

# [***Arizona Senators Blast Republicans for Killing Border Crisis Solution***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6B8T-6TX1-DY68-13T5-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Length:** 748 words

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**Highlight:** "This is what people hate about Washington," Senator Mark Kelly told Newsweek.

**Body**

While Arizona's two senators generally refrain from taking direct shots at [*Republicans*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/republicans?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships), Wednesday marked a breaking point as the duo of [*Kyrsten Sinema*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/kyrsten-sinema?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) and [*Mark Kelly*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/mark-kelly?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) condemned the right for killing the [*Senate*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/senate?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships)'s bipartisan border security deal.

The U.S.-Mexico border faces record illegal crossing numbers, averaging over 262,000 crossings over the last three months. Seeking a solution, the bipartisan working group of Senators [*James Lankford*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/james-lankford?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships), an Oklahoma Republican; Chris Murphy, a Connecticut Democrat; and Sinema, an independent released a bill that secured the endorsements of border community leaders, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, and border patrol's union.

However, former President [*Donald Trump*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/donald-trump?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) deemed the deal "horrendous," characterizing it as a "great gift to the [*Democrats*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/democrats?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships)" as he makes the border a focus of his 2024 campaign. Senate Republicans who [*previously supported*](https://www.newsweek.com/republican-disregard-border-negotiator-james-lankford-angers-democrats-1867508?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships)the effort soon pulled their support, leading the bill to fall Wednesday after a 49-50 vote.

"This is what people hate about Washington," Democratic Senator Mark Kelly of Arizona told *Newsweek*. "Yesterday and today are, after January 6, the two worst days I've seen here."

Kelly, who took office in December 2020, has [*called for action*](https://www.newsweek.com/mark-kelly-says-listen-border-states-dhs-draws-fire-immigration-1701957?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) at the border since his early days in [*Congress*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/congress?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships), sometimes making high-profile criticisms of President [*Joe Biden*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/joe-biden?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) in the process.

The Arizona Democrat said it's "pretty obvious" that many senators "care more about ***politics*** than they do about solving problems" and said these individuals made a political decision specifically to appease the wishes of Trump when they voted against the bill.

Democrats made significant concessions to reach a border agreement, abandoning their longtime demand that border enforcement policy come alongside significant immigration reforms. In doing so, they lost of the support of some progressive Democrats who felt the bipartisan bill went too far.

The border deal would have reformed the asylum system by raising the fear standard and allowing claims to be reviewed by asylum officers as opposed to just immigration judges. Proponents believe this measure would prove significant in reducing the immigration court case backlog which now totals [*over 3 million*](https://trac.syr.edu/reports/734/).

Additionally, the bill would have ended the practice of "catch and release" whereby individuals who cross the border illegally surrender to border patrol, make an asylum claim, then live in the U.S. while their case makes its way through the backlog. If the number of illegal crossings averaged 5,000 over a 7-day period, border authorities would no longer be required to process the asylum claims made by illegal crossers.

"We had the opportunity to solve the nightmare my state has lived for over 40 years," Sinema said during a Wednesday speech on the Senate floor. "But less than 24 hours after we released the bill, my Republican colleagues changed their minds. Turns out they want all talk and no action. It turns out border security is not a risk to our national security. It's just a talking point for the election."

Republicans who opposed the bill largely took issue with the 5,000 number that triggered the authority to turn away asylum seekers who crossed illegally, even though that authority could have been optionally triggered by the president if the 7-day average reached 4,000. Some who opposed the bill incorrectly characterized the provision as a rule dictating that 5,000 illegal crossers would be permitted to enter the U.S. each day.

Lankford pushed back against his conservative colleagues and defended the bill to its end. He acknowledged during his Wednesday floor speech that the bill is "not going to be perfect, but we also knew the status quo is untenable." He said Washington lawmakers were politicizing the issue and urged his colleagues to heed the advice of the National Border Patrol Council and support the bill.

Lankford emphasized that the 370-page deal included funding for the border wall, increased the number of agents, and improved border technology. It would have increased the number of beds for detained migrants, introduced thousands of employment- and family-based visas, and offered pathways to citizenship for Afghan allies admitted to the country after the [*Taliban*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/taliban?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) took over.

"I have a very clear message for anyone using the southern border for staged political events. Don't come to Arizona," Sinema said toward the end of her speech. "Take your political theater to Texas."

*Newsweek* contacted the Trump campaign for comment.

[*Link to Image*](https://d.newsweek.com/en/full/2346160/sinema-kelly-blast-republicans-over-border.jpg)

**Graphic**

Sinema and Kelly Blast Republicans Over Border

Sinema Photo by Kevin Dietsch/Getty Images) (Kelly Photo by Stefani Reynolds/Getty Images

The photo illustration above features on Senator Kyrsten Sinema on February 05, 2024 in Washington, D.C. and Senator Mark Kelly on on April 29, 2021 in Washington, D.C. The two Arizonans offered scathing remarks to Republicans who reneged their support for a border deal.

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