

Democrats bray for immigration deal with Trump as judge halts DACA rescission

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11 January 2018

Late Tuesday Judge William Alsup of the US District Court for the Northern District of California ruled that the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, an Obama era policy which covers undocumented immigrants brought to the US as children, must remain in limited effect nationwide pending the outcome of a separate court case challenging the Trump administration's decision to phase out the program entirely by March.

The ruling came just hours after a public White House meeting between Trump and Democrats to hash out a compromise over immigration policy. On Wednesday night, Republicans led by Robert Goodlatte unveiled a bill that would extend DACA in exchange for cutting legal immigration of family members by 250,000 per year, ending the diversity visa program, authorizing construction of a border wall, hiring 10,000 new border guards and ICE officials, plus several other reactionary measures. Goodlatte said the measure was an attempt to "do DACA right."

Meanwhile, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents conducted mass workplace raids on Wednesday, sweeping approximately 100 7-Eleven convenience stores in 17 states and the District of Columbia. Twenty-one people were detained in the largest workplace raids since Trump took office a year ago. Derek N. Benner, acting head of ICE's Homeland Security Investigations, ominously told the Associated Press that the raids are "a harbinger of what's to come."

"This is what we're gearing up for this year and what you're going to see more and more of is these large-scale compliance inspections, just for starters," Benner declared. "From there, we will look at whether these cases warrant an administrative posture or criminal investigation."

Alsup's ruling provides little more than a temporary reprieve for DACA recipients, however, and applies to those who already have DACA. The judge's decision leaves it up to Department of Homeland Security to decide when current recipients could possibly apply for renewal of their status pending a likely successful appeal of the decision by the Justice Department.

The Justice Department made clear that it would appeal Alsup's decision. "The Justice Department will continue to vigorously defend this position, and looks forward to vindicating its position in further litigation," department spokesman Devin O'Malley said in a statement.

President Donald Trump responded to Tuesday's decision in typical fashion by denouncing the judiciary as "broken and unfair" in an early morning outburst on Twitter.

"It just shows everyone how broken and unfair our Court System is when the opposing side in a case (such as DACA) always runs to the 9th Circuit and almost always wins before being reversed by higher courts," Trump exclaimed. He followed these remarks up in the afternoon by insisting that any deal over DACA must include funding for the wall. Trump cited Israel as a country which has solved its problems by walling off Palestinian territory.

Wednesday's Tweet was not the first time that Trump has taunted the judiciary. When federal judges blocked the implementation of his revised anti-Muslim travel ban in March, the president claimed he had full, unfettered authority to suspend immigration and threatened to defy the decision. A revised version of the travel ban was allowed to go into effect by the Supreme Court in December.

"We find this decision to be outrageous, especially in light of the president's successful bipartisan meeting

with House and Senate members at the White House on the same day,” White House spokesperson Sarah Huckabee Sanders said in a statement Wednesday morning.

White House legislative director Marc Short dangled the prospect of an appeal to the Supreme Court which would unilaterally overturn DACA.

“If we let this drag out, the risk would be that the Supreme Court would say ‘yeah we’re overturning the decision’ and immediately DACA ends,” Short told NPR. “And so it’s better to give us some opportunity to find a legislative fix as opposed to risking status for all those individuals.”

Despite the attacks on Alsup’s ruling, Trump has already made clear that he will extend protections for DACA recipients in exchange for a militarization of the US-Mexico border and right-wing limits on legal immigration including ending provisions that allow for the reunification of families.

The fate of the approximately 800,000 current DACA recipients is being cynically employed as a bargaining chip as Republicans and Democrats work together to enact a far-reaching crackdown on immigration. Leading members of the Democratic Party are eager to cut a right-wing deal with Trump which would save DACA in some form.

Senator Bernie Sanders made clear the Democrats’ willingness to support a further militarization of the border ahead of the talks on Sunday, stating, “I don’t think there’s anybody who disagrees that we need strong border security. If the president wants to work with us to make sure we have strong border security, let’s do that.”

Congressional leaders from both parties indicated that they would not let Alsup’s decision sway them from reaching a comprehensive legislative compromise on immigration.

Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer tweeted Wednesday morning that the Democrats would continue to push for a legislative fix: “Let me be VERY clear: this ruling last night in no way diminishes the urgency of resolving the DACA issue. On this, we agree with [the] WhiteHouse, who says the ruling doesn’t do anything to reduce Congress’ obligation to address this problem now.”

Schumer has demagogically opposed Trump’s proposal for a border wall while pressing for billions to

be spent on hiring thousands more border guards, drones to fly along the border and infrared cameras for surveillance.

The effort to strike a deal over DACA and the border wall comes amid a massive crackdown on immigrant workers by the Trump administration, which the Democratic Party has done nothing to oppose. Above all, the first year of the Trump administration starkly illustrates the fact that neither the courts nor the Democratic Party can be trusted to protect immigrants.

On Monday Trump ended Temporary Protected Status for more than 250,000 Salvadorans living in the United States. None of the Democrats who joined Trump in the White House Tuesday made any statements defending this group of immigrants who will be deported to a country they have not lived in for more than two decades.



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