

# [***In Biden's pledge to 'shut down' border, a stunning political shift***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6B6W-8601-JBSS-S014-00000-00&context=1516831)

CNN Wire

January 29, 2024 Monday 9:47 PM GMT

Copyright 2024 Cable News Network All Rights Reserved

**Length:** 1294 words

**Byline:** Analysis by Zachary B. Wolf, CNN

**Dateline:** (CNN)

**Body**

(CNN) &#8212; President Joe Biden's evolution on the key election issue of immigration entered a new phase when he promised to "shut down the border right now" if given new powers by Congress.

The deeper policy context of the comments, delivered at a campaign event in South Carolina Saturday and in [*a statement from the White House on Friday*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/01/26/politics/senate-deal-shutdown-border/index.html), is that Biden wants to resuscitate a bipartisan deal to pair new border powers with additional military aid for Ukraine and Israel.

But the Trump-like rhetoric from the Democratic president - and the fact that Democrats are not even talking about a pathway to legal status for undocumented immigrants currently in the country - is also an important political admission as immigration-focused Donald Trump zeroes in on the Republican presidential nomination and the border crisis reverberates through the country and into Washington, DC.

Biden is willing to offer concessions so he can make deals, and Trump wants to keep this as a campaign issue.

Trump wants to kill bipartisan deal

"As the leader of our party, there is zero chance I will support this horrible, open-borders betrayal of America," Trump said in Nevada on Saturday, although future Republican presidents would also benefit from the new power Biden is seeking.

Trump doesn't think the president needs new power to shut the border. He has promised that, if elected, he will act as "dictator for one day" to do it, and he's actively working against the bipartisan effort even though parts of it are straight out of his policy playbook.

"The reality is that this includes many provisions that when Donald Trump was president, he hoped would be made into law," said CNN's Lauren Fox, appearing Monday on "Inside ***Politics***." These Trump-friendly priorities, she said, include making it much more difficult for migrants to seek asylum in the US and increasing the speed at which asylum cases can be processed in immigration courts.

Biden's acknowledgment

CNN's Priscilla Alvarez, a White House reporter who is also an expert on the issue of immigration, [*documents Biden's shift*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/01/27/politics/biden-border-shut-down-us-mexico-immigration/index.html).

"Biden took office pledging to restore asylum and manage the border in a 'humane' way," Alvarez writes. "But his administration has faced the harsh realities and challenges at the US-Mexico border amid record migration across the Western Hemisphere - making it a political vulnerability seized on by Republicans."

Permanent power for the president

The new permanent power pushed by Biden and Senate negotiators is in line with temporary, Covid-era restrictions originally put in place during Trump's administration, but which lapsed last year on Biden's watch.

Following Trump's lead, rather than work with the president to secure the border, House Republicans have rejected even the idea of a Senate compromise and are gearing up to [*impeach Biden's secretary of Homeland Security*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/01/28/politics/mayorkas-impeachment-house-republicans/index.html), Alejandro Mayorkas, for not applying current law to turn away more people at the border.

Still no deal in writing

The framing of this issue may end up being more important than the policy itself. The bipartisan group of senators has not released text for their compromise, but [*they insist it does exist*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/01/28/politics/chris-murphy-immigration-border-deal-cnntv/index.html).

"We do have a bipartisan deal. We're finishing the text right now," Sen. Chris Murphy, the Connecticut Democrat who is a key negotiator on the deal, said on CNN's "State of the Union" on Sunday.

"The question is whether Republicans are going to listen to Donald Trump, who wants to preserve chaos at the border because he thinks that it's a winning political issue for him," said Murphy, adding the proposal would give the president, Republican or Democrat, permanent new emergency powers.

What we know

While the text of the bill has not been finalized, Biden ticked off the major points during that appearance in South Carolina:

"It includes an additional 1,300 Border Patrols - we need more agents on the border;375 immigration judges to judge whether or not someone can come or not come and be fair about it;1,600 asylum officers;and over 100 cutting-edge inspection machines to help detect and stop fentanyl coming in."

