

# THE MONITOR

## Valley lawmakers sign petition to force vote on DACA bills

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Rio Grande Valley lawmakers Tuesday announced they will sign a petition in an effort to force the House to take up immigration bills, according to a news release.

U.S. Reps. Filemon Vela, D-Brownsville, and Vicente Gonzalez, D-McAllen, said they would sign Discharge Petition No. 10, which will set up a “Queen of the Hill” process to consider four immigration bills during a time when local clergy have supported Dreamers.



*Texans protest in front of the Attorney General's office after the White House announce it would phase out the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program. Justin Dehn | The Texas Tribune*

The move to sign the petition comes nine months since the Trump Administration rescinded President Barack Obama's Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, or DACA program, which provided nearly 800,000 young immigrants a reprieve from deportation and the ability to work legally in the U.S.

In that time, lawmakers on both sides of the aisle have proposed immigration bills, but Trump has shot them down, saying he would not sign any bill that did not include funding for a wall along the U.S.-Mexico border.

A “queen of the hill” process would bring four different DACA bills to the House floor for a vote; whichever one of the four bills receiving the largest vote margin in favor would pass.

"In consultation with Dreamers, their parents, clergy and Bishop Daniel Flores, I have decided to sign the discharge petition so that Dreamers can get the vote they are requesting," Vela said in the statement. "I will vote for a clean Dream Act, but not for any measure that includes border wall funding. Republican moderates claim they have the votes to move their discharge petition forward... Let's see it."

Gonzalez said his decision is based on protecting the nearly 1 million DACA recipients — giving them a peace of mind they haven't felt since before September 2017 when the Trump Administration announced it was rescinding the Obama-era program.

"Let me be clear, I will not accept a DACA fix that includes funding for a border wall," Gonzalez said. "It's unfortunate that we are at this nexus, but the ball is now in the Republicans' court. And as such, I ask them: 'What will be your next move?'"

DACA was set to expire in March of this year but litigation in the federal courts has kept the program from expiring pending the aforementioned court arguments.

Flores, of the Catholic Diocese of Brownsville, was among the Valley Interfaith leaders who met with lawmakers in relation to DACA issues.

Flores said he is heartened by congressional delegation's decision to support the signing of the petition that would provide a legal path for protection for the affected youth.

"These are difficult times for DACA students, living in uncertainty and fear, and I am hopeful that the decision by our elected representatives will help move congressional action forward," Flores said in the release. "I urge leaders of both parties to act responsibly and with courage to break the current deadlock in Congress and secure a permanent congressional solution to the plight of the Dreamers."

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