

PEOPLE'S WORLD

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November 29, 2014

Op-Ed roundup: Failure of Republicans to act is why Obama must



By Van Le

In today's op-ed roundup, a number of columnists are pushing back against the ridiculous idea that Republicans could act on immigration reform if President Obama would only give them a chance. Remember: the GOP has had nearly two full years to pass legislation. The Senate did its job, and the Republican-controlled House could have followed at any time. But they didn't. At this point, the only two outcomes are 1) Obama acts to protect immigrants already here, or 2) we're stuck with the status.

So here's the reality. It's been 16 months, nearly 500 days, since the Senate passed the bill. The House could have passed it on any one of those days. But Boehner and the Republicans refused, completely out of cowardice and to spite Obama. Insanely irresponsible. And on top of that, Boehner told Obama in June that he was not going to allow a vote on it all year. In other words, the Speaker told the President (both of whom knew the bill had the votes) that he was not only going to refuse to have a vote, but that he was going to let the Senate bill die.

And now, when Obama wants to try to do something about the issue that's actually far, far more modest than the bill would have been, he's the irresponsible one? It's grounds for impeachment? Eugene Robinson at Washington Post agrees

[that] Obama is only acting now because Republicans have completely failed at their job:

All the melodramatic Republican outrage isn't fooling anybody. The only reason President Obama has to act on immigration reform is that House Speaker John Boehner won't.

I repeat: That's the only reason. The issue could have been settled a year ago. It could be settled in an afternoon. The problem is that Boehner refuses to do his job, preferring instead to spend his time

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huffing and puffing in simulated indignation...

The president has not just the right but also the obligation to "use all the lawful authority that I possess," as he promised last week in a long-deferred effort to repair an immigration system that both parties agree is broken. Law and precedent

Every single president since Eisenhower has used that power including Republican presidents like the two Bushes and Ronald Reagan.

give Obama wide latitude, and at this point he can hardly be accused of acting rashly.

Instead of debating what kind of hissy fit they want to pitch, Boehner and his flock ought to be reading the Senate bill. They would find much to like.

Jamelle Bouie at Slate points out that if Republicans had tried to work with Democrats to pass immigration legislation in the House, they would've gotten a lot of what they wanted out of the process (even more border security, for example). It's their complete unwillingness to compromise that has led to this point where Obama must act unilaterally.

Given the high priority for immigration reform, there's no question Democrats could have worked with House Republicans to craft a counterpart to the Senate bill. And indeed, there's a good chance they would have made even more concessions if it guaranteed a vote.

When it comes to the prospect of a new, more liberal immigration regime, Republicans have

themselves to blame. With a few concessions, they could have gotten more enforcement and tighter security. Instead, we'll have legal status for millions of immigrants, with few Republican fingerprints.

There was no outrage from Republicans on those earlier instances, so why are Republicans pitching a fit now? It's possible that today's congressional Republicans have no idea that this history exists. It's also possible they just don't give a darn.

The fact that Obama appears likely to follow a trail that's already been blazed flips the burden back to freaked-out lawmakers - if previous Congresses didn't descend into madness as a result of executive actions on immigration, why should this Congress behave differently?



[Read full story from America's Voices blog.](#)

Walmart workers brief Capitol Hill lawmakers

Combined Sources

Hardworking men and women want a fighting chance to build a future," Sen. Elizabeth Warren, D-Mass., told members of OUR Walmart at a legislative briefing last week. Warren spoke in support of legislation which would raise the minimum wage, provide fairness in scheduling, and provide for equal pay for equal work.

The "Walmart and the Economic Insecurity of American Families," hearing was held just one week before Black Friday job actions at 1,000 Walmart stores nationwide. The hearing highlighted the Schedules That Work Act, Fair Minimum Wage Act and Paycheck Fairness Act - legislation that would force the company to improve its pay and hours. Walmart's low pay, manipulation of scheduling and illegal threats to workers have created a new norm across industries that makes it nearly impossible for workers to hold down second jobs, arrange child care, go to school or manage health conditions, workers testified.

"Walmart's shoddy business model is wreaking havoc on American families," said Rep. George Miller, D-Calif. "The courage of Walmart workers who are engaged in sit-down strikes to protest the company's illegal silencing of workers who have called for better jobs and full-time work is essential to creating real change."

After public calls from OUR Walmart, the company committed to raise wages for its lowest paid workers and rolled out a new scheduling system that allows workers to sign up for open shifts. Workers from 1,200 stores have signed a petition calling on Walmart and its owners, the Walton family, to commit to paying \$15 an hour and providing consistent, full-time hours.

"OUR Walmart has grown to a powerful network that is making big changes," said Cantare Davunt, a Walmart customer service manager and OUR Walmart member.

Members of Our Walmart speak about how the country's largest employer is creating an economic crisis for working families in America.

Hemingway grandsons, environmentalists, in Cuba

By Taylor Clark



Following in the footsteps of Ernest Hemingway, the Latin America Working Group Education Fund (LAWGEF) organized a delegation headed by John and Patrick Hemingway, grandsons of Ernest, to travel to Cuba and work with researchers to promote cooperation between the United States and Cuba in the field of marine conservation. The trip served the dual purpose of commemorating Hemingway's life in Cuba and his love for the country, and his passion for the preservation of the Florida Straits. The group was able to celebrate the 60th anniversary of Hemingway's Nobel Prize for Literature in 1954 and the 80th anniversary of Hemingway's first journey from Key West to Havana on his cabin cruiser, *Pilar*, in 1934. Representatives from LAWGEF were joined on this trip by scientists, researchers, and experts on the life and literature of Ernest Hemingway.

