

# [***Takeaways from Biden and Trump's dueling visits to the border***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6BFJ-T7Y1-JBSS-S026-00000-00&context=1516831)

CNN Wire

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**Body**

Washington (CNN) &#8212; President Joe Biden and his political opponent Donald Trump both agree: The situation along the US-Mexico border needs to change. But their extraordinary dual visits to Texas showed that the likely 2024 general election rivals could not be further apart on how to obtain that goal.

In a rare overture for what otherwise promises to be a highly toxic and politically charged campaign, Biden extended an olive branch to Trump during his remarks in Brownsville, entreating the former president to join his efforts to get Congress to reconsider a bipartisan border agreement - one that Trump effectively scuttled by signaling to congressional Republicans that he was opposed to it.

"Join me - or I'll join you - in telling Congress to pass this bipartisan border security bill," Biden said, addressing Trump directly. "We can do this together."

A truce seems unlikely. Just moments before, speaking in Eagle Pass, Trump blamed Biden directly for recent crimes that migrants were accused of committing across the country, using visceral language to describe the recent killing of a Georgia nursing student allegedly at the hands of an undocumented Venezuelan migrant.

"The United States is being overrun by the Biden migrant crime," Trump said in Eagle Pass, adding that Biden has "the blood of countless innocent victims" on his hands.

It was an example of Trump's crystal-clear - if bellicose and fear-mongering - messaging on the issue that has been a hallmark of his political career. Biden, meanwhile, simultaneously blamed Trump for the failure to get a bill done while also trying to convince the former president to work with him, highlighting the difficulty for Biden in talking about an issue that he only recently has decided to embrace given that it appears set to be one of the key factors in the election.

Biden makes an overture to Trump as he tries to seize a political opening

Following the failure earlier this month of the bipartisan border bill, Biden vowed to make his case for reform directly to the American people - effectively punting what has been his most vexing domestic challenge to Trump.

The failure of the bill allowed Biden the opportunity to say that a deal had been brokered on immigration - and it was Trump who ended hopes of an agreement. Biden's remarks on Thursday were more tenuous than his more forceful attempts to shift the blame for the border situation earlier in the month, attempting to uphold the veneer of bipartisan cooperation.

"The majority of Democrats and Republicans in both houses supported this legislation until someone came along and said 'Don't do that, it'll benefit the incumbent,'" Biden said Thursday in a reference to Trump.

"That's a hell of a way to do business in America for such a serious problem," he added. "We need to act."

Biden implored Republicans to "show a little spine."

"Let's remember who we work for for God's sake," he said. "We work for the American people."

Addressing Trump, Biden said: "So instead of playing ***politics*** with the issue, why don't we just get together and get it done?"

It's an unlikely prospect. [*CNN has reported that*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/01/25/politics/gop-senators-angry-trump-immigration-deal/index.html) Trump has lobbied Republicans both in private conversations and in public statements on social media to oppose the border compromise being delicately hashed out in the Senate, according to GOP sources familiar with the conversations - in part because he wants to campaign on the issue this November and doesn't want Biden to score a victory in an area where he is politically vulnerable.

The political bickering has had significant international reverberations. Leading House Republicans demanded that any further security funding for Ukraine's fight against Russia be tied to significant immigration-related concessions from the Biden administration. The deal's collapse not only dashed any hope of progress on the border, but also effectively torpedoed vital US assistance to Ukraine - which has experienced significant recent battlefield losses in the absence of further US-funded ammunition.

Trump rips into Biden's border handling, blames him directly for alleged migrant crimes

After touring the border along Eagle Pass with Texas Gov. Greg Abbott, Trump laid the blame of recent noteworthy crimes allegedly committed by migrants across the country directly at Biden's feet, including the killing of Laken Hope Riley in Georgia, whom Trump said was "barbarically attacked - almost unrecognizable."

Riley, who Trump repeatedly called "beautiful," was "brutally assaulted, terrifically beaten kidnapped and savagely murdered," Trump said.

"The monster charged in the death is an illegal alien migrant who was led into our country and released into our communities by Crooked Joe Biden," Trump said.

[*The suspect in her killing, Jose Antonio Ibarra, 26,*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/02/25/us/uga-augusta-university-student-killing-monday/index.html) has since been charged with felony murder, false imprisonment and kidnapping and concealing the death of another, jail records show. Investigators said there is no evidence Ibarra - an undocumented Venezuelan migrant who federal authorities say entered the country illegally - knew Riley.

Research has shown there is [*no correlation between immigrants and crime*](https://www.cnn.com/2018/11/03/us/immigrants-crime-numbers/index.html). Immigrants are less likely to commit crimes than citizens.

He stoked further fear about migrants entering the United States: "We have languages coming into our country, we have nobody that even speaks those languages," Trump said. "They're truly foreign languages - nobody speaks them."

Trump repeated exaggerations he made about the amount of border wall erected during his administration. He claimed Thursday that 571 miles of border wall was built during his presidency, when in reality it was fewer than 500.

No executive action announced from Biden

Although Biden is ratcheting up his attacks on Trump, [*CNN recently reported*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/02/21/politics/biden-considering-executive-action-to-close-southern-border-sources-say/index.html) that he is considering exercising his executive authority in ways reminiscent of Trump's tenure in office.

Biden is reportedly considering an executive action that would restrict migrants' ability to seek asylum at the US-Mexico border if they crossed illegally. The plan, if enacted, is sure to invite fierce criticism from immigration activists and progressives,including people who have already soured on Biden due to his handling of the war in Gaza.

Biden's apparent openness to consider that move signifies his awareness that immigration is turning into a poisonous issue that can harm him in the general election.

Biden previously signaled openness to Republican-favored concessions in order to get the border bill passed. He had suggested he would shut down the border if the then-proposed legislation were signed into law.

No final decision about the executive action has been made, and Biden did not announce any action during his border stop.

Texas and the federal government remain in tense standoff

In the backdrop of Trump and Biden's visit to Texas was the tense standoff between the state and federal governments on how to handle migrant crossings.

Abbott, the Texas governor, has made himself a key player in bringing the border crisis to the rest of the country by busing migrants to Democratic-run cities around the nation.

He has also taken steps to usurp the federal government's authority over immigration enforcement, signing a bill into law that would give state law enforcement the authority to detain migrants. Just hours before Biden and Trump's remarks, a federal judge in Austin [*blocked that law*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/02/29/politics/texas-immigration-law/index.html), which would have gone into effect Tuesday without the court's intervention.

Abbott vowed to appeal the decision: "The president of the United States has a constitutional duty to enforce federal laws protecting states, including laws already on the books that mandate the detention of illegal immigrants," Abbott said in a statement.

Abbott has said his recent efforts were in direct response to what he has described as Biden's failure to address immigration enforcement.

CNN's Priscilla Alvarez, Daniel Dale and MJ Lee contributed.

By Michael Williams, CNN

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