

# [***Greg Abbott's Move Against Biden Could Spectacularly Backfire***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6B78-KJW1-DY68-12HY-00000-00&context=1516831)

Newsweek.com

January 31, 2024 Wednesday 12:18 PM EST

Copyright © 2024 Newsweek Inc. All Rights Reserved



**Length:** 648 words

**Byline:** James Bickerton

**Highlight:** The standoff with Governor Abbott over migration could help Biden by portraying him as "a fighter" according to one social scientist.

**Body**

Texas Governor [*Greg Abbott*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/greg-abbott?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships)'s standoff with the federal government over migration policy could backfire and end up benefitting President Biden, according to two prominent political scientists.

Heath Brown, an associate professor of public policy at the City University of New York, said the confrontation had shown "Biden as a fighter," whilst Professor J. Wesley Leckrone, an expert in American ***politics*** at Widener University, said it plays into the [*Democratic Party*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/democratic-party?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) narrative on "the GOP's march toward authoritarianism."

Tensions between Texan and the Biden administration erupted on January 22 when [*the Supreme Court ruled*](https://www.newsweek.com/greg-abbott-vows-not-over-supreme-court-border-loss-1863032?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) federal agents could remove razor wire placed along the Texas-Mexico border by the state's National Guard on Abbott's orders in a bid to stem migrant flows.

The move sparked an angry response from Abbott who in a letter said he was invoking "Texas's constitutional authority to defend and protect itself" against what he described as an "invasion," with another 25 Republican governors publishing a joint statement [*supporting his position*](https://www.newsweek.com/texas-border-powder-keg-situation-republican-governor-warns-1864191?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships).

Abbott's defiant response prompted two House [*Democrats*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/democrats?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) to suggest Biden could [*federalize the Texas National Guard*](https://www.newsweek.com/joe-biden-faces-growing-calls-federalize-texas-national-guard-1863839?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships), removing it from Abbott's command. On Monday, Texas Lieutenant Governor Dan Patrick told [*Fox News*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/fox-news?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) state authorities would continue placing razor wire along the border despite the ruling.

Speaking to *Newsweek,* Brown argued the confrontation with Abbott could strengthen public perceptions of Biden.

He said: "I think Biden has suffered with the public over the last several years on immigration because he's been seen as not doing anything at all. He's been viewed as weak. I suspect the recent stalemate in [*Congress*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/congress?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) on immigration reform will flip that dynamic: [*Republicans*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/republicans?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) are going to be seen as the inactive ones and Biden as the one who's the eager problem-solver.

"Similarly, in Texas now, Biden's confrontation with Governor Abbott may reveal Biden as a fighter, and Americans always prefer strength and action over inaction in the White House."

Biden is fighting to [*save a bipartisan immigration deal*](https://www.nytimes.com/2024/01/26/us/politics/johnson-opposes-border-deal.html) which Republican House Speaker [*Mike Johnson*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/mike-johnson?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) has already suggested could be "dead on arrival." On Friday, the president claimed the proposal would be "the toughest and fairest set of reforms to secure the border we've ever had in our country" giving him "a new emergency authority to shut down the border when it becomes overwhelmed."

Leckrone told *Newsweek* that Abbott's actions could help Biden by playing into his argument that the Republican Party is becoming increasingly authoritarian.

He commented: "I doubt there will a long-term cost to Biden. There may even be a net gain for him, particularly among swing voters. Abbott taking matters into his own hands on immigration, talk in GOP circles of rejecting the [*Supreme Court*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/supreme-court?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships)'s ruling, and the optics of other red states sending National Guard troops to Texas all play into Biden's narrative of Trump and the GOP's march toward authoritarianism and the rejection of the rule of law.

"What Abbott is currently doing is a signal that Trumpism is bigger than Trump the individual. Many leaders of the GOP have adopted his style of ***politics***, Abbott is just the latest example."

However, Thomas Whalen, an associate professor of social science at Boston University, disagreed, telling *Newsweek* the controversy over illegal migration has been a disaster for Biden.

The academic said: "Biden must feel as comfortable as Count Dracula in a tanning booth over this one. It's part of a clever, albeit cynical GOP political strategy to paint the president into a corner on immigration. Damned if he does intercede, damn if he doesn't. Either way, he gets blamed for the border problem. Trump must be rubbing his stubby little hands together over this."

*Newsweek* has reached out to the press offices of Governor Abbott and the White House for comment by email.

[*Link to Image*](https://d.newsweek.com/en/full/2343064/greg-abbott-joe-biden.jpg)

**Graphic**

Greg Abbott and Joe Biden

BRANDON BELL/MANDEL NGAN/AFP/GETTY

Texas Gov. Greg Abbott speaking at a news conference at the state Capitol on June 08, 2023 in Austin, Texas (left) and President Joe Biden walking to talk to reporters before boarding Marine One on the South Lawn of the White House in Washington, DC, on January 30, 2024 (right). Speaking to Newsweek one political scientist said the confrontation between Abbott and Biden could strengthen the president by showing him "as a fighter."

**Load-Date:** January 31, 2024

**End of Document**