

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

2157 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6143

MAJORITY (202) 225-5074
MINORITY (202) 225-5051

<https://oversight.house.gov>

Ranking Member Robert Garcia
Subcommittee on National Security, the Border, and Foreign Affairs
Hearing on “The Consequences of Catch and Release at the Border”
February 15, 2024

Thank you, Chairman Grothman.

It’s disappointing to be here for yet another political stunt hearing on the border.

After the historic humiliation of losing Secretary Mayorkas’s sham impeachment vote on the floor last week, and with the Senate poised to laugh off your allegations, I guess the Majority needs new strategies to try to score political points.

The majority can’t even claim to be interested in solving the border problems anymore, and you don’t have to take my word for it.

The majority blames the situation at the border on President Biden. But they refuse to accept legislative proposals or funding to deal with the problem when the President and the Department of Homeland Secretary offer them.

House Republicans are blocking billions in vital funding to hire additional border agents, asylum officers, and immigration judges.

That money could actually help process migrants faster, or clear the asylum backlog, but you’re not interested in any of that.

Instead, Republicans are wasting time and resources to cater to the demands of Donald Trump. After months of bipartisan negotiations, Donald Trump pressured Senate Republicans to kill the border policy deal because he doesn’t want President Joe Biden to chalk up a win ahead of the 2024 presidential election.

The Republican Speaker of the House admitted to Fox News that he’s taking orders from Trump on the border. And after speaking frequently with the former President, he determined that the bipartisan border deal would be “dead on arrival” as soon as it makes it to the House.

Donald Trump speaks about immigrants with the same rhetoric that Hitler did, claiming that immigrants like me and my family “pollute the blood of this country.”

He spent the weekend doubling down on his promises to launch mass deportations, with national guard soldiers from Republican states dragging people to camps. He is promising to divert the FBI away from criminal investigations to help.

He wants fear and chaos.

And in fact, I think a better use of this committee's time would be to hold hearings on the threats that Donald Trump poses, when he threatens to destroy our alliances and allow Russia to invade more countries in Europe.

But let's look at the actual facts.

The spike in migration clearly started under Donald Trump. He dealt with spikes in 2019 which he could not control.

That's when he proposed some of his more insane and destructive policies.

Like, to build an alligator moat.

To Electrify his wall.

To shoot migrants in the legs.

To bomb Mexico.

His agenda failed. And in fact, when Covid lockdowns ended, Border Patrol apprehensions more than tripled in the last eight months of Trump's presidency.

And, actually, David Bier at the Cato Institute showed that President Biden removed a higher rate of border crossers in his first two years than Trump did during his last two years, despite Trump having to deal with many fewer total crossings.

Mr. Bier wrote, and I quote: "the reason people are being released is because of operational capacity to detain and deport them, not policy."

President Biden's higher removal rate hasn't deterred new asylum seekers. These policies just don't work.

I want an orderly and safe border as much as anyone. I want people to be able to come to this country, to contribute to our communities, and to build better lives like my family did.

I want them to be able to come without the risks of crossing long stretches of desert or the dangerous Darien gap.

I want real solutions to stop fentanyl deaths, which I'll remind my colleagues, is caused by fentanyl that U.S. citizens carry through ports of entry.

But I guess we can't have that conversation with a party led by Donald Trump that is dedicated to promoting an extremist agenda.

Immigrants are the most patriotic and hardest working people in this country. We're a nation of immigrants.

And I want to remind everyone that immigration is good for our country.

The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office found that President Biden’s efforts to boost LEGAL immigration will add \$7 trillion to the United States economy over the next 10 years and will reduce the deficit by a trillion dollars.

We added 353,000 jobs last month. Our economy has created 14.8 million jobs since President Biden took office. Unemployment has been less than 4% for two full years now. Inflation has been at pre-pandemic levels of roughly 2% over the last half year.

Wages, wealth, and jobs are higher now than before the pandemic.

Legal immigration made that possible. Expanding legal pathways and addressing the complex root causes of migration are the right way to make sure our immigration system is safe and orderly.

We haven’t passed real immigration reform in 30 years—it’s long-past time to pass commonsense, effective, and humane legislative solutions.

But the conversation here is broken, and the MAGA extremists broke it.

I yield back.

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Contact: Nelly Decker, Communications Director, (202) 226-5181