



DACA protesters at Tucson City Hall

Paul Ingram

September 6, 2017

A day after the Trump administration announced the wind-down of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, hundreds of people rallied here to show their support for the program, and shouted down Mayor Jonathan Rothschild with calls for Tucson to become a "sanctuary city."

Beginning at DeAnza Park, 1000 N. Stone Ave., around 900 people marched just over two miles, east along Speedway before heading south on Fourth Ave. and then to Tucson City Hall, where they assembled for a 90-minute rally to profess backing for DACA and the thousands of young immigrants the program once protected.

On Tuesday morning, Attorney General Jeff Sessions announced that the federal government will no longer accept new applications, and that Homeland Security officials will seek an "orderly wind down" of the program in the next six months, giving Congress the chance to act.

The announcement was met with opprobrium from members of Congress, state officials, and nearly 200 corporate leaders, and fury from activists.

In Tucson, dozens of high school students marched out of their classrooms and headed for the University of Arizona, and around 150 activists and supporters headed to Tucson City Hall to hold a short rally in support of DACA.

Though centered around the same location, the march of Wednesday was significantly larger.

Stteffanny Cott, an organizer with LUPE, announced a series of demands from the "Tucson community" including a defense of DACA that is "unwavering, uncompromising." As well as way to "legalize" all the other 11.5 million people who are in the country without authorization, and "declare Tucson a sanctuary city."

"A resolution is not enough, we want concrete protection," she said. "No militarization of the border, no further militarization of the police." She noted that Chris Magnus, the chief of Tucson police, was at the rally. "I see Chief Magnus here as well."

Like what you're reading? [Support high-quality local journalism and help underwrite independent news without the spin.](#)

And, finally "No border wall," Cott said. As she finished this point, the crowd roared and chanted, "No border wall."

Najima Rainey, an activist with Black Lives Matter, said she listened to stories from parents and students at LUPE about "the way that our state and our government have persecuted and terrorized a community of people."

"I heard stories of people coming through that triumphant, only to see us rolling backwards, into that kind of persecution," Rainey said. "What I wonder is, how the hell did we get here?"

Nearly an hour into the rally, Tucson Mayor Jonathan Rothschild, taking a break from a regularly scheduled City Council meeting inside, tried to make a public statement asking for people to support DACA by pressing their congressional representatives, but was soon drowned out by the crowd.

"The decision to end DACA is cruel and un-American. And, it should be fixed immediately by Congress," said Rothschild, but as he tried to explain DACA and how recipients pass a background check, the crowd became increasingly agitated. Removing DACA, Rothschild said, will not "make us safer, it will make us un-safer," he said. "Bottom line..."

"Sanctuary city," yelled one man, and then the crowd began to chant. Rothschild tried to recover, and he tried to explain himself, a woman in the crowd yelled, "Do something!"

"You broke no law, you've been here all your life and you've done everything right," Rothschild said. "You work here, you go to school here..."

"We're human!"

"We have to go to Congress and fix this," Rothschild said, ending his speech.

The Council has grappled with the sanctuary city label, one that has become increasingly controversial over the last year, calling the city "welcoming" while picking up some of the policies that make a city a "sanctuary," while not taking steps to completely bar local law enforcement from cooperating with federal immigration officials.

Support TucsonSentinel.com today, because a smarter Tucson is a better Tucson.

Under Arizona law, some "sanctuary" policies adopted by cities in other states could put at risk more than \$50 million in annual state shared revenues.

Since January, the White House and Sessions have repeatedly attacked so-called sanctuary cities.

Earlier in the year, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement issued a report on cities that refused requests to detain people for the agency, but soon abandoned the effort after it became clear that the list included cities that allowed ICE agents into facilities, as well as a privately-run facility under ICE contract.

However, Sessions has continued to attack cities for sanctuary policies, and once said that such cities are a threat to U.S. safety that "dangerously undermine" efforts to stop criminal gangs. On July 25, Sessions moved forward with a plan to withhold millions of dollars in Justice Department grants from cities identified as sanctuary cities, however, that plan has been held up by a federal judge.

On Thursday, Keep Tucson Together will help people get information about DACA and help people take their next steps in the cafeteria of Pueblo Magnet High School, at 3500 S. 12th Ave., beginning at 5:30 p.m.

DACA permits that expire between now and March 5, 2018 can be renewed for two years, but only if they are submitted before October 5.

While many DACA recipients may not face deportation in the next six months, analysis by the Cato Institute, using data from U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services shows that by March 2018, nearly 17,000 DACA recipients could face deportation by Homeland Security officials. And, in June more than 86,000 could face deportation, as DACA permits continue to expire.