

Voces de la Frontera: School walkouts & civil disobedience as Wisconsin rises up for the clean Dream Act

Posted on Tuesday, Mar 6, 2018

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MILWAUKEE & RACINE, WISCONSIN – On Monday, hundreds of Wisconsin high school students walked out of class and 23 people were arrested in an act of civil disobedience at US Speaker of the House Paul Ryan’s Racine office, as part of a national day of action demanding Congress pass the clean Dream Act. After Monday, immigrant youth will begin losing protection from deportation under the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, or DACA, thanks to the President’s cruel decision to end the program, and thanks to Speaker Ryan’s refusal to allow a vote on a clean Dream Act bill.

Hundreds of students from Milwaukee School of Languages, Riverside, Reagan, and South Division High Schools in Milwaukee, as well as Horlick High School in Racine, joined the morning walkouts. The students gathered in Racine before marching on Speaker Ryan’s office. At Ryan’s office, hundreds of community members joined the students for an afternoon rally, during which 23 people were arrested while peacefully blocking a busy intersection in an act of civil disobedience to urge Speaker Ryan to act to protect immigrant youth.

The group who engaged in civil disobedience included children of immigrant parents, public school teachers, elected officials, union members, and a Catholic

priest. Two candidates running to replace Congressman Ryan, Randy Bryce and Cathy Myers, were among the arrested.

“We walked out of our schools today because Speaker Ryan has the power to move the Dream Act to a vote, but he has chosen not to,” said Yesica Ramirez, 17, a junior at Horlick High School in Racine. “Insead, he is supporting the most anti-immigrant bill proposed, the Goodlatte bill. By supporting the Goodlatte bill, Speaker Ryan has become anti-immigrant, and that is unacceptable. We are fighting for the Dream Act because we need a permanent solution, and permanent status, in the only country we know as home.”

“We cannot be silent on DACA,” said State Rep. JoCasta Zamarripa, one of the 23 who was arrested. “We will march. We will call. We will email & tweet. We will sit in nonviolent protest. And we will vote. You’re either on the side of humanity or against it.”