



Buzz on rumored DACA deal dissolves to drone on what was really said

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September 15, 2017

It was the greatest political deal that was – until it wasn't. Unless it still is.

After Democratic leaders said Wednesday night that they had reached a deal with President Donald Trump to preserve DACA, without a border wall requirement, social media exploded – along with some Republican members of Congress.

But official Washington spent much of Thursday walking back and parsing statements about the deal while advocates were left scrambling to find the real meaning – or shrugging at more political posturing.

Conservatives like Rep. Andy Biggs, R-Gilbert, demanded that Trump “prioritize full enforcement of our immigration laws,” while a Sahuarita minister in town to lobby for the DREAM Act said he planned to keep plugging along, deal or no deal.

As the debate see-sawed and reaction went viral with the #DACADeal hashtag, others tried to put it into perspective.

“It’s all just political talk until you have pen on paper,” said David Bier, immigration policy analyst at the Cato Institute. “Until you have a bill with sponsors and an actual description, it’s all just smoke.”

The political talk began Wednesday with a joint statement from House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi and Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer after the two Democratic leaders and Trump had dinner at the White House.

The Democrats said they and Trump had agreed to “enshrine the protections of DACA into law quickly,” while improving border security measures “excluding the wall” that has been a hallmark of this administration.

The statement lit up social media from both sides. Over the next 24 hours, #EndDACA got more than 3.2 million impressions on Twitter while #DACADeal earned 3.8 million impressions.

Trump quickly disputed the Democrats’ claims, tweeting Thursday morning that there had been discussions but no deal. While he showed sympathy for DACA recipients, his tweets said there was no deal on legislation to protect them and he insisted that building a border wall remains a priority.

“No deal was made last night on DACA. Massive border security would have to be agreed to in exchange for consent. Would be subject to vote,” Trump said in his Thursday morning tweet. “Does anybody really want to throw out good, educated and accomplished young people who have jobs, some serving in the military? Really!.....”

Before heading to Florida, the president told reporters that Pelosi and Schumer’s Republican counterparts, House Speaker Paul Ryan and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, were “on board” with possible compromise on the DREAM Act.

Pelosi and Schumer released another joint statement in which they said the president’s tweets were “not inconsistent” with Wednesday’s talk.

Ryan then put his own spin on the events, saying the White House talks “were discussions, not negotiations.”

“There isn’t an agreement and if we don’t fix the problems we have with border security and enforcement and we would only fix DACA, we’re going to have another DACA problem a decade from now,” Ryan said at an afternoon news conference.

He said Democrats, as the minority in the House and Senate, will have to work with Republicans and he believes a compromise can be reached before DACA ends in six months. He said Democrats are already beginning to agree that any agreement to pass the DREAM Act must include increases in border security and enforcement.

Despite those assurances, advocates on the right cautioned Trump against making a deal with Democrats.

“We trust that President Trump will not be so inept as to concede his one area of bargaining leverage – a DACA adjustment program – without gaining major legislative progress on what was a core issue of his entire presidential campaign,” said a statement from the Federation for American Immigration Reform.

FAIR also called out Republicans in Congress, saying they “claim to be the party that supports immigration enforcement” but “have yet to demonstrate any real commitment to the policy goals laid out by the president.”

One of the angriest reactions came from Arizona Rep. Andy Biggs, R-Gilbert, who released a statement demanding that a border wall be built before any immigration deal is made. He called the DREAM Act, which would codify many provisions of the DACA program, “yet another amnesty program.”

“Congress should prioritize full enforcement of our immigration laws, eliminating incentives that drive illegal immigration, and fully funding a physical border wall,” Biggs said.

Cato’s Bier said that while a deal is probably far off, the right is probably more justified in its outrage Thursday than the left in any perceived victory.

“The sentiment Trump showed was that he is interested in some relief for DACA recipients,” Bier said. “But sentiment doesn’t create a plan, we are pretty far from that point.”

Andrew Arthur, a resident fellow in law and policy at the Center for Immigration Studies, said the hype could just be a misreading of the president, who “has been in the business of making

deals, he has the nature of leaving a conversation agreeing. So I think what we saw was part political maneuvering, part negotiation.”

Arthur said it would be to Democrats’ benefit to frame the meeting as a win.

“They had the meeting to see what is possible with aliens covered by DACA,” he said. “It is possible they came out and said he agreed to things that he did not actually agree to, or did not mean to agree to – but if he did, that kind of puts congressional Republicans in a box.”

But the Rev. Noel Andersen, who lobbied to save DACA and then to pass the DREAM Act, was not about to relax Thursday. Andersen, of World Church Service, said that, despite buzz from both sides, the alleged deal will not affect his work for now.

“There are different sides of the story,” Andersen said. “I’m not sure that a lot has changed between yesterday and today.

“We’re still trying to pass a clean Dream Act and of course we don’t want any enforcement or border security attached to that,” he said.