



New speaker, same excuse to stall on immigration

Donna Brazile

November 11, 2015

Rep. Paul Ryan of Wisconsin is the new speaker of the House of Representatives. As a congressman Ryan advocated being close and open with “the people.” Yet, in the summer of 2011, Ryan phoned in his town hall meetings, and when he chose to appear in person, the attendees were charged \$15 admission. I wonder how that went over with his constituents?

But Ryan’s contradictions, like those of others’, are part of the whole package, and they carried over into his first public appearances as speaker. The night before his initial press conference, Ryan told radio host Hugh Hewitt, “If you don’t like the direction the country is going — which we don’t — then we (need to show) how we would do things differently.”

[Click here!](#)

The next morning, Ryan said, “We don’t believe that the country is headed in the wrong direction ... we think the president is leading it in the wrong direction.” Ryan added, “We feel that we have an obligation ... to get things fixed.”

In less than 12 hours, Ryan not only contradicted himself as to whether Republicans liked the direction the country was going, he also contravened his promise to “do things differently” and “to get things fixed.”

At the same press conference, the new speaker took immigration reform off the table until President Obama has left office. That means no immigration reform until at least 2017. Now, the last major immigration reform was almost 30 years ago, in 1986. Ryan has no reason to follow in the footsteps of former President Ronald Reagan.

And while Iowa Republicans and Democrats don’t agree on what issues are important, according to a recent Bloomberg/Des Moines Register poll, they do agree on two issues: immigration and job creation. Republicans know immigration is important; certainly Donald Trump does — he’s built his campaign on exploiting anti-immigrant feelings.

The Cato Institute, a libertarian think tank in Washington, D.C., published a study in 2012 that said “comprehensive immigration reform would yield at least \$1.5 trillion in added U.S. gross

domestic product (GDP) over 10 years.” Immigration economist George Borjas says all immigrants, documented or not, grow the economy by \$1.6 trillion a year. America’s immigrant residents must be addressed for their — and the economy’s — benefit.

But Ryan kicked the can down to 2017. Like former House Speaker John Boehner, Ryan finds more excuses for avoiding immigration reform than a teenager has for putting off homework.

The fault lies not in Obama, but in the divisions within the Republican Party. George W. Bush attempted immigration reform in 2007, but was defeated by his own party and some Democrats unwilling to compromise. Boehner couldn’t get the House to pass a bipartisan reform bill in 2014, which included Sen. John McCain as a major sponsor. Why did they fail?

The House of Representatives is supposed to be closest to the American people. Yet the truth is, for the past five years, the Congress has been closest to a minority in the Republican Party. Making it worse, in order to win the presidency, the GOP must increase its support among Hispanics and others.

It’s been more than 2½ years since the president and Ryan have met face to face. With all the big issues still looming, including the budget, it’s time to schedule a sit-down discussion.