



*** Press Release ***

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*** Media Contact ***

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GUTIÉRREZ JOINS LETTER TO OBAMA CALLING FOR PAUSE IN DEPORTATIONS

"If your child has received DACA, you should not be deported. If you qualify for legalization under the Senate bill -- a bill the President and the rest of the country supports -- you should not be deported." - Rep. Gutiérrez

Washington, DC – Today, Rep. Luis V. Gutiérrez (D-IL) joined Rep. Raúl Grijalva (D-AZ) and other Members of Congress (Reps. Schakowsky, Rangel, Holt, Titus, Doggett) in releasing a letter from Members of Congress to the President asking him to use his executive power under current law to dial back certain deportations. The letter, signed by 29 Members, says: "Our efforts in Congress will only be helped by the sensible and moral step of stopping deportations." (Full text below).

Rep. Gutiérrez said, "Let us make sure the right hand of the Obama administration that is working with Republicans and Democrats to pass immigration reform is in sync with the left hand of the Obama Administration that is deporting people at record levels."

Rep. Gutiérrez specifically called for a cessation on deportations for the parents of young people who have received DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) and those who would be eligible for legal status under the terms of the Senate bipartisan immigration bill (S. 744) passed in June of this year. The Senate bill has been endorsed by the President.

Rep. Gutiérrez is the Chair of the Immigration Task Force of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus and a Member of the Judiciary Committee and the Immigration Subcommittee. The following is the text of the Congressman's remarks (as prepared for delivery):

Press Conference Remarks December 5, 2013

I want to thank Raúl Grijalva for organizing this press conference and for correctly saying that we need to put more pressure on the White House to dial back the deportations. Thank you.

And I have already heard from reporters: 'Hey, Gutiérrez, does this mean immigration reform in Congress is dead?' My answer is 'No.' We must fight for immigration reform and fight to stop the deportation of those we want to legalize at the same time, which is what I have been doing for the past five years.

In March of 2009, I began seeking some form of administrative relief to scale back the deportations. At the same time I was pushing Congressional Leadership and the President to make immigration reform the top priority.

In early 2011, after we passed the DREAM Act in the House and after the DREAM Act was filibustered in the Senate, despite a majority vote, the Congressional Hispanic Caucus joined me in calling on President Obama to use his vast administrative powers to prioritize deportations of criminals and leave hardworking families and individuals alone. I was arrested twice in front of the White House while making that point.

In 2011 and again in 2012 and again in 2013, the President took important steps to prioritize the deportation of criminals, using deportations to advance the national interest, and setting the deportation of certain immigrants aside, especially the DREAMers and military families.

Does he have the legal authority to do this? There is really no debate. Every significant legal expert -- including the [former Republican Chairman of the House Judiciary Committee](#) who is a staunch opponent of legal and illegal immigration -- agrees that under current law the President can suspend deportations for certain individuals.

No less than Robert Morgenthau, the respected former Manhattan District Attorney and legal expert, agrees. [In today's New York Times he has a letter to the editor](#) that says,

"President Obama seriously understates his ability to mitigate the effect of immigration law while he confronts Republican intransigence in the House."

He goes on to say:

"The best way to challenge 'know nothings' on immigration policy is to 'do something.' The president should use his discretion, carry out a principled immigration policy and let the House Republicans come to him begging for compromise."

And we are pleading with President Obama to take this advice.

If your child has received DACA, you should not be deported. If you qualify for legalization under the Senate bill -- a bill the President and the rest of the country supports -- you should not be deported.

The U.S. is shooting ourselves in the foot at great cost, ripping apart American families, putting our foster care system under stress, and disqualifying the very people we are working to qualify for earning legal status. Once we deport someone, it is very, very hard to get them back.

So let us make sure the right hand of the Obama administration that is working with Republicans and Democrats to pass immigration reform is in sync with the left hand of the Obama Administration that is deporting people at record levels.

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Text of the Letter to President Obama:

December 5, 2013

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20500
Dear Mr. President,

The undersigned Members of Congress respectfully request that you suspend any further deportations and expand the successful deferred action program to all those who would be potential citizens under immigration reform.

We stand by the 543 faith-based, labor, neighborhood, legal, and civil rights organizations, including the AFL-CIO, MALDEF, United We Dream, and NDLOM that support this proposal, and agree that this is the best way to advance the path to citizenship for undocumented individuals across the country.

We appreciate your commitment to reforming our nation's broken immigration policies for the benefit of all. In the context of the intransigence of a small number of legislators that are willing to hold the legislation hostage unless we pass a series of incredibly extreme proposals, a cessation of the deportation of the 1,100 potential citizens expelled daily would do a great deal to set the parameters of the conversation.

Let us not take these policies lightly. Every deportation of a father, a sister, or a neighbor tears at our social consciousness; every unnecessary raid and detention seriously threatens the fabric of civil liberties we swore to uphold. We are talking about American families and American communities. Criminalizing American families or giving local law enforcement the responsibility to choose who stays and who goes, is not the right option.

Our efforts in Congress will only be helped by the sensible and moral step of stopping deportations.

As we have seen with deferred action for childhood arrivals, such relief brings with it the benefit of active participation in the debate by undocumented people themselves. When their stories are known and voices are heard, we have witnessed how the debate shifts. The fear and xenophobia that block progress only shrink in the display of their courage. But left unchecked, the threat of deportations will prevent so many from coming forward and contributing to the national

conversation. Instead, the specter of deportation removes the human and grounding element in any political discussion—those individuals who are most directly impacted.

The senseless opposition that neither reflects the public will, nor the moral responsibility we hold, should not allow us to prolong the needless suffering of those who could so soon have their place in our society fully recognized. In fact, taking a strong step toward granting relief would move us in the direction of where the immigration debate rightfully should start, with the legalization of eleven million men and women who call the United States their home.

As the debate proceeds, it is necessary to expand the protections of our future citizens that were established by the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program and grant it to the family and neighbors and all of those who have made their lives here but are yet to be fully recognized.

We cannot continue to witness potential citizens in our districts go through the anguish of deportation when legalization could be just around the corner for them. We look to you to firmly contribute to advancing inclusion for immigrants by suspending deportations and expanding DACA.

Sincerely,

The undersigned

Raúl M. Grijalva
Madeleine Bordallo
John Delaney
Eni Faleomavaega
Alan Grayson
Alcee L. Hastings
Eleanor Holmes-Norton
Michael Honda
Barbara Lee
Alan Lowenthal
Grace Napolitano
Mark Pocan
Bobby L. Rush
Mark Takano
Marc Veasey

Yvette Clarke
Tony Cárdenas
Lloyd Doggett
Sam Farr
Luis Gutiérrez
Filemon Vela
Rush Holt
Sheila Jackson-Lee
John Lewis
Gwen Moore
Beto O'Rourke
Charles Rangel
Jan Schakowsky
Dina Titus