

Voces de la Frontera: Ryan's departure is an opportunity for the Immigrant Rights Movement

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MILWAUKEE, WISCONSIN – On Wednesday morning, US Speaker of the House Paul Ryan announced he would not seek re-election in November and would retire from Congress at the end of his term. Ryan joins at least 42 Republicans in the House and Senate who are not seeking re-election in 2018. Voces de la Frontera issued the following statement:

“In September 2017, I was one of five people who went on hunger strike for five days in front of Paul Ryan’s office to demand he protect immigrant youth,” said Fernanda Jimenez, 17, a DACA recipient and member of Voces de la Frontera’s student arm Youth Empowered in the Struggle from Racine, Wisconsin. “Paul Ryan said that he supported us and would defend DACA, but he never did one thing for the 800,000 families protected by the program. Ryan has been a liar and a hypocrite when it comes to defending undocumented families and workers. We are still hungry for justice, and while we haven’t won the clean Dream Act yet, Paul Ryan’s exit means we are one step closer today.”

“Paul Ryan read the writing on the wall,” said Christine Neumann-Ortiz, Executive Director of Voces de la Frontera. “He is facing sustained protest from the immigrant rights movement and progressives, as well as strong opposition in November. He has been running away from his constituents and refusing to hold town halls. As Speaker of the House, Paul Ryan has refused to allow a vote on the clean Dream Act, and just passed a disgraceful tax bill that further concentrates wealth at the top. Ryan’s retirement provides an opening for a champion for working people to

take his place. While he is still in office, our pressure will have more impact because Ryan has nothing to lose. Ryan still has political ambitions, and as a movement, we will continue to call on him to use his time in office to hold a vote on the clean Dream Act, provide relief for refugees stripped of TPS protections, and block Trump's increased funding for escalated deportations. Just last week, ICE arrested 97 people in a military-style raid on a factory in Tennessee. We are witnessing a relentless increase in the persecution of immigrant communities. Ryan's departure is a victory for our organizing, but we have to keep stepping it up, because the times demand it."

"Paul Ryan has enriched himself at the expense of working people," said Al Levie, a Racine teacher and voter in Ryan's district. "Thanks to the massive uprisings across the country, including the vigorous protests led by workers and immigrants in Ryan's district, people are waking up to who he really is. He is getting out before the people of his district put him out. Goodbye and good riddance."

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