

COMMENTARY Immigration

Biden's Nonsensical Border COVID Policy Costs Lives

Aug 12th, 2021 6 min read

Mark Morgan

Visiting Fellow, Davis Institute

Mark Morgan is a visiting fellow in the Davis Institute for National Security and Foreign Policy at The Heritage Foundation.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

The president's border crisis has become far more than a national-security, humanitarian, and constitutional crisis since assuming office.

The Biden administration hasn't let data, public health, or countless COVID-related deaths slow down its America-last agenda.

COVID cases are spiking across Central and South America, the region driving the mass increase in illegal immigration.

Six months into the Biden administration, the president's border crisis has become far more than a national-security, humanitarian, and constitutional crisis. It represents one of the most substantial public-health crises facing the United States as we struggle to recover from the pandemic.

Driven by politics and ideological hubris, the administration remains committed to a nonsensical, inconsistent, and anti-science open-borders agenda that not only encourages record levels of illegal immigration but also needlessly jeopardizes the lives of American citizens.

In short, the administration is knowingly seeding border towns and cities with individuals who are actively carrying and transmitting the virus—people who have defied our laws and broken into our country while ignoring almost all basic guidance concerning COVID.

They travel through COVID hotspots, often jammed into overcrowded stash houses for days or even weeks with no medical attention or adequate PPE, recklessly endangering the health of our citizens, law-enforcement personnel, and the migrants themselves. Thirty-two Customs and Border Protection (CBP) personnel have died in the line of duty from COVID—nine of them from the Border Patrol. Since the pandemic began, thousands of CBP personnel have been quarantined, degrading CBP's ability to operate, while many others have been placed in intensive care at local hospitals, fighting for their lives.

>>> Biden Border “Blueprint”: Unfair, Disorderly, and Inhumane

But the Biden administration hasn't let data, public health, or countless COVID-related deaths slow down its America-last agenda. On the contrary, it continues to openly contradict and undermine the CDC's guidance under Title 42, which clearly states that the current surge of illegal aliens “migrating through Canada and Mexico into the United States creates a serious danger of the introduction of COVID-19 into the United States.”

Under the Trump administration, I and my fellow immigration officials implemented the CDC's order with purpose and with the understanding that it would save countless American lives. There were no “carve-outs” to please any political faction. We put the health and safety of Americans first.

President Biden, however, has refused from his first day in office to apply Title 42 to unaccompanied children (UACs) infected with COVID, although the overwhelming majority of UACs are 15 to 17 years of age and can carry the virus. The result has been more than 100,000 apprehensions of UACs this fiscal year—the highest total in American history. Most of them have subsequently been released into the U.S.

Under the direction of Homeland Security secretary Alejandro Mayorkas, a 17-year-old from anywhere in the world who illegally crosses our southwest border will be released and transported to any city in the U.S. where they can find a “sponsor,” regardless of their COVID status.

Yet while the country is navigating new COVID variants and rising infections, the Biden administration continues to play a dangerous political game with American lives. As the Rio Grande Valley area is reporting a 900 percent increase in COVID cases, the administration is currently releasing, on average, 80 percent of the families illegally entering the U.S. This fiscal year, Mayorkas has directed the release of more than 170,000 family members into

local communities without testing for COVID, forcing those communities to take on the responsibility.

McAllen, along with local NGOs, has been forced to establish temporary shelters to address the massive flood of illegal aliens into their communities. McAllen's mayor recently declared the city overwhelmed and over capacity. The COVID-positive rate among the illegal aliens released into McAllen is 15 percent.

We've learned in recent days of thousands of illegal aliens being detained under bridges in Texas, in unsanitary, overcrowded conditions, because CBP lacks the capacity to hold them anywhere else. These are among the most intense "super-spreader" events. Other pictures from inside CBP facilities show illegal aliens crammed into small areas like sardines, creating what amounts to an active COVID petri dish.

But, sadly, the consequences of Biden's border crisis are not limited to border towns or facilities. Illegal aliens are daily being resettled into neighborhoods across the country at U.S. taxpayer expense. A chilling line from the NBC report, quoting an illegal alien who tested positive upon release by CBP, demonstrates the national scope of this troubling reality: "Right now we were tested for Covid and they separated about eight of us because we were positive. We are waiting right now.' She was waiting to catch a bus to Houston." (Emphasis added.)

