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Biden pledges to shut down the border to gain Ukraine war funds

In a statement issued from the White House Friday night, President Joe Biden pledged to his Republican “colleagues” that he would “shut down” the US-Mexico border if Republicans helped pass a \$110 billion supplemental funding package. Biden’s statement was released two days after Texas Governor Greg Abbott declared that migrants seeking asylum constituted an “invasion” of his state and justified his usurpation of federal authority over the border.



President Joe Biden speaks to the media before boarding Marine One on the South Lawn of the White House, Thursday, Jan. 18, 2024. [AP Photo/Yuri Gripas]

The supplemental war package has been languishing since October due to Republican objections that the bill, which includes over \$61 billion in funding for the proxy war against Russia in Ukraine, does not include sufficiently brutal attacks on immigrants, including reinstitution of Trump’s “Remain in Mexico” policy and virtual elimination of the right to asylum.

The supplemental funding bill also provides \$14.5 billion for Israel, \$14 billion for border security and billions more for military aid to Taiwan and other South Asian regimes aligned with the US against China.

In a bid for Republican support for the war package, Biden has already carried out more deportations in the last year than Trump did in 2019, and he has resumed building portions of Trump's border wall.

In response to Trump's opposition to any border deal with Biden and the Democrats, seconded by Republican House Speaker Mike Johnson, Biden has now adopted the language of the fascist ex-president and declared that he will "shut down the border" the day his supplemental war funding bill is passed and signed into law.

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The White House statement repeated the Republican mantra that the "border is broken." It noted that the supplemental funding bill would grant Biden "a new emergency authority to shut down the border when it becomes overwhelmed." It added that the new policies requested by Biden would represent the "toughest and fairest set of reforms to secure the border we've ever had in our country."

News outlets are reporting that policy changes in the bill include detention of all single adults and mandatory closure of the US-Mexico border if migrant "encounters" reach an average of 5,000 per day. More than that number have been reported virtually every day for the last several months.

The 5,000 "encounter" limit includes 1,400 legal applications through the Customs and Border Protection application known as CBP One. This means that only 3,600 immigrants per day would have the opportunity to apply for asylum.



Federal officers in San Diego remove handcuffs from men before releasing them through a gate in a border wall to Tijuana, Mexico, Wednesday, March 15, 2023. [AP Photo/Gregory Bull]

Once the threshold is hit, the new law would allow the president to impose a shutdown, requiring Border Patrol agents to immediately expel, without processing, any and all immigrants crossing the border. During the shutdown, no immigrants who crossed would be able to file for asylum under Title 8.

The shutdown could only be lifted once “daily encounters” averaged less than 3,750 a day over a two-week span, something that has not happened in months. Furthermore, any migrant who attempted to cross the border twice during a “shutdown” would be banned from entering the US for one year.

Campaigning against Trump in 2020, Biden promised to institute more humane immigration policies. With his statement Friday, he and the Democratic Party are openly adopting the fascistic anti-immigrant policy of Trump and the Republicans.

The White House statement noted that the bill included funding for the border requested by Biden himself in October, providing for an “additional 1,300 Border Patrol agents, 375 immigration judges, 1,600 asylum officers, and over 100 cutting-edge inspection machines...”

Senator James Lankford, one of the lead negotiators for the Republicans on the supplemental package, touted the draconian changes on border policy in the proposed bipartisan Senate bill. He told “Fox News Sunday”:

“The bill focuses on getting us to zero illegal crossings a day. There’s no amnesty. It increases the number of Border Patrol agents, increases asylum officers. It increases detention beds so we can quickly detain and then deport individuals.”

Lankford added that the bill provides “additional deportation flights out” and “changes our asylum process so that people get a fast asylum screening at a higher standard and then get returned back their home country.”

More than 48 hours after Biden acceded to Republican demands that will put millions of immigrants, including over 2.5 million “dreamers” (undocumented immigrants who arrived in the US as minors), at risk of deportation, leading members of the Democratic Socialists of America have remained silent.

New York Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, who denounced socialist and left-wing critics of her support for Biden’s immigration policies as “privileged” in 2021, has yet to post a tweet on either of her X/Twitter social media accounts or make a post on Instagram opposing the measure. Appearing on NBC’s “Meet the Press” program Sunday, she was not asked about Biden’s pledge to shut down the border and did not raise the issue herself.

Three other current DSA members of the House—Cori Bush (Missouri), Greg Casar (Texas) and Rashida Tlaib (Michigan)—likewise have yet to issue any statement denouncing Biden for throwing immigrants under the bus in order to secure funding for war in Ukraine and genocide in Gaza.

Their silence is not an oversight. The Democrats, including the fake socialists and self-declared “progressives,” will collaborate with the Republicans in enacting their fascistic domestic agenda in exchange for securing funding for the war in Ukraine and the widening war in the Middle East. No attacks on democratic rights are beyond the pale.

This was underscored by former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi Sunday on CNN’s State of the Union program. Pelosi called for the FBI to investigate anti-genocide protesters, some of whom, she claimed, without offering a shred of evidence, were “Russian plants.”

She said: “For them to call for a cease-fire is Mr. Putin’s message. Make no mistake, this is directly connected to what he would like to see. Same thing with Ukraine. It’s about Putin’s message.”

These developments demonstrate that a vote for “Genocide Joe” and the Democrats in November is not a means of fighting against Trump’s authoritarianism, but a guarantee that the attacks on the democratic rights and social conditions of the working class will be intensified.

The working class cannot defend its democratic rights, in America or anywhere else, by

supporting any of the capitalist parties. The choice between Trump and Biden is no choice at all. There is no “lesser evil.” There are two parties representing rival reactionary factions of a crisis-ridden capitalist ruling class that is committed to world war, dictatorship and the impoverishment of the working class.

The war against immigrants—being waged by the ruling class in every country—is the spearhead of the assault on the democratic rights of the entire working class. It must be opposed by workers of all countries as part of the fight against the descent of capitalism into barbarism, through the revolutionary struggle for socialism.

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