

# [***Interview With Sen. James Lankford (R-OK)***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6BV1-RD21-JCS1-6002-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Body**

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

CHAD PERGRAM, FOX NEWS CONGRESSIONAL CORRESPONDENT: DO you feel exonerated from yesterday? What are your first comments after being exonerated by the Senate, being cleared here? Anything to say at all? Are you concerned about the state of the border?

Do you think that Democrats got put into a bad position here having to defend you yesterday behind during the second trial? Is there an asterisk next to your name, the second secretary to go through an impeachment trial?

(END VIDEO CLIP)

NEIL CAVUTO, FOX NEWS ANCHOR: All right, that was interesting. Mayorkas had nothing to say to Chad Pergram.

But, again, these are all legitimate questions because he dodged a bullet there where he could have been impeached. It was never really a likelihood. He was impeached in the House, I should say. He was not convicted in the Senate, both of those articles of impeachment against voted to be unconstitutional.

Enter Senator James Lankford, the Oklahoma Republican who had crafted together that bipartisan deal that looked like it could have removed any of this separate palace intrigue. But it never -- never happened.

The senator kind enough to join us.

Senator, good to see you again.

SEN. JAMES LANKFORD (R-OK): Good to see you again as well.

CAVUTO: You know, you think about it, Senator, your work and working with others to come up with a plan to at least address some of these pressing issues at the border, it ultimately never happened. It had a good deal of support, but it didn`t go anywhere.

Bottom line, then the other issue with what Mayorkas did, that didn`t go anywhere. He`s still staying in the job. So what`s to stop me from thinking nothing changed?

LANKFORD: Yes, well, 5,800-plus yesterday crossed the border illegally. That continues to be day after day. The media has just looked away from what`s happening at the border, but it continues to be chaotic.

My issue has always been, I`m going to work with anybody on either side of the aisle that`s willing to be able to stop the chaos at the border. If we can negotiate a deal to actually get this done, we will do it. The White House has things that they could do they`re choosing not to do. Congress has things that they could do they`re choosing not to do.

And that leaves us with 5,800 people a day still crossing the border, while everyone`s pointing fingers at everybody. End of the day, we do have to solve this. This is a major national security risk. And yesterday`s non- impeachment impeachment trial, which was painful to be able to see for the future of the Senate, was one more painful moment to say, if we`re going to do something, let`s do it.

But yesterday was more drama than actually getting anything done, because Schumer was unwilling to actually have a trial after we have an impeachment. And, again, with 5,800 people crossing, including special interest aliens that are known terrorists, they continue to be able to come, and we`re not stopping it.

CAVUTO: Do you think, had they passed that measure, which would have at least put a ceiling on that sort of number, we wouldn`t be looking at what we`re looking at now...

LANKFORD: Yes.

CAVUTO: ... and we wouldn`t have seen a pursuit of Mr. Mayorkas?

LANKFORD: Well, I don`t know if we wouldn`t have had an impeachment vote or not.

Obviously, the House still has major problems. And there`s a major issue with Mayorkas basically telling false information to the House. You have got all kinds of other areas where they have chosen not to enforce the law. Don`t know whether the impeachment would have moved in the House, but we wouldn`t have had 5,800 people illegally crossing the border yesterday.

There`s no way that would have happened. We would have had double the number of detention beds. We would have had double the number of deportation flights, a change in the asylum standard, a quick turnaround process that was in that bill. So, no, we would have had a much, much smaller number than what we had just yesterday.

CAVUTO: I have raised this issue, Senator, with your colleague John Barrasso on where that finger-pointing started and, more to the point, some of the expectations for President Biden to do something via executive order.

I like, if you can, sir, to respond to this.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

CAVUTO: If this president by executive order didn`t do enough, and this measure wasn`t enough, it`s fair to say both parties dropped the ball on it, huh?

SEN. JOHN BARRASSO (R-WY): Well, this president did 94 executive orders his first 100 days in office, throwing the border wide open, inviting people from all around the world to come here, over 150 countries. Many from communist China are here, 20,000 this past year alone.

This is a president who refuses to enforce the law and who has new interpretations of the law to let more people in. The bill that was worked on in a bipartisan way would have set 5,000 a day. That is not good enough.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

CAVUTO: All right, that that measure you referred to would still not have been good enough. What do you think?

LANKFORD: Yes, I get it. This common misnomer of the 5,000 a day, some of my colleagues have mentioned this.

CAVUTO: Right.

LANKFORD: That`s actually factually not true.

And the way the bill was set up is, the very first person that came across would have been detained, quickly screened and deported. So, it was a very rapid turnaround from the very first person that came across the border.

But it also did set up an extreme measure that, if we had these large caravans and other folks that come in, and we get 5,000, it takes away due process when you get to that number and they`re just detained and deported. So the first person detained, screened quickly and deported. If you get to 5,000, they`re just detained and deported.

But it doesn`t wait until 5,000 to do something.

CAVUTO: Right.

LANKFORD: It did it at the very first moment. That was the great misnomer.

What Senator Barrasso was saying in that, though, is actually correct, that this is not just a Mayorkas issue. This is a Biden issue because the State Department is no longer pushing people back to recalcitrant countries. The Department of Justice is no longer prosecuting folks. ICE is no longer gathering folks up in the interior and deporting them.

And DHS is no longer stopping people at the border. This is a whole-of- government effort to be able to advance the number of people coming in and not turning people around.

CAVUTO: You`re a real gentleman about this, and I know you`re not trying to zing your colleagues, but it`s your colleagues in your party, sir, who torpedoed this, who didn`t get the facts right on what you just outlined was in that measure.

They killed it, ironically, not Democrats.

LANKFORD: Right. It was. And it was painful to be able to watch it.

And it got stirred up in all the presidential ***politics*** and several of my colleagues started looking for ways after President Trump said don`t fix anything during the presidential election.

CAVUTO: Right.

LANKFORD: It`s the single biggest issue during the election. Don`t resolve this. We will resolve it next year.

Quite a few of my colleagues backed up, looked for a reason to be able to shoot against it and then walked away. I get that. That`s a decision everybody makes. And my issue is, we can -- if we`re pursuing everything, we very often end up with nothing. If we`re pursuing someone coming later to fix it, later seems to never come.

When we have a moment to fix things, we should fix as many things as we can then, then come back later and fix the rest.

CAVUTO: That`s on Donald Trump, Senator.

LANKFORD: Again, he`s got an office that he`s running for. He`s got a campaign that he`s running.

I`m already in office. I have got a responsibility to be able to carry on this. I think everybody cares about the future of the country. President Trump has a bigger picture of a lot of other issues he`s looking for. If we have a President Biden again, this never gets any better. And I think President Trump sees this as a moment that, if this gets fixed, then maybe a few people don`t vote, and then we have a whole host of other issues in the future.

CAVUTO: All right.

LANKFORD: Again, he`s got a task he`s taken on. Respectful. I have also got a task I have got to do. I have got to actually get this fixed.

CAVUTO: Got it.

Senator, very good seeing you again. Thank you very much.

LANKFORD: Good to see you.

CAVUTO: James Lankford of Oklahoma.

He tried.

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