

# [***Opinion: On the border, voters want action, not photo ops***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6BFD-G1P1-JBSS-S52D-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Body**

(CNN) &#8212; It's an election year, which means it's the season for campaign stunts. The goal of these gimmicks is to prove a candidate is strong where they are very, very weak. Upholding that proud tradition, President Joe Biden is headed to the border on Thursday - and so is former President Donald Trump.

Unfortunately for Biden, these stunts usually don't help very much. [*Bob Dole*](https://www.nytimes.com/1996/11/01/us/a-nonstop-gop-tour.html) spent the closing days of the 1996 campaign on a frantic 96-hour tour before losing to former President Bill Clinton. Sen. [*John McCain*](https://www.cnn.com/2008/POLITICS/09/24/campaign.wrap/index.html) suspended his 2008 presidential campaign to address the Wall Street crash before losing to former President Barack Obama. Hillary Clinton embarked on 2016 cross-country [*van tour*](https://www.cnn.com/2015/04/13/politics/hillary-clinton-2016-iowa-road-trip/index.html) to show a common touch before losing to Trump.

Perhaps Biden's stunt will end up differently. What makes it curious, however, is that he's visiting Texas the [*same day*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/02/26/politics/biden-southern-border-thursday/index.html) as Trump.

I'm a lifelong resident of Arizona, and border-state voters have heard a lot of talk, but haven't seen much action. Politicians have had their photos taken in every dusty city and desert town in my state, from [*Douglas*](https://www.sinema.senate.gov/sinema-bringing-bipartisan-delegation-arizona-mexico-border/) in the east to [*Yuma*](https://www.azcentral.com/story/news/politics/arizona/2020/08/18/president-donald-trump-visit-yuma/3384572001/) in the west. Yet the unlawful migration remains unchecked.

Tucson has witnessed a [*182% increase*](https://www.cbp.gov/newsroom/stats/southwest-land-border-encounters-by-component) in encounters this fiscal year compared to last. But Texas seems to command the most media attention, making it the ideal location for a photo-op.

The president's only other visit to the border was [*a year ago*](https://www.cnn.com/2023/01/08/politics/joe-biden-border/index.html), briefly stopping in El Paso before racing back home. This time, he's going to [*Brownsville*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/02/26/politics/biden-southern-border-thursday/index.html), Texas, a city located adjacent to the Gulf of Mexico and a relatively sleepy stretch for [*migrant traffic*](https://abcnews.go.com/US/wireStory/texas-border-cities-offer-biden-trump-backdrops-dueling-107646797).

Trump, meanwhile, will be about 300 miles to the northwest in Eagle Pass, Texas. This small community became famous for some of the highest numbers of illicit border crossings. It makes up part of the [*Del Rio*](https://abcnews.go.com/US/wireStory/texas-border-cities-offer-biden-trump-backdrops-dueling-107646797) sector, an area that recorded 71,000 [*arrests*](https://apnews.com/article/immigration-border-crossings-mexico-biden-18ac91ef502e0c5433f74de6cc629b32) in December alone.

Eagle Pass has become a flashpoint between the administration and Texas Gov. Greg Abbott. He has deployed Texas National Guard [*troops*](https://gov.texas.gov/news/post/governor-abbott-deploys-new-texas-tactical-border-force) to address the overflow of undocumented migrants, and recently announced plans for an 80-acre [*military base*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/02/16/us/texas-greg-abbott-eagle-pass-base/index.html) in the area to house the troops.

Why is Biden visiting now, after all but ignoring the border since his inauguration? The answer is simple: disastrous polls.

The president's job approval has fallen to 38%, according to [*Gallup*](https://news.gallup.com/poll/610988/biden-job-approval-edges-down.aspx). A significant factor in this drop-off is his handling of immigration, which is at an all-time low approval of 28%. And the disdain is bipartisan. A slim majority of Democrats (55%) still support Biden on border security, but this shows a drop of seven points from the last poll published in August.

And the top issue for voters? You guessed it. When asked about the most important problem facing America, immigration was number one, garnering [*28%*](https://news.gallup.com/poll/611135/immigration-surges-top-important-problem-list.aspx). This is an increase of eight points from a month ago.

Biden also faces increasing pressure from Democratic governors and mayors who are panicked over the migrant influx.

This week, New York City Mayor Eric Adams said the city needs to [*amend*](https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/restoring-america/faith-freedom-self-reliance/2890148/democrats-realize-their-sanctuary-city-policies-were-a-mistake/) its "sanctuary city" law so that migrants who commit felonies can be turned over to Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

In January, [*Illinois Gov. JB Pritzker*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/02/22/politics/greg-abbott-democrats-border-immigration/index.html) wrote to Abbott in a newspaper ad, begging him to stop bussing migrants north.

Add to this the spate of alleged crime committed by people who recently crossed the border, from the [*attack*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/02/08/us/nypd-officers-assaulted-outside-migrant-shelter-indictments/index.html) on New York City Police Department officers, to the [*tragic killing*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/02/26/us/uga-campus-killing-augusta-university-student-tuesday/index.html) of a Georgia nursing student.

Their panic is understandable. The US is just eight months from an election, and angry voters love to turn out incumbents. But a brief campaign stunt in Texas won't change their minds.

The president plans to "discuss the urgent need to pass the Senate bipartisan border security agreement," according to a White House [*statement*](https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/press-briefings/2024/02/26/press-gaggle-by-press-secretary-karine-jean-pierre-en-route-queens-ny/) released Monday. This means Biden's true aim is to cast the blame on his political opponents.

"He will reiterate his calls for congressional Republicans to stop playing ***politics*** and to provide the funding needed for additional U.S. Border Patrol agents, more asylum officers, fentanyl detection technology and more," the statement said. Meanwhile, Trump will surely blame Biden for the border crisis.

But neither so-called "leader" will do anything to actually, you know, fix the border crisis. It's far easier to glower for the cameras.

Earlier this month, Trump persuaded [*Senate Republicans*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/02/07/politics/senate-border-ukraine-israel-aid-vote/index.html) to reject a proposed compromise, all but ending hope of legislative action prior to Election Day. In reaction, the House GOP [*impeached*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/02/16/politics/alejandro-mayorkas-cnntv/index.html) Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas, a move sure to die in the upper chamber.

If Biden wants to improve his standing with voters, a Brownsville photo won't cut it. He needs to stop posing and start acting. Whether he likes it or not, his predecessor allowed far fewer migrants into the country with the same laws on the books.

Upon entering office, the president rolled back most of Trump's [*immigration measures*](https://www.voanews.com/a/usa_biden-signs-executive-orders-reversing-trump-immigration-policies/6201520.html). But what was removed by the pen can be restored by the pen, an approach sources say [*Biden*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/02/21/politics/biden-considering-executive-action-to-close-southern-border-sources-say/index.html) is already considering. This would at least mitigate Biden's polling drop while also giving border states and blue cities a respite from the migrant influx.

Voters are tired of politicians merely complaining about problems. They are exhausted by "blue-ribbon" commissions, doomed compromises and Capitol Hill gridlock. They're done with photo-ops next to broken border walls and other campaign stunts.

What they want is results; something Biden can provide with the stroke of his pen. Once he gets back from Texas, that is.

Opinion by Jon Gabriel

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