After dismantling the effective policies implemented under the Trump administration—which created the most secure border in our lifetime—the Biden administration has opened our borders to illegal aliens carrying the most destructive virus in a century.

The Biden administration is actively importing COVID cases into the United States at the same time that it is pushing new mask mandates and various forms of vaccine passports, and even raising the possibility of more lockdowns.

This certainly flies in the face of the administration's self-aggrandizing support for "science." Since the 2020 campaign, Americans have been told that Joe Biden respects "science and the scientists." "We should listen to the scientists, not to the president," he gravely intoned in a CNN town hall on September 17, 2020. Administration officials are also committed to this bit. White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki tweeted in March, "Tell the truth, follow the science, work together." Visitors to the White House website will find a memorandum on

“Restoring Trust in Government Through Scientific Integrity and Evidence-Based Policymaking.” It sounds like the president literally didn’t get the memo.

At the same time that this administration is knowingly and willfully releasing illegal aliens in record numbers into the United States, it has continued to maintain a cruel and unscientific ban on citizens of the U.K. and the European Union entering the U.S.

The ban was implemented by the Trump administration in the early days of the outbreak, but Trump announced he would allow it to expire on January 26. Sadly, the new administration announced it would maintain the ban, even after the U.K. and EU this spring lifted their own similar restrictions.

Ellen Carmichael, who penned a passionate and eloquent takedown of the Biden administration’s unscientific travel ban last month for National Review, points out the inconsistency of the policy: “To reenter the U.S., American citizens and legal residents only need to show an airline representative a current negative COVID-19 test. Apparently, the Biden administration believes an identical test administered to a European yields a false result.”

Absurdity has reached new heights. The Biden administration’s position is that travelers from the U.K. and the EU, many of whom have been vaccinated or come from nations with reasonable health-care infrastructure, may not come to the U.S., even if they test negative for COVID. The administration has also kept our borders with Mexico and Canada closed for “non-essential” cross-border traffic, an issue adversely affecting border communities and prompting bipartisan action from officials such as Representative Henry Cuellar (D., Texas).

>>> Biden Border Crisis

Their outrage comes from the inconsistent, seemingly illogical application of restrictions against the backdrop of these open-border policies. A fully vaccinated Mexican citizen coming to a legal point of entry is forbidden to enter, but an illegal alien family with COVID is rapidly released into the U.S. The administration will fly illegal aliens across the country on commercial airlines, even if their health status is unclear, as former ICE acting director Tom Homan and I witnessed firsthand this spring.

According to the Reuters COVID-19 Tracker, COVID cases are spiking across Central and South America, the region driving the mass increase in illegal immigration. In Honduras, infections are at 99 percent of peak rate, with not even 10 percent of Hondurans vaccinated.

Cases in Guatemala are around 72 percent of peak rate, with even fewer individuals vaccinated than in Honduras (about 7.2 percent). Only about 3 percent of Nicaragua's population has received a vaccine.

Meanwhile, cases in the U.K. are falling, and more than 64 percent of the population is vaccinated. Cases are also falling in countries such as the Netherlands, Portugal, and the Czech Republic. Even in European nations where cases are rising, either the rate is low (Germany, 9 percent of peak rate; Poland, less than 1 percent of peak rate) or at least half the population is vaccinated.

The Biden administration has sparked an unprecedented crisis on our southern border. It has undone the effective policies of the previous administration that created the most secure border in American history.

Not only do the massive numbers of illegal aliens being apprehended at the border every month overwhelm our Border Patrol, but many are subsequently released into the interior because CBP simply does not have the capacity to detain, process, and deport them.

For anyone willing to put aside politics, the consequences are right before our eyes.

This piece originally appeared in The National Review

COLLECTIONS

The Biden Border Crisis

COMMENTARY

Conservatives Should Not Help Biden Destroy Border Security

May 7, 2021 4 min read

COMMENTARY

The Biden-Made Border Crisis

Feb 23, 2021 2 min read