

# [***Democrats pivot on immigration as Republicans take a stand against Biden***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6BB8-T6K1-DY7V-G01N-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Body**

(CNN) &#8212; The immigration and border crisis is quickly morphing into the dominant issue of American ***politics*** - and Democrats are pivoting faster than Republicans at the moment.

GOP lawmakers have long claimed immigration as their top issue, raising the alarm about the drastic rise of migrants and asylum-seekers at the southern border. Blaming President Joe Biden for the border crisis is the backbone of Donald Trump's presidential campaign.

But after a [*defeat in a special election*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/02/14/politics/new-york-special-election-takeaways/index.html) to fill a New York House seat, Republicans might be wondering if they are being outmaneuvered by Democrats who are adjusting to acknowledge the crisis and suddenly preaching bipartisanship.

A drastic, new migrant policy under consideration by the Biden administration will only heap pressure on Republicans to relent and seek middle ground with the White House even as they complain about Biden's current policy.

Here's what's happened with immigration so far this week:

**Republicans, committed to casting blame, impeach Mayorkas.** It took two tries, but House Republicans made their point and voted by the narrowest possible margin to [*impeach Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/02/13/politics/alejandro-mayorkas-impeachment-vote/index.html), the first impeachment of a Cabinet secretary since the 1870s. The Senate, which is controlled by Democrats, will surely acquit Mayorkas or figure out a way to dismiss the charges, but not without an unwanted spectacle.

**There are consequences for failing to legislate.** After the failure of a bipartisan Senatecompromise to revamp border policy and add funding for Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the Biden administration has [*drawn up a draft contingency plan*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/02/14/politics/ice-draft-plan-release-migrants/index.html) to address a massive budget shortfall by cutting detention capacity and releasing thousands of immigrants.

**The House GOP majority shrank.** It's a good thing for the Republicans who supported the impeachment that they got it done Tuesday night, since Democrats picked up a seat in the special election to replace disgraced former Rep. George Santos, who was expelled from the House in December.

**Democrats are triangulating.** How did the winner in New York, [*former Rep. Tom Suozzi*](https://www.cnn.com/politics/live-news/ny-special-election-santos-02-13-24/h_3b42fa175ea181959871c0da62a3f84b), win back his old seat? He tacked to the middle specifically on the issue of immigration, hammering Republicans for refusing to work with Democrats on an immigration compromise.

"Let's send a message to our friends running the Congress these days: Stop running around for Trump, and start running the country," Suozzi told supporters after claiming victory Tuesday night.

**Immigration is a major issue in New York City.** Immigration might have been the issue on which Republicans could have kept the seat despite the bad taste Santos may have left in voters' mouths. A serial fabulist who misrepresented just about everything in his background, Santos is set to be prosecuted for, among other things, defrauding donors to his 2022 campaign.

But New York is feeling the pinch of the immigration crisis. Mayor Eric Adams has complained the city can no longer cope with the thousands of migrants being shipped to the city by, among others, Texas Gov. Greg Abbott.

**Republicans say NBD.** Even though Suozzi's win [*shrinks the narrow House Republican majority*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/02/14/politics/house-narrow-majority-democrats-flip-seat-new-york/index.html) even further and makes itmore difficult for Speaker Mike Johnson to pass any legislation, Johnson told fellow GOP lawmakers not to panic during a closed-door meeting Wednesday, according to CNN's Capitol Hill team.

Later, he noted that Democrats spent more money on the race than Republicans and told reporters that Suozzi won because he "ran like a Republican."

"He sounded like a Republican, talking about the border and immigration, because everybody knows that's the top issue," Johnson said.

Except voters concerned about immigration told CNN reporters that it was also dysfunction on Capitol Hill - Republicans rejected even the idea of a bipartisan immigration deal last week - that drove their votes.

Democrats and Republicans in the Senate joined together to [*pass a foreign aid package this week*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/02/12/politics/senate-foreign-aid-bill-ukraine/index.html) after it was decoupled from the border compromise. But Johnson opposes allowing votes on that bill too.

**This is the definition of a catch-22.** Without any irony after helping kill the border compromise, Johnson said he could not accept any aid for Ukraine and Israel until there is action on the border.

"House Republicans were crystal clear from the very beginning of discussions that any so-called national security supplemental legislation must recognize that national security begins at our own border," Johnson said in a statement, days after helping kill legislation to address the situation at the border.

**Democrats are embracing the rhetoric of bipartisanship - for now.** Reacting to Suozzi's victory, House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries said that voters respond to people who want to solve problems.

"Tom Suozzi talked about common-sense solutions. And finding bipartisan common ground. Tom Suozzi won," Jeffries said.

**Fight or flight?** It's perfectly reasonable to wonder why anyone would want to work on Capitol Hill. [*Rep. Mike Gallagher of Wisconsin*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/02/10/politics/mike-gallagher-reelection/index.html), one of three Republicans to vote against impeaching Mayorkas, was surrounded and pressured by colleagues on the House floor last week during the first impeachment effort. Days later, he announced he would not run for reelection.

"Electoral ***politics*** was never supposed to be a career and, trust me, Congress is no place to grow old," Gallagher, who had been viewed as a rising star in the party, said in a statement.

Compare that with [*former Maryland Gov. Larry Hogan*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/02/09/politics/larry-hogan-senate-maryland/index.html), an anti-Trump Republican who recentlyannounced he would run for a seat in the US Senate after previously saying he had no interest in working on Capitol Hill. He still isn't exactly excited about it, Hogan told CNN's Dana Bash on "Inside ***Politics***" on Wednesday.

"Who in their right mind would want to go in and be a part of that divisiveness and dysfunction?" Hogan asked.

But he made the decision a week ago, he said, after the "debacle that took place on the Senate floor" when the bipartisan immigration deal was abandoned. Biden, he argued, has failed to secure the border. But Republicans, given the opportunity to work toward a solution, backed off.

"I thought it was typical dysfunction," he later added. "I'm frustrated with both parties down there, and that's a perfect example - it's an important thing that most people in America want us to solve, and it's not getting solved because it's just typical Washington ***politics***."

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