

# Congress of the United States

## House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

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**Ranking Member Jamie Raskin**  
**Opening Statement**

**Hearing on “The Biden Administration’s Regulatory and Policymaking Efforts to Undermine U.S. Immigration Law”**  
**January 17, 2024**

Thank you, Chairman Comer.

**Today, our colleagues are using their first full committee hearing of the year to distract from the depressing reality that they have failed to bring forward even a single piece of serious bipartisan legislation, much less a bipartisan bill, to improve our immigration system and confront our major challenges on the southern border. The 118th Congress is shaping up to be one of the most [unproductive](#) history, with only 34 bills signed into law in 2023—a small fraction of the number typically enacted each year. They simply have no program for America and just operate at the beck and call of Donald Trump.**

It has become obvious that Trump’s party doesn’t want immigration solutions at the border; they want immigration problems to run against. The other main issue they used to demagogue, abortion, is no longer available to them because the country’s negative response to the Supreme Court’s destruction of *Roe v. Wade* in 2022 demonstrates that this is still a country that prizes freedom, rejects theocratic repression, and opposes the MAGA Republicans’ eagerness to pass a national law banning abortion rights. So they can’t talk about their plans for a nationwide criminal ban on abortion anymore. The cat’s got their tongue.

**So—with no positive program on infrastructure, health care, education, or anything else to run on—the do-nothing MAGA Republicans are hoping that sitting around and demagoguing the issue of immigration, while not addressing it in any serious way, will be their ticket back to the White House. Then Trump can resume the real work he wants to do: [pocketing](#) tens of millions or billions of dollars from foreign governments like Communist China and the murderous monarchs of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Qatar. But MAGA Republicans forget that, as with reproductive freedom, the American people have real values on immigration: America is a nation of immigrants but it is also a nation of laws, and we must make America accessible for lawful immigration while we reduce and discourage unlawful immigration. Where is their plan?**

**The immigration system of the United States has been broken for decades. We know that migration surges are provoked by economic and social crisis, war, violence, lack of opportunity and natural disasters, rather than the specific immigration policies of any U.S. Administration. As we’ll hear from our expert witness from the Cato Institute today, scholars across the political spectrum have found [evidence](#) that it is the strength of our country’s labor market—coupled with inadequate pathways to legal migration—that are the domestic factors that best explain the surges we see. So if we have a record high jobs rate, as we do under President Biden, and a great demand for workers, but far too few legal opportunities for entry, we will be dealing with a lot of unlawful entry.**

The difficult challenges posed by immigration require comprehensive policy solutions, and that's what Democrats have advanced. On his first day in office, President Biden sent Congress the U.S. Citizenship Act, a strong, commonsense immigration reform proposal that would modernize and invest in greater border security, expand lawful pathways to immigration and citizenship, address immigrant visa backlogs, and combat the underlying conditions fueling migration in the first place.

**President Biden has acted to strengthen the American immigration system and enforcement of our border security laws. He ordered the hiring of 300 additional Border Patrol agents—the first hiring increase of Border Patrol agents in more than a decade, a decade which included the big-talking and wall-obsessed Trump Administration. The Biden-Harris Administration has also engaged in [coordinated](#) efforts to thwart fentanyl trafficking by making more illicit fentanyl-related arrests in the last two years than in the last five years combined.**

**The Administration also ended the gratuitously inhumane and repeatedly failed policies of the Trump Administration, including the cruel separation of immigrant families at the Southwest border. The Administration repaired and expanded lawful immigration pathways through newly established parole processes and increased refugee admissions. It also made historic investments to strengthen enforcement and reduce unlawful border crossings. And the Administration is addressing the underlying causes of undocumented migration by engaging in sustained global efforts with our international partners. Taken together, the Biden-Harris Administration's efforts will make it easier to get into America lawfully and a lot harder for people and illicit drugs to get into America unlawfully.**

**My Republican colleagues try to paint these policies as radical. In reality, the Biden-Harris Administration has used its rulemaking authority faithfully and appropriately, as upheld in court time and again.** For example, on June 23 of last year, the Supreme Court sided with the Biden Administration in a resounding 8-1 decision to [uphold](#) its policy of focusing limited federal resources on addressing unlawful migrants who are suspected terrorists and criminals.

**But we know it's not enough alone to enforce existing laws. Congress must reform our immigration system and provide adequate resources to support it.** Last Congress, House Democrats passed five comprehensive immigration bills that would rebuild our broken system and provide pathways to lawful immigration. But this Congress, the House MAGA Majority refuses to bring forward any of the nearly 70 bipartisan or Democratic immigration reform bills already on the table.

**Instead of engaging meaningfully on these proposals or approving President Biden's requests for robust border security funding, MAGA Republicans have put forth proposals that range from cruel and unworkable, such as their sweeping [Child Deportation Act](#), to nonsensical and strange, such as their proposals to [defund the Department of Homeland Security](#) and [slash Secretary Mayorkas's salary to \\$1.](#)**

**They prefer to waste time and taxpayer resources than to engage in serious negotiations about policies and funding that would actually strengthen the border. This was made clear last week in their outlandish sham impeachment hearing against Secretary Mayorkas. Our colleagues apparently don't know the difference between a policy disagreement and a constitutional high crime and misdemeanor. Rather than joining Democrats and President Biden in good-faith, bipartisan negotiations to make progress on immigration, these MAGA sheep are taking orders from [Donald Trump](#) and are actively [obstructing](#) a bipartisan border deal. Just as Trump is openly hoping for a sudden economic downturn in our robust low-unemployment economy, they're hoping for chaos at the border and trying to stop us from preventing it.**

These divisive tactics are accompanied by dangerous rhetoric. MAGA Republicans continue to invoke white supremacist, anti-immigrant fantasies and conspiracy theories. **It has been almost a full year since I invited Chairman Comer and my Republican colleagues to join Oversight Democrats in condemning**

**the false [Great Replacement Theory](#), and still they fail to denounce this shameful conspiracy theory, which has been invoked by numerous antisemitic mass shooters and murderers across the country.**

America is not a great country in spite of immigrants—we are a great country because of immigrants. Immigrants are as essential to our present and our future as they have been to our history, and Democrats will continue to stand up for strong laws and to hatred, mistreatment, and scapegoating of immigrants.

**Congressional Democrats are here to legislate and to do the hard work of hammering out a bipartisan path to comprehensive immigration reform, just as we were a decade ago when House Republicans scuttled a hard-fought immigration reform package that passed the Senate with bipartisan support. We will still be here when my Republican colleagues are ready to step back from their extremist ledge and come to the table for effective and pragmatic solutions.**

Thank you, and I yield back.

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