The postponement leaves nearly 800,000 DACA youth in danger in the run-up to a March 5 deadline for the passage of legislation regularizing their status set by President Donald Trump when he terminated the program in September.

If the legislation is not passed, all of them will be subject to deportation. As it is, some 11,000 youth have already lost permission to work as a result of DACA's repeal, and an estimated 120 more are facing the same fate every day.

In November, House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi promised DACA recipients that a deal would come before the new year and vowed that the Democratic caucus would withhold support on stopgap spending legislation to prevent a government shutdown if a DACA deal was not reached before Congress adjourned for the holidays.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell announced Tuesday that he had reached an agreement with Democratic Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer to forego any action: "No, we'll not be doing DACA ... this week ... That's a matter to be discussed next year. The president has given us until March to address that issue. We have plenty of time to do it."

Seven DACA supporters were jailed last Friday after staging a sit-in at Schumer's office and then carried out a hunger strike.

Democrats, especially those up for reelection in states won by Trump, are quickly distancing themselves from threats of a government shutdown to force action on DACA.

"We've got to get it done, but I'm not drawing a line in the sand that it has to be this week versus two weeks from now," said Senator Claire McCaskill (D-Mo.), who faces reelection next year. Echoing those sentiments were Senators Joe Manchin III (D-W.Va.) and Joe Donnelly (D-Ind.). These senators all voted "yes" when the temporary funding bill passed the Senate last night by a 66-32 margin. Seventeen Democrats voted "yes," including Hillary

Clinton's running mate Tim Kaine (D-Va.), who attempted to use his poor Spanish language skills during the 2016 campaign to convince Latino voters to support the Democratic ticket.

While many DACA enrollees are frustrated that a decision has been kicked down the line to 2018, the reality is that any DACA "deal" that emerges will be a piece of reactionary legislation to further escalate the crackdown on undocumented immigrants, militarize the border, limit immigration and sentence millions of immigrants and refugees to increasingly dangerous journeys.

Following a meeting to discuss immigration policy this past Tuesday, White House chief of staff John Kelly and other officials went into detail about the size and scope of fencing off the southern border and what measures the White House requires in exchange for a DACA deal.

This so called "deal" will allow the Democrats to help pass a bill for the increased militarization of the border and the crackdown on immigrants, while dressing it up as "progressive" by trading on the lives of 800,000 youth.

What is being portrayed in the media as some kind of virtuous fight by Democrats to "save DACA" must be called out for all of its hypocrisy. From day one, DACA has been nothing but a bargaining chip for the political establishment.

Indeed, some are already hoping to cash in, using the passage of a DACA deal to propel their own careers. Representative Michelle Lujan Grisham (D-N.M.) announced that she is canceling her Christmas plans to stay in Washington to work on legislation. "I believe that my leadership is gonna close the deal and I have to believe that," she said. Lujan Grisham has announced her bid for Governor of New Mexico in the 2018 election.

DACA was first unveiled as a cynical maneuver in 2012, just three months before the presidential election. The popular realization that the Obama administration had continued and expanded upon the Bush policies of war abroad and austerity at home, while dramatically increasing the number of deportations, reflected itself in the polls leading up to November. The worried administration

produced the executive order out of thin air in August of 2012 in an attempt to court Latino voters at the eleventh hour. DACA offered only deferred deportation for a small fraction of the 11 million undocumented.

For the first two years of the Obama administration, the Democrats controlled the House, Senate, and presidency, yet there were zero efforts to put forth legislation to offer routes to citizenship or amnesty for the 11 million undocumented.

This should come as no surprise, as the administration was too focused on deporting a record number of immigrants (nearly 3 million), establishing mandatory bed quotas for detention facilities (34,000) and massively expanding ICE throughout the country to disappear people from their workplaces and homes.

While the conditions of the DACA deal are still being worked out, there can be no doubt that the Democrats will negotiate a deal that will introduce some of the most reactionary anti-immigrant legislation since Japanese internment.

Trump and the Republican right are lining up behind Senator Tom Cotton's (Republican-Arkansas) "RAISE Act," which would end green cards for the parents of adult U.S. citizens, eliminate all family sponsorship beyond spouses and minor children of U.S. citizens and Legal Permanent Residents, reduce the age limit for minor children from 21 to 18 and reduce green card caps from 226,000 to 88,000.

Another GOP proposal, the SECURE Act, would offer only "provisional status" in the form of three-year work permits to 690,000 DACA youth, while tying it to increased funding for the construction of a border wall and the hiring of more border guards, limiting the ability of immigrants to reunite with their families, a tightening of the e-Verify system to exclude undocumented immigrants from jobs and the penalization of so-called "sanctuary cities" that refuse to cooperate with federal immigration-enforcement agencies.

On Wednesday, the Supreme Court issued an unsigned opinion which stated that the Trump administration is not required to turn over documents which "informed" or were related to its decision to end DACA, as was ordered by a San Francisco federal court to respond to five lawsuits which have been filed against the Trump administration by immigration lawyers and activists.

Wednesday's opinion, further exposing the right-wing character of the Supreme Court and the overall anti-immigrant consensus in Washington, comes just weeks after justices voted 5-4 to issue a temporary order protecting the administration from having to turn over documents before a December 22 deadline.

The postponement of any action on DACA until next year exposes the criminal indifference of both political parties to

the fate of immigrant youth who are threatened with deportation to countries that they, in many cases, left as infants. Underlying this indifference is a bipartisan consensus on essential policies of US imperialism that drive mass immigration from Latin America and war-torn countries in the Middle East and North Africa.

DACA youth and their supporters must draw the critical lessons from this experience and break completely from the Democratic Party, whose every action serves to expose it as a party of warmongers and Wall Street cronies. The Democrats deserve only contempt, and any policy based on appeals to them serves to merely instill illusions and to divert any genuine struggle against the assault on immigrants. Where was the Democrats' "concern" for immigrants during the millions of abductions and deportations that took place under Obama?

The Socialist Equality Party (SEP) rejects the noxious lie inherent in all of the legislative proposals being considered in Washington that immigrants are to blame for falling wages, unemployment and poverty. These conditions are the product of capitalism and the profit-driven attack on the entire working class. The SEP calls for immediate citizenship to be given to every DACA recipient as well as to the families who brought them to this country. Further, the SEP calls for a policy of open borders and the right of all workers to live and work wherever they choose. Only the fight by the entire working class for the socialist reorganization of society can secure the rights of immigrants in the US and internationally.



To contact the WSWs and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

[wsws.org/contact](https://www.wsws.org/contact)