

# Bill Kaplan: Ryan, Dreamers and redemption

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On Thursday, the Washington Post reported: “The night before Trump delivered his first speech to Congress in February 2017, ... (he) reluctantly agreed with suggestions (to) strike a gentler tone on immigration in the speech. ...he (Trump) then read aloud (at the White House meeting) a few made-up Hispanic names and described potential crimes they could have committed, like rape or murder”. Presidential aides Stephen Miller and Jared Kushner “laughed”. Moral depravity.

The Post also reported Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen was recently belittled by Trump for “a surge in illegal border crossings”. Nielsen is on thin ice. Overlooked is that “U.S. farms, factories and businesses are desperate for workers” (Post). Moreover, the aftermath of civil wars in Central America and poverty there and in Mexico causes many to flee to the U.S. But it’s easier for Trump to scapegoat Latinos and pretend that a wall is the solution.

House Speaker Paul Ryan is at a crossroads. His only accomplishment exploded the deficit, with tax cuts mostly benefitting corporations and the rich. However, history is knocking at his door. It’s time for Ryan to listen to the humane, moderate conservatives in the House GOP caucus and U.S. Catholic bishops. They are speaking truth to power about the Dreamers (brought to the U.S. illegally as kids).

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Catholic Archbishop Jose Gomez of Los Angeles said: “The Dreamers have been waiting for decades for Congress to do its job and pass immigration reform legislation. But for many years now, reform has been blocked in the House for

political reasons by a minority of lawmakers. This is not about Republicans or Democrats. It is about right and wrong.” (There are about 7,600 Wisconsin Dreamers – Milwaukee Journal Sentinel).

Some House Republicans and almost all Democrats are not waiting. They have signed a “discharge petition” to bypass obstruction and force a vote on multiple immigration bills. The likely winner would be a bipartisan measure giving permanent legal status to Dreamers, with a possible pathway to citizenship, and enhanced border security. So far 23 Republicans and 190 Democrats have signed, leaving only 5 more needed. Wisconsin Democratic Representatives Ron Kind, Gwen Moore and Mark Pocan are on board, but no Wisconsin GOP representative has signed. I urge Green Bay Republican Representative Mike Gallagher to sign. After all he is a member of the bipartisan Problem Solvers Caucus.

On Thursday, House GOP Chief Deputy Whip Patrick McHenry said the “discharge petition” would get the final five signatures. Ryan is looking for a “sweet spot” to avoid losing control to a bipartisan majority and a bitter fight within the House GOP caucus. But there is only one pathway to redemption for Ryan. Listen to the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops: “We urge a bipartisan solution forward that is narrowly tailored. Time is of the essence. Every day we experience the human consequences of delayed action in the form of young people losing their livelihood and hope. ... Elected officials must show leadership ... .” Ryan must help the Dreamers and himself. Redemption.

— Kaplan wrote a guest column from Washington, D.C. for the Wisconsin State Journal from 1995 - 2009.