To further understand and celebrate the life of Ernest Hemingway, trip participants sailed from the Hemingway Marina near Havana to the fishing village of Cojimar, the setting of Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea*. Townspeople and school children lined the docks waiting for the Hemingways. The mayor of Cojimar led a ceremony to honor the anniversary of Hemingway's initial voyage on *Pilar* from

Key West to Havana. At Hemingway's one-time home and now museum, Finca Vigía, a ceremony was held to honor Hemingway's literary accomplishments, specifically his Nobel Prize awarded in 1954. As trip participants and grandsons of Ernest Hemingway, John and Patrick Hemingway, wrote upon returning from the trip:

"We hope that our journey to Cuba will begin to address these problems and restore balance to an important and delicate ecosystem that is of vital importance to both the American and Cuban people. We also hope that the cooperative nature of our trip will help demonstrate that better relations between the United States and Cuba are possible, and desirable. We support these changes in U.S. policy toward Cuba: The fundamental right to travel to Cuba without restriction should be restored to U.S. citizens; Cuba should be removed from the list of state sponsors of terrorism, which it is not. It's time to move beyond more than 50 years of antagonism to normalized relations."

The trip was a definite success, attracting international media attention and jumpstarting talks addressing scientific cooperation between the United States and Cuba to preserve the natural resources of the Gulf Stream and the Florida Straits.

The trip serves as an example of how cooperation between Cuba and the United States is beneficial to both nations and essential to preserving our natural resources.

AFL-CIO calls January wage summit

By Mark Gruenberg

The AFL-CIO will emphasize job creation and raising workers' incomes at a "wage summit" in January in D.C., Federation President Richard Trumka says. Similar regional summits nationwide will follow.

Trumka's announcement came in the wake of the November 4 election, which gave the GOP full control of Congress.

"We'll start in January with a summit with our progressive friends" on how to raise wages for workers nationwide, Trumka explained. "Then, we'll be pushing common-sense economics and we hope to get it to several million non-union members as well." "Every time they (lawmakers) vote against our members, we'll let our members and the general public know," he added. "If a candidate goes out with a strong economic message - 'Here's how I'll solve your problems and get you a better standard of living' - they'll do well" at the polls, Trumka predicted.

Now that Republicans control the entire Congress, "It's on them" to produce for workers.

The Fed will also hold the Democratic Obama administration to that standard, he warned. He cited a post-election poll showing voters were interested most in creating jobs and bettering living standards.

"I hope he (Obama) takes that poll as a road-map and runs with it," Trumka declared. Economics won't be the only issue labor stresses. Mass incarceration, immigration and, especially, racism will be on the agenda, too. Racism, he explained, "is right below the surface in both politics and economics."

Acción ejecutiva: Un buen primer paso

Richard Trumka

Hoy día se ha tomado un paso importante hacia una ejecución humana y racional de la ley de inmigración. En nombre de los trabajadores de Estados Unidos, aplaudo la disposición para actuar del gobierno. Desde la primavera de 2013, hemos pedido que la Casa Blanca actúe para detener las deportaciones innecesarias. Lo hemos hecho porque nuestro disfuncional sistema de inmigración invita la manipulación y abuso de empleadores, mientras que los trabajadores, tanto nacidos en Estados Unidos como los inmigrantes, sufren las consecuencias.

Al extender un alivio migratorio y un permiso de trabajo a aproximadamente cuatro millones de personas, el gobierno de Obama ayudará a prevenir que empleadores inescrupulosos utilicen a trabajadores que están expuestos para rebajar los salarios y las condiciones laborales para todos los trabajadores de Estados Unidos. Aunque esta medida será un arreglo temporal, permitirá que millones de personas puedan vivir y trabajar sin temor, y les otorgará el estatus para que puedan afirmar sus derechos en el trabajo.

El gobierno está operando bajo su autoridad para avanzar los intereses morales y económicos de nuestro país, y mientras estamos dispuestos a defender este programa, también debemos dejar en claro que este es sólo un primer paso. Desafortunadamente, más de la mitad de aquellos que carecen de protecciones legales continuarán siendo vulnerables a robos salariales, castigos injustos, y otras formas de explotación laboral.

Además, estamos preocupados que el presidente de Estados Unidos ha cedido a las demandas corporativas de otorgar un mayor acceso a visas temporales, las cuales permitirán la continua supresión de salarios en el sector tecnológico. Seguiremos activos en el proceso de reglamentación para asegurar que los nuevos trabajadores sean contratados bajo un mercado laboral real y con todos los derechos y protecciones.

Pero con este anuncio podremos avanzar – un progreso que se debe al coraje y a la determinación de los inmigrantes que salieron a marchar, realizaron peticiones, ayunaron, y bloquearon las calles para que podamos llegar a este momento. Una implementación de una acción ejecutiva debe comenzar inmediatamente antes de que más atrasos permitan una obstrucción legislativa. Desde mañana, el gobierno debe hacer cumplir la ley enfocándose en casos de alto perfil, deteniendo las redadas que afectan a nuestras comunidades, y dejando tranquilos a los trabajadores, abuelos y niños.

Renovamos nuestro llamado para que una reforma inclusiva y amplia al sistema de inmigración contenga una vía a la ciudadanía y protecciones reales para los trabajadores. Continuaremos apoyando a todos los trabajadores sin importar su estatus migratorio, para asegurar que se escuchen sus voces y que sus derechos sean protegidos. Trabajando unidos, sabemos que últimamente lograremos alcanzar un sistema de inmigración justo, que promueva una prosperidad compartida y que respete la dignidad de todos los trabajadores.