GOP negotiator censured by his own party

Sen. James Lankford of Oklahoma, the top Republican negotiator, is already facing blowback even though the deal has not been publicly released.

The Oklahoma Republican Party voted over the weekend to [*censure Lankford*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/01/29/politics/oklahoma-gop-condemns-censures-lankford-border-negotiations/index.html) and demanded that he abandon the bipartisan talks.

Appearing on "Fox News Sunday," Lankford was pressed about the new authority for Biden, which would be triggered if there's an average of 5,000 migrant crossings per day over the course of a full week. Lankford said this would not normalize 5,000 migrant crossings per day. And for context, border officials were dealing with [*more than 10,000 crossings*](https://www.cnn.com/2023/12/29/us/us-mexico-border-migration/index.html) per day for most of December.

"This is set up for if you have a rush of people coming at the border, the border closes down - no one gets in," he said. "This is not someone standing at the border with a little clicker, saying, 'I'm going to let one more in, we're at 4,999 and then it has to stop.' It is a shutdown of the border, and everyone actually gets turned around."

Democrats waiting for details too

Rank-and-file Democrats would surely be frustrated with such a compromise, which does not address their long-term immigration priorities, like giving permanent legal status to the children of undocumented immigrants who were raised in the US or paving a pathway to citizenship for undocumented immigrants who have built lives and paid taxes in the US.

"We have milestones and we have a path to get there, but we were never going to get a path to citizenship in this bill," former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi told CNN's Dana Bash on Sunday.

Frustration in US cities

Meanwhile, mayors of Democratic cities continue to raise the alarm about an untenable wave of migrants bused north from border states and draining their infrastructure.

Chicago Mayor Brandon Johnson [*plans to begin evicting*](https://abc7chicago.com/chicago-mayor-brandon-johnson-migrants-city-council-governor-jb-pritzker/14363628/) some asylum-seekers from shelters in his city later this week. Next week, [*Denver Mayor Mike Johnston*](https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/denver-struggles-cope-40000-migrants-rcna135555) plans to follow suit. In strapped New York City, CNN [*visited a tent city*](https://www.cnn.com/videos/us/2024/01/28/new-york-migrant-tent-city-pazmino-nr-vpx.cnn) on Randall's Island.

The public view of the current immigration situation has shifted

Nearly half - 45% of Americans in a [*CBS News poll*](https://www.cbsnews.com/news/cbs-news-opinion-poll-americans-border-crisis/) released early this month - said the situation at the border is a crisis.

And a strong majority of the public - 63% now compared with 55% in September - said the Biden administration should be tougher on immigrants crossing at the border. More than two-thirds, 68%, said they disapproved of Biden's handling of the border, although that does not translate into support for Republicans. Sixty-five percent of Americans said they disapproved of congressional Republicans' handling of the issue.

Americans are still broadly supportive of immigration, however. In a [*Gallup poll*](https://news.gallup.com/poll/508520/americans-value-immigration-concerns.aspx) released last July, 68% said the overall effect of immigration was a good thing for the US, compared with just 27% who said it was a bad thing.

After publication, White House spokesperson Angelo Fernandez Hernandez provided this statement:

"The American people overwhelmingly agree with what President Biden underlined in his Day One reform plan: that our immigration system is broken and we have an imperative to secure the border and treat migrants with dignity," Fernandez Hernandez said in an email. "After opposing the record border security funding President Biden has delivered every year of his administration, House Republicans are blocking the border security resources President Biden is fighting for in order to hire more Border Patrol officers and invest in cutting edge technology to detect fentanyl."

Analysis by Zachary B. Wolf, CNN

TM & © 2024 Cable News Network, Inc., a Time Warner Company. All rights reserved.

**Load-Date:** January 29, 2024

**End of Document**