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Ryan declines invite to Kenosha town hall meeting

Progressive group Forward Kenosha had reached out to Speaker

Published 15 hours ago



BY DANIEL GAITAN
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Speaker of the House Paul Ryan speaks at an October event in Kenosha. (KENOSHA NEWS FILE PHOTO BY SEAN KRAJACIC)

U.S. House Speaker Paul Ryan has declined an invitation to attend a town hall meeting sponsored by local progressive group Forward Kenosha during the February recess.

"While we appreciate the clever attempt to get media coverage for their organization, Paul will be unable to assist in that effort," said Ryan press secretary Ian Martorana in a statement to the Kenosha News.

Ryan, the nation's third highest-ranking Republican, represents Wisconsin's First Congressional District, which includes Kenosha County.

Members of Forward Kenosha hoped to have Ryan address their concerns regarding immigration, repeal of the Affordable Care Act and President Donald Trump during their town hall event, which will be 6 to 7:30 p.m. Sunday at United Auto Workers Local 72 headquarters, 3615 Washington Road.

"Remaining silent and staying away from our district isn't acceptable. We hear from constituents every day that they are very concerned with the direction of our country and want to hear from our congressman. He isn't listening," said Gina Walkington, a Forward Kenosha founding member, in a statement.

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Comments captured during the event will be sent to Ryan by Forward Kenosha.

Forward Kenosha was formed after the 2016 presidential election. The group aims to promote peace and to assure the "dignity, inclusion, equality, safety and respect of every person in our community through education, advocacy and political engagement."

Members of Forward Kenosha have held numerous protests outside Ryan's local office, 5031 Seventh Ave., this winter.

No Ryan events planned

Martorana said Ryan has no press-open Kenosha events nor town halls scheduled in the immediate future. He said any upcoming events will be posted to Ryan's website paulryan.house.gov.

Ryan has previously held at least some in-person, in-district listening sessions in the spring, most recently in Kenosha in April 2015 and March 2014. Sessions were also held here in April 2008 and 2011, based on a search of Kenosha News archives.

However, Martorana said telephone town halls were held in April 2016, but Ryan and his team were barred by the House Committee on Administration from doing any others from May to after the Nov. 8 election.

"Basically, the rules are that you cannot use any funds from the (members' representational allowance) to engage in any unsolicited mass communication to more than 500 people within 90 days of being on the ballot, hence no (telephone town halls) from April — after the election," he said. "We plan to have a telephone town hall next month. We group callers by geographic area."

Martorana encouraged constituents who want to be on the call list to contact the Ryan administration via phone or email. Martorana said Ryan has done six telephone town halls since he became speaker in October 2015.

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**John Scott**

"Clever attempt" is what we get from Ryan's office? How about the people's constitutional right to voice their opinions and communicate with their elected leaders. He's not listening.

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**Sandy Bachman Pie** · Library Staff at Germantown Public Library

C'mon Paul Ryan! You work for all of us! You need to hear our questions and we have a right to hear your answers! You have your hand in all the legislation affecting every citizen in this country, yet you ignore our voices. The best you can do is be condescending in your remark about Forward Kenosha. A group that is still in it's infancy stages. A group growing by leaps and bounds because of the misguided direction of the GOP party as they throw out all principles of the past party. The new dictatorial party that jumps to appease it's new leader, rather than the constituency that voted i... [See More](#)

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**Marcia Colsmith** · University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee

He doesn't want to face questions about why he is killing the ACA and wanting to privatize Medicare. We all know it's because he has received million\$ from healthcare companies. It makes zero sense to go from Medicare which has a 2-3% overhead to private insurance companies, with their 20+% overhead. The only way to save money doing that is to drastically slash benefits to the elderly. Do we all have to eat cat food when we are old to afford our doctor hospital visits? He's avoiding us because he knows he is a puppet of the health insurance companies and he doesn't like to think about it!

Like · Reply · 3 · 8 hrs

**Matt Bisciglia** · Chicago, Illinois

How dare it be called a "clever attempt". Forward Kenosha isn't hiding who they are. He simply choses not to go where "his constituents" opinions are different than his own and then wonders why someone would say he's not "their congressman". If he truly believed in his vision he would not be afraid to face them, which he most definitely is.

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**Jeff Snyder** · Northern Illinois University

No he doesn't want to deal with a bunch of paid leftist rectums who don't have any cogent thoughts and can barely articulated canned talking points.

Like · Reply · 2 hrs

**Heather Bothe** · University of Wisconsin–Parkside

No, Jeff, we are not paid. We are his constituents that he doesn't want to face because he is bought and paid for. He's the poster boy for course changing when it benefits him.

Like · Reply · 1 · 31 mins

**Jean L. Turner** · Lake Saint Louis, Missouri

What are you afraid of? Paid by who? How can you let yourself believe that a large majority of people are fighting policies, for money? Please turn off your television and step off your porch.

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