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# The GOP's border proposals are a human trafficker's dream

BY JASON HOUSER, OPINION CONTRIBUTOR - 01/03/24 10:30 AM ET

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It's no secret that our immigration system is broken. But the border policies that Senate Republicans are demanding in exchange for unrelated foreign aid would be an operational nightmare — and a human trafficker's dream.

The concessions being demanded pull straight from Donald Trump's playbook and would severely restrict the right to seek asylum, fast-track deportations nationwide and require the detention of families and children seeking refuge. At the heart of these negotiations lies a dangerous tradeoff that, if accepted, could dismantle any semblance of a functional immigration process.

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In execution, the proposed policies would collapse our border communities into further crisis and destroy federal law enforcement's ability to carry out its duty to protect public safety and defend our national security. The Republican wish list for so-called "border security," is truly anti-law enforcement at its core.

What the proposals get wrong is they naively overlook the broader management of the entire immigration system and continuum. Immigration starts when a person decides to seek a better life elsewhere and leave their home — not at the southern border.

A functioning immigration system includes expanded pathways for asylum seekers, efficient screenings at the border, timely processing of immigration and asylum applications, non-custodial oversight, case management, immigration hearings and detention for those who are public safety threats. If immigration agencies were required to detain and deport every family or person crossing the border or in the interior, it would divert critical resources away from other important aspects that keep the system running.

The current Republican proposals would also create a five-alarm response across the federal government, forcing the Department of Homeland Security and other agencies to deploy their staff and resources to the border. In turn, law enforcement would be pulled away from their duties, including cracking down on the real dangers at the border — such as fentanyl and sex and human trafficking — and enforcing our customs and immigration laws across the nation.

Human traffickers prey on opportunities when immigration and other law enforcement are pulled from their mission to oversee these types of policies — smugglers will adjust their recruitment and trafficking routes, and feed on policies that create recidivist clientele, as we saw with expulsions under Title 42.

disorder, such as the escalations in Del Rio, Texas, when thousands of Haitian migrants were violently removed from the border and sent back to a country devastated by ongoing gang violence, as well as one of the deadliest earthquakes in its history. If our government returns to Title 42-type policies, it will likely create additional sporadic mass surges of migrants in low-resourced sectors, putting migrants and law enforcement at risk.

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Beyond the impact on law enforcement and the functionality of our immigration system, we must not lose sight of the human cost these proposals will exact on migrants seeking safety. Throughout our history, families escaping violence and persecution have come to the United States with the hope of finding refuge and opportunities for a brighter future. In turn, migrants have become our friends, family members and contributors to our economy and communities.

The situation at the border presents many challenges for surrounding communities and cities receiving migrants but also presents a remarkable opportunity for our country to maintain our moral commitment to protect people fleeing war and violence. It is our duty to ensure that our immigration system is effective, just and humane, providing a pathway for those who seek a better life while safeguarding our national security.

I have told lawmakers time and time again that a functioning immigration system works for both law enforcement and migrants themselves. Instead of doubling down on 30 years of failed deterrence policies, we should focus on comprehensive, bipartisan solutions that effectively address the breadth of the immigration process, improve border management and uphold our nation's values.

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A year from now, [President Biden](#) could find himself paying the same political price for conceding to measures that fail to deliver meaningful solutions that Republicans are demanding in Congress. Instead of compromising the security of our communities and the well-being of migrants for short-term gains, our lawmakers must prioritize policies that stand the test of time and effectively address the complex issues at our border.

The stakes are too high, and the consequences too severe to ignore the potential operational repercussions from a deal that undermines the very integrity of our immigration system and undercuts law enforcement's ability to do its job.

*Jason Houser was the chief of staff at Immigration and Customs Enforcement during the Biden administration from 2021-2023. He also worked in the Department of Homeland Security and Customs and Border Protection during the Obama administration from 2009-2016.*

**TAGS** BORDER SECURITY DONALD TRUMP IMMIGRATION AND CUSTOMS ENFORCEMENT IMMIGRATION POLICY IMMIGRATION TO THE UNITED STATES JOE BIDEN POLITICS OF THE UNITED STATES TITLE 42

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