



A message from XR Association

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Funding deadlock threatens to make the border crisis worse



Stef W. Kight



US Customs and Border Protection officers take an immigrant child from her mother after they crossed the border from Mexico. Photo: Chandan Khanna/AFP via Getty Images

have enough cash as it is, sources tell Axios.

Why it matters: Stalled [funding deals in Congress](#) are threatening to make an already chaotic situation along the U.S.-Mexico border even worse, as lawmakers demand action but can't agree on a plan to pay for it.

- Border money is tied up in raging political debates over immigration, government spending and military aid to Ukraine.
- Republicans are calling for President Biden to do more to secure the border — even as they reject spending requests and policies they say don't go far enough.
- If the standoff continues, "we're going to have to make tough business decisions on what we're going to cease and significantly slow down," one DHS official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity, told Axios.

Driving the news: "We must insist that the border be the top priority," House Speaker Mike Johnson (R-La.) said after a meeting with the White House and congressional leaders on Wednesday.

- A bipartisan group of senators has been hashing out a deal on border policy for weeks, while Johnson and conservatives in the House have largely insisted on their [sweeping, GOP-only border bill](#).
- Congress also looks likely to push back the deadline for passing new funding for the government, including DHS, once again.

Zoom in: Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) is hundreds of millions of dollars in the hole, Axios has learned. DHS also had to [reshuffle funds last year](#) to fill gaps.

- It has also spent more money on deportation flights and ramped up a controversial program to fast-track migrant family removals.
- Without a significant influx of funds soon, at least one of those priorities will have to give. That could worsen an already chronically backlogged immigration system.



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Customs and Border Protection (CBP) has had to pay massive amount of money to keep temporary processing facilities running along the border and increase migrant transportation.

- They are now slated to give their agents a pay raise and overtime.
- "If we don't put in more money, they have to take it out of somewhere," said Rep. Henry Cuellar (D-Tex.) who represents a border district and sits on the appropriations committee. "And that somewhere is the operational budget."
- Top agency officials are already planning for worst-case scenarios, sources tell Axios.

What they're saying: In the absence of supplemental money, immigration agencies will likely have to make painful cuts in their day-to-day work.



- Meanwhile, the wave of desperate people taking long journeys to the border for a chance at a new life in the U.S. shows no signs of slowing.



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An officer stands guard on the banks of the Rio Grande River at Shelby Park on Friday in Eagle Pass, Texas. Photo: Brandon Bell/Getty Images

The Department of Homeland Security is calling Texas' immigration policies "cruel" and "inhumane" after three migrants drowned while trying to cross the [U.S. southern border](#) on Friday in an area near where the state has restricted Border Patrol agents from processing and aiding migrants.

Why it matters: It is a flashpoint in the [growing battle](#) between Texas and the Biden administration over Gov. Greg Abbott's aggressive border actions and a harrowing reminder of the life-and-death consequences carried by border decisions.

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Biden to meet with congressional leaders on national security package



House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries, Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer and House Speaker Mike Johnson at a menorah lighting ceremony on Dec. 12, 2023. Photo: Tom Williams/CQ-Roll Call, Inc via Getty Images.

President Biden is scheduled to meet with congressional leaders at the White House on Wednesday to discuss an [emergency national security funding package](#) still being hashed out by lawmakers, Axios has learned.

Why it matters: The president's [request for more than \\$100 billion](#) in funding for Ukraine, Israel, the Indo-Pacific and border security has been stuck in Senate negotiations for months.

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Migrants caught between shelter evictions, freezing temps



A group of migrants awaits food at a migrant landing zone during a winter storm on January 12, 2024 in Chicago. Photo: Kamil Krzaczynski/AFP via Getty Images

[Arctic temperatures](#) hitting cities like New York, Chicago and Denver are endangering newly arrived migrants and complicating cities' efforts to manage limited shelter space.

Why it matters: It is another crisis point for strained official and non-government networks trying to care for migrants across the country.

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