

United States: Businesses across U.S. close, students skip school on 'Day Without Immigrants'

Friday 17 February 2017, by [STANGLIN Doug](#) (Date first published: 16 February 2017).

Across the nation, thousands of protesters took part in "Day Without Immigrants" events, from marching to boycotting jobs to keeping kids out of school in the hopes of underscoring how migrants form the lifeblood of the country's economy and society.

Many shop and restaurant owners in Atlanta, Detroit, Washington, D.C., Philadelphia, Austin, Texas, and other major U.S. cities joined the protest by closing their doors in a show of solidarity with their workers. In many places, immigrants marched to demonstrate their role in the nation's economy.

"I'm here to be the voice of those who can't speak," said Erika Montes, 30, who turned out for a march to the White House. "I'm here to show my students and their families, and my friends and family that teachers are supporting them and we are going to make sure they have a safe place."

Coming on the heels of roundups of undocumented immigrants nationwide, organizers urged legal residents as well as undocumented ones to participate in the boycott in response to President Trump's crackdown on immigration.

Among the White House actions rankling protesters are plans to build a border wall, install a temporary immigration ban on nationals from certain Muslim-majority nations, boost patrol agents to curb illegal immigration and strip federal funding from sanctuary cities that limit cooperation with immigration agents.

Immigrants make up the majority of the 12 million workers in the restaurant industry and up to 70% of those employed in cities like New York and Chicago, according to the Restaurant Opportunities Centers United, which works to improve working conditions. An estimated 1.3 million in the industry are immigrants living in the U.S. illegally, the group said.

Ethan Smith, co-owner of the New York City restaurant Hecho en Dumbo, heard of the strike Wednesday night when other restaurants texted him to see if he would also close. Despite the financial blow, Smith said the restaurant decided to join because of the lack of an authoritative voice to address the fear sweeping the immigrant community over raids by officials.

"This seemed like an opportune moment for us to show the undocumented community support," he said. "We also hope it will show those who may wish to impose broader deportation measures that our community as a whole isn't going to sit idly by and let neighbors be taken from their homes en masse. The president asserts that he 'has a big heart' in this regard so we're hoping he might soon feel inclined to elaborate on that."

In Washington, D.C., Busboys & Poets and more than a dozen other restaurants in the nation's capital shut down, including the Sweetgreen salad chain. "Our team members are the face of the

brand, from the front lines to our kitchen — they're the backbone of this company and what makes Sweetgreen special," said co-founders Jonathan Neman, Nicolas Jammet and Nathaniel Ru. "And that's why we stand with them, today and every day."

"From doctors to dishwashers, immigrants are integral to daily life in the U.S.," tweeted Janet Murguia, president and CEO of National Council of La Raza, as she praised Spanish-American Chef Jose Andrés' decision to close his Washington, D.C., restaurants Thursday.

Andrés decided to close after a few hundred of his employees told him they weren't coming to work. "We are all one," he said. "We should not be fighting among each other, we should all be working together to keep moving the country forward."

Andrés faces a lawsuit from Trump after pulling out of a restaurant deal at Trump's new Washington, D.C., hotel over offensive comments the then-presidential candidate made about Mexican immigrants.

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P.S.

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<http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2017/02/16/a-day-without-immigrants-strike/97965460/?csp=dailybriefing>