

# [***Former RNC Chair Rebukes Republicans' Baltimore Bridge Response***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6BNV-CR01-JBR6-9005-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Length:** 529 words

**Byline:** Gabe Whisnant

**Highlight:** Rep. Dan Meuser said it's "outrageous" for Joe Biden to propose using federal funds to pay for the Baltimore bridge replacement.

**Body**

Former [*Republican*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/republican?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) National Committee (RNC) chairman Michael Steele rebuked the response of GOP members who are skeptical of using federal funds to reconstruct [*Baltimore's Francis Scott Key Bridge.*](https://www.newsweek.com/baltimore-bridge-collapse-dali-leaking-hazardous-material-patapsco-river-1884492?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships)

"What was so frustrating for me was the response of others to this crisis," Steele said Saturday morning on [*MSNBC*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/msnbc?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships)'s *The Weekend*. "The fact that we have [*Republicans*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/republicans?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) now saying, 'We don't know, now, about paying for this.' This fall back into the ***politics*** in a critical moment like this. Again, wake up America. These are the leaders supposedly leading us through crises...making political calculations instead of, how do we help this city, how do we help this state?"

**The Context:**

The *Dali* container ship, a nearly 1,000-foot-long vessel, hit one of the bridge support columns at around 1:30 a.m. on Tuesday causing the entire structure to [*snap apart in several places*](https://www.newsweek.com/fact-check-francis-scott-key-bridge-explosion-video-baltimore-1883452?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) and fall into the Patapsco River.

On Tuesday afternoon, President [*Joe Biden*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/joe-biden?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) said the federal government should front the bill to rebuild the bridge [*following its collapse.*](https://www.newsweek.com/baltimore-francis-scott-key-bridge-collapse-update-officials-searching-missing-people-dali-1883606?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships)

"It's my intention, that the federal government will pay for the entire cost of reconstructing that bridge," he said during a press conference. "And I expect [*Congress*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/congress?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) to support my effort."

When asked if the company that chartered the ship that caused the collapse should be held responsible for funding the bridge's reconstruction, Biden said, "We're not going to wait for that to happen. We're gonna pay to get the bridge rebuilt and reopened."

GOP Representative Dan Meuser of Pennsylvania was among those pushing back on the Biden administration this week.

"It was kind of outrageous immediately for Biden to express in this tragedy the idea that he's going to use federal funds to pay for the entirety," the congressman told [*Fox*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/fox?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) Business' [*Maria Bartiromo*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/maria-bartiromo?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) on Thursday. "You know, he doesn't refer to it as the American taxpayer dollars on anything. You know, the first reaction, in fact the only reaction, tends to be to spend."

**What We Know:**

The closure of the Port of Baltimore after the collapse of the Francis Scott Key Bridge on Tuesday is forcing car manufacturers to adjust and look for alternatives for the transport of vehicles.

The Port of Baltimore is the [*largest handler of import and exports of automobiles*](https://www.newsweek.com/amazon-assessing-damage-baltimore-bridge-collapse-1883817?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) and light trucks in the United States. Last year, nearly 850,000 cars came through the port, but that has now been suspended as authorities look to rebuild the bridge, which they acknowledge may take time.

Automakers tell *Newsweek* that the suspension of activities may lead to some disruption of their operations and that they were exploring alternatives.

"The Port of Baltimore is an important waterway for the automotive industry," a spokesperson at Stellantis, makers of Chrysler, [*Jeep*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/jeep?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships), Dodge and Maserati, told *Newsweek* in a statement. "We are initiating discussions with our various transportation providers on contingency plans to ensure an uninterrupted flow of vehicles to our customers and will continue to carefully monitor this situation."

*Update 3/30/24, 11:06 a.m.: This story has been updated with additional information.*

*This is a developing news story and will be updated with additional information.*

[*Link to Image*](https://d.newsweek.com/en/full/2370448/key-bridge-dali.jpg)

**Graphic**

Key Bridge and Dali

AFP/Getty Images

Debris from the collapsed Francis Scott Key Bridge rests on the cargo ship Dali on March 29, 2024 in Baltimore, Maryland. The bridge, which was used by roughly 30,000 vehicles each day, fell into the Patapsco River after being struck by the Dali after it lost power and steering capability while leaving the Port of Baltimore at around 1:30am on Tuesday morning. The bodies of two men who were working on the bridge at the time of the accident have been recovered from the water, four other are still missing and presumed dead, two others were rescued and treated for injuries shortly after the accident. The Port of Baltimore, one of the largest and busiest on the East Coast of the U.S., remains temporarily closed due to the incident.

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