

Voces de la Frontera: Over 10,000 strike and march in Wisconsin to demand Waukesha Sheriff Severson reject 287g

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During the “Day without Latinxs & Immigrants,” thousands of workers struck and thousands of students were absent from school

Over 100 businesses closed during the march ([partial list here](#))

Over 100 businesses closed during the time of the march, ([partial list here](#)), thousands of students affiliated with Voces’ student arm Youth Empowered in the Struggle at dozens of schools in Waukesha, Milwaukee, Racine, and elsewhere left class, and buses came to Waukesha from over 12 cities ([list here](#)). Marchers rallied at Cutler Park in Waukesha before marching to the Waukesha County Courthouse, where speakers addressed the crowd. Elected officials and candidates including Randy Bryce joined the march. Marchers carried an enormous 100 yard banner visible from the air that read “They Tried to Bury Us, They Didn’t Know We Were Seeds.” WAUKESHA, WISCONSIN - Over ten thousand people marched in Waukesha today as part of a Day Without Latinxs & Immigrants statewide general strike. Marchers demanded Waukesha County Sheriff Eric Severson not turn his deputies into ICE agents through the 287g program. Across the US, dozens of cities are holding marches today to protest the Trump Administration’s cruel crackdown on immigrant communities.

“I was a teacher at Waukesha North High School for 38 years,” said **Diane Voit**,

representative at-large to the Waukesha Board of Education. “Students do not need the fear and anxiety that our current immigration policies add. That is not the learning environment in which you can become the best that you can be. They deserve better from our community – they deserve to feel safe. We urge Sheriff Severson, as a parent, to consider the fear of the children who don’t want to be separated from their parents. We urge him not to implement 287g. My grandparents came to America as immigrants for a better life, as did so many of your parents and grandparents. I firmly believe that immigrants make America great.”

“Exactly one year ago, some of us found ourselves marching to the courthouse chanting and fighting for our rights, so that 287g wouldn’t be implemented in Milwaukee,” said **Eduardo Castro, a junior at Riverside University High School in Milwaukee**, and a leader with Voces’ student arm Youth Empowered in the Struggle. “Thanks to our effort and strength, we were able to defeat it. I am a son of two proud immigrant parents who came here for a better life for them and for my siblings as well. My father works in Waukesha and he has been stopped 3 times before by a local law enforcement officer, who once threatened him with deportation if he kept driving. My father goes through this fear every day, hoping that he gets home from work and can see us once again. If we don’t stop 287g, my family could be the next one to be torn apart.”

“We have a broken immigration system that needs to be fixed,” said **Anselmo Villarreal, President and CEO of La Casa de Esperanza**. “It needs to be fixed through comprehensive immigration reform initiatives like 287g not only distract us from achieving our goal, but also hurt and confuse our communities. I encourage Sheriff Severson to do the right thing and not implement the 287g program.”

“As an educator in Waukesha, I feel the need march on May 1st with my students, their families, and the community, to speak out Waukesha County Sheriff Eric Severson’s efforts to turn his deputies into Immigration and Customs Enforcement (“ICE”) agents,” said **Gerardo Lemus, a teacher at Butler Middle School in Waukesha**. “If Sheriff Severson follows through on his plans for 287g, many families in Waukesha will face trauma. How could my students ever focus on school when their families are under attack?”

“The 287g program is part of Trump’s white nationalist plan to divide working people and implement a cruel mass deportation program targeting people of color, immigrants and refugees,” said **Christine Neumann-Ortiz, Executive Director**

of Voces de la Frontera. “Sheriff Severson’s contract with ICE makes it clear: all immigrants will be targets for deportation. But we have faced this threat before and defeated it. We will launch a campaign that will include all segments of the community to defeat 287g in Waukesha. We will ensure that immigrants, Latinos and others who live in or come to Waukesha are trained to know their rights. We will build sanctuary communities in every county in Wisconsin to reject efforts to take on an immigration role and instead promote policies that foster welcoming communities. We will organize statewide support to restore driver licenses for immigrants and US Citizens who are also disenfranchised and criminalized.”

“The United States was founded on the principle of ‘all men’ being created equal, and the idea that we all are entitled to a chance to pursue ‘life, liberty, and a pursuit of happiness,’” said **Imam Noman Hassan of the Masjid Al-Noor, Islamic Society of Milwaukee West in Brookfield in Waukesha County.** “That is all we are here to do. While the president talks about building walls, immigrants are building this country. Immigrants help grow the economy, and add to its diversity and its prosperity with our hard work, sweat, and tears. We are a valuable asset. We are woven into the fabric of this nation, its everyday life, and our absence is felt at all levels if we are not present.” Imam Hassan led an interfaith circle in a closing prayer following the rally that included Pastor Teresa Rios of Casa de Restauracion Church in New Berlin in Waukesha County, Pastor Benny Khabebe of Ascension Lutheran Church in the city of Waukesha and the SOPHIA interfaith network, and Reverend Ralph Schultz of the First United Congregational Church in Waukesha.

Sheriff Severson signed the [287g agreement](#) with ICE in February of this year. On Wednesday, April 25th, Severson [announced that his deputies will receive 287g ICE training from June 13 through July 18, 2018.](#) The Trump Administration has massively expanded the number of local sheriff’s and police departments with 287g agreements nationwide from 29 in 2016 to 76 today, as part of an unprecedented effort to turn local law enforcement into an arm of Trump’s campaign of terror against immigrant families.

Since 2016, statewide “Day without Latinxs & Immigrants” strike actions organized by Voces de la Frontera in Wisconsin have defeated [287g in Milwaukee County](#) and stopped proposed [anti-sanctuary bills](#) in the state legislature.

Co-sponsors of the day’s actions include Casa de Esperanza, SOPHIA, Milwaukee Teachers’ Education Association (MTEA), Service Employees International Union

(SEIU), Wisconsin Federation of Nurses and Health Professionals, American Federation of Teachers Local 212, Laborers Local 113, United Food and Commercial Workers Local 1473, Planned Parenthood of Wisconsin, 9 to 5, Hmong American Women's Association, Milwaukee Muslim Women's Coalition, Citizen Action of Wisconsin, Manitowoc Human Rights Coalition, Progressive Moms of Milwaukee, and the Wisconsin Working Families Party.

Voces de la Frontera is a membership-based community organization led by low-wage workers, immigrants and students, whose mission is to protect and expand civil rights and workers' rights through leadership development and community organizing. Voces' student arm is Youth Empowered in the Struggle (YES). To learn more visit vdlf.org. Follow [@voces_milwaukee](https://twitter.com/voces_milwaukee) on Twitter or like us on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/voces_milwaukee).