

Voces de la Frontera: Assembly Speaker Robin Vos should resign leadership

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June 11, 2020, Milwaukee WI: “Assembly Speaker Robin Vos should resign his leadership position given his racist and false claim that immigrant culture is to blame for COVID-19 outbreaks in Racine County, the district he represents,” said Christine Neumann-Ortiz, Executive Director of Voces de la Frontera. [*Read Vos’ comment [here](#)*]

“This is 2020, not 1920. Instead of recognizing the important contributions immigrant essential workers and their families make to Wisconsin’s economy, he scapegoats them to absolve himself of his own failure to protect the health and lives of all workers against COVID-19,” she said.

Many immigrants work at essential jobs side-by-side with US-born citizens, but in workplaces that haven’t provided adequate health protections. Echo Lake Foods in Racine County, Vos’ district, is one of those. More than a month ago, Voces—the largest immigrant rights group in Wisconsin—called Echo Lake to the attention of state leaders (including Vos) and the federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA). But the number of workers there who are sick has risen and one has died from COVID-19. [*See Voces’ letter to Echo Lake [here](#)*]

Said Neumann-Ortiz: “Vos failed to use his leadership position to enforce stronger safety protections for workers and access to paid sick days during this pandemic. He supported premature lifting of the Governor’s emergency order and used the pandemic as a tactic of voter suppression in the April election. He should resign his leadership position because of his disregard for the lives of immigrants and working people.”

Daniel Gutierrez Ayala is a student, worker, and recipient of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) is a federal program protecting from deportation immigrants who came to the US as children. The US Supreme Court will soon rule on the Trump administration's effort to eliminate DACA protection. The educational and work success of DACA recipients, including 6,600 in Wisconsin, undermines Vos' prejudiced statement.

He said: "Vos' disgraceful comments are unacceptable and demonstrate his disconnect with the immigrant community. Immigrant essential workers are serving their local communities and the state of Wisconsin, they deserve respect, not racism.

"My parents worked at Amtrak and were considered essential; without them the trains wouldn't run. However, when the station suspended operations, they lost their jobs. My parents aren't alone, many hard-working people, including immigrant workers, have lost their jobs at no fault of their own."

Morelia Blanco is also a student, worker, and DACA recipient. She said: "I've witnessed up close the struggles of essential farm workers. Vos' comments on immigrant culture are out of line and disrespectful. Culture isn't the issue, it's a lack of proper protections and necessary safety measures for immigrant essential workers while they are on the front-lines making sure the people of Wisconsin are fed. Immigrant essential workers are at a higher risk for COVID-19 and our state representatives have the responsibility to protect them."

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