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## Why are House Republicans bucking their leadership on immigration?

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We are witnessing a pretty surprising bucking of House leadership from a group of House Republicans who typically don't pull this sort of thing.

Nearly 20 House Republicans have signed a petition to try to force an immigration vote that Republican leaders have so far refused to have.

“Obviously we don't like the discharge petition,” House Speaker Paul D. Ryan (R-Wis.) said at an event Thursday. “It would guarantee [whatever we vote on] would not go into law.”

Behind closed doors, Ryan and his team have even warned their colleagues that this petition could cost Republicans the majority.

And yet more lawmakers keep signing on. Hours before receiving that warning Wednesday, two more moderates signed the petition.

That means these Republicans and their Democratic allies are just five signatories shy of forcing a vote in the House on immigration, some seven months after the president announced he'd be ending the federal program protecting dreamers and tossed the problem to Congress.

But no plan yet, and discharge petition effort continues.

So, what's driving this extraordinary showdown by House GOP moderates? A few things:

**1. The election:** This is a “duh” explanation, but it's worth exploring why these House moderates are pressing the panic button now.

Earlier in 2018, it was still a possibility that some kind of DACA bill could get folded into a spending bill. Senate Democrats were willing to see the government shut down in January to try to force a vote.

The Democrats failed, a series of votes in the Senate on immigration failed, a spending bill funding the government for the rest of the year passed without an immigration deal, and now Congress is basically done legislating big items for the rest of the year.

Which means if you're a Republican running for reelection in a moderate district, you probably thought that by now there would be a solution on dreamers. And since Congress takes less risks the closer its members get to Election Day, this may be your last shot to force Congress to get something done before November.

If that means taking on your leadership, so be it.

**2. *This election:*** The signers of this petition come from districts in Florida and California and Pennsylvania and Nevada and Michigan, from districts that are on the front lines of the battle for control of the House. And they are letting it be known that immigration is an issue they fear most being attacked on.

“They see this as something that can help them build some credibility on an issue that matters to swing voters in their own districts,” said Molly Reynolds, a congressional expert at Brookings Institution.

These moderate lawmakers are feeling the pressure of both Democratic enthusiasm in their districts and the potentially potent attack line that they broke a promise to find a solution to DACA. Dreamers are also a largely sympathetic group, brought to America as children and largely Americanized.

Legalizing dreamers polls exceptionally well among Americans. A January Quinnipiac University poll found that even 49 percent of Republicans support legalizing dreamers.

“This is something the American public is demanding,” Rep. Jeff Denham (R-Calif.), a leader of the effort, told The Post's Mike DeBonis. He added: “I also believe the majority is at stake if we do nothing.”

**3. *There's a lot of uncertainty on what will happen to dreamers:*** Federal courts across the country have ruled that the Trump administration can't just end the dreamer program and has to accept new applicants. That's because they didn't explain *why* they were ending the program.

The court rulings are a temporary solution for advocates of protecting dreamers. Legal experts say this will almost certainly end up before the Supreme Court as a question of the president's power, but that still probably won't decide the underlying policy question of whether dreamers can stay or go.

“You're still going to have millions of dreamers who are not going to be eligible for the program but who will be living here,” said Alex Nowrasteh, an immigration policy analyst with the libertarian Cato Institute, in April. “It's not a permanent solution.”

Which means that absent a new law on dreamers, the likeliest solution is that as these court cases wrap up, dreamers will simply fade back into the shadows, Nowrasteh said.