

Republicans' Border Hypocrisy

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This is a big week for immigration policy—Title 42 is lapsing and Republicans are bringing their immigration bill to the House floor. The purpose of H.R. 2 (the Secure the Border Act) is similar to other partisan GOP bills concerning the border—pretend you're doing something while avoiding all responsibility for actually doing anything.

Still, this issue is politically fraught for Democrats. In opposing H.R. 2, **Democrats need to show that they care about border security** as much as they care about humane migration policies and a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants. Many Americans are worried about potential chaos at our southern border, and Democrats must answer these concerns. Thankfully, Democrats can stand on their party's own record.

Republicans aren't serious about fixing our immigration system. Democrats should be united in opposing this bill, while touting their investments in border security and immigration reform.

H.R. 2: It's Radical and It's Pretend

Republicans aren't serious about fixing our immigration system or improving border security, or they wouldn't have introduced a blatantly partisan and phony solution. Even moderate House Republicans have voiced concerns about the bill's impact. Here are a few "highlights" of the Republican bill. It would:

- Subject all 11 million undocumented immigrants, including Dreamers who have legal status under the DACA program, to immediate deportation. This is radical and unworkable and something they dared not do when they had congressional majorities and the Trump presidency.
- Send unaccompanied children all alone back to their country of origin. It is not humane.
- Make it near impossible to apply for asylum even if you qualify under US law. A reversal of decades of American law.
- Detain children and families in jail-like facilities, akin to Trump's "kids in cages."
- Require DHS to resume construction of the same "Trump border wall" they did not build when they had congressional majorities and the Trump presidency.

How Democrats Should Oppose the Bill

How should Democrats oppose H.R. 2? By leaning into border security.

President Biden and Democrats have invested in border security, cracked down on fentanyl trafficking, and improved the efficiency of our immigration system. President Biden's Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 budget includes:

- Additional funds for Customs and Border Protection (CBP) to hire 350 new Border Patrol Agents;
- \$535 million for border security technology at and between ports of entry;
- \$40 million to combat fentanyl trafficking and disrupt transnational criminal organizations along with;
 - Installation of 123 new large-scale scanners at ports of entry to allow CBP to scan six times as much cargo per day;
 - A coordinated operation among federal and local law enforcement to target the smuggling of fentanyl;
 - Increased cooperation with couriers to inspect packages for fentanyl;
- \$865 million to process the backlog of asylum caseloads;

- \$1.5 billion to hire new immigration judges and staff to surge to the border and manage the backlog of cases; and,
- \$4.7 billion to help respond to migration swells along the southwest border.

Democrats have been the party investing in border security, and we need to let voters know it.

Need for Bipartisan Legislation

If we want to make progress, it will need to be bipartisan.

Congress made some progress in December of 2022, when Senators Sinema and Tillis led efforts to champion a bipartisan immigration deal that would've provided 2 million Dreamers with a path to citizenship in exchange for investments in border security and reforms to US asylum law. These talks failed when Republicans—once again—got cold feet and refused to come to the table.

With the application of Title 42 ending this week, and the potential for the courts to overturn DACA imminently, bipartisan efforts around immigration reform are more timely than ever. While Democrats won't be able to get everything they want in a bill that could pass the current Senate, such legislation could potentially address pressing issues and build a foundation for future immigration reforms.

Republican Hypocrisy

Republicans have decided they benefit more politically by complaining about the border than solving it.

Every time bipartisan talks got close, Republicans backed out—in 2006, 2013, 2018, and 2022. The proposals under negotiation in those years included common sense, bipartisan, and popular reforms, like increased funding for border security, a path to legalization for undocumented immigrants living in the US, and an increase in foreign worker visas to address pressing needs in the US workforce. In 2006, the bill was led by President George W. Bush but couldn't get through a Republican Congress. In 2013, a deeply bipartisan Senate bill died in the GOP-controlled House. In 2018, an agreement by President Trump and Senator Durbin was scuttled by White House staff. And in 2022, Republicans walked away from the Sinema-Tillis compromise. Naturally, instead of holding bipartisan talks with Democrats this time around, House Republicans have decided to introduce a radical immigration bill that would make most voters' jaws drop.

Meanwhile, the debt limit bill that House Republicans passed would impose major cuts on funding and staff for border security. It proposes to cut CBP's budget by \$4 billion and results in the loss of 2,400 border patrol agents. These cuts would also mean that over \$640 million in border security technology would no longer be operational. This would have serious consequences for CBP's ability to enforce our borders and stop fentanyl trafficking—clearly making Americans less safe.

TOPICS

IMMIGRATION 85