



Biden's border plan can work—why isn't anyone supporting it?

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President Biden announced major immigration changes last week, and they have the potential to end much of the disorder, illegality, and chaos at the border.

His plan should bring both sides together by reducing illegal immigration while creating viable legal options for people seeking to come to the United States. Yet no one seems happy. In reality, both sides seem to view border chaos as a benefit.

As the centerpiece of his plan, Biden has convinced Mexico to accept—for the first time—30,000 expulsions per month of people from Venezuela, Haiti, Nicaragua, and Cuba who enter the United States illegally. This would bring total expulsions to a level much higher than when Trump left office. Biden has also committed to reinstating a Trump-era ban on asylum for any immigrants crossing illegally.

In exchange, the president has agreed to allow 30,000 immigrants per month from the four countries mentioned above to legally migrate directly from abroad if they have U.S. financial sponsors. They will receive a work permit and legal status known as “parole.” The asylum ban and expulsions will only apply if someone crosses the border illegally so that asylum seekers who can't apply from abroad are able to apply at legal crossing points.

In combination, these policies will dramatically reduce illegal immigration, especially from the four targeted countries. We know this because the administration has already piloted these initiatives on smaller scales this year, and every time it has worked.

The first initiative occurred in the spring. After the Russian invasion of Ukraine, tens of thousands of Ukrainians began showing up at the U.S.-Mexico border to request asylum.

In response to this crisis, the administration created a legal process (also known as parole) to allow Ukrainians to migrate directly from Europe while expelling Ukrainians who come to the border. This new process led to a 98-percent reduction in Ukrainian border arrivals.

Another trial run occurred in October when the administration applied the Ukrainian parole process to Venezuelans and convinced Mexico to accept Venezuelan expulsions. In the first full month after implementation, a majority of Venezuelans were already entering the country legally, mainly by plane. By December, there was a greater than 90-percent drop in illegal crossings by Venezuelans.

The final experiment started this summer when the administration decided to admit more asylum seekers from Haiti at legal crossing points along the U.S.-Mexico border. Haitians seeking asylum would be referred by nonprofit organizations, upload their information into the government's system, and schedule an appointment at a land port of entry. This new process transformed Haitian migration from 99 percent illegal to 98 percent legal in a matter of months.

Now the administration is expanding its Haitian experiment by letting asylum seekers from any country directly schedule appointments without a referral by a nonprofit organization using a phone app called CBP One. This process by itself will quickly cut illegal immigration.

Meanwhile, Haitians in their home country are already lining up to apply for the new parole program, which allows them to avoid a potentially dangerous trip to the U.S.-Mexico border if they line up a U.S. sponsor.

Despite the proven success of these initiatives, both sides of the political spectrum refuse to accept them.

For instance, former Trump immigration advisor Stephen Miller condemned the new legal migration effort as "mass amnesty."

Amnesty is forgiveness for a violation, but these people would not be violating the law. They would be following it. These programs were essential to get Mexico to agree to an enforcement deal even Trump couldn't get. Does Miller want illegal immigration to continue?

The left is also condemning Biden's scheme. The Refugee And Immigrant Center for Education and Legal Services (RAICES) responded by questioning the plan's mechanics.

"It is preposterous to expect that [asylum seekers] can book a flight and download a mobile app," the group said.

In reality, the option is one (book a flight) or the other (use the app), not both. But more importantly, this attitude towards immigrants is deeply condescending. These immigrants figure out far more difficult challenges and incur far greater expenses traversing thousands of miles illegally by land.

Does RAICES really believe the current system is working for immigrants? People trying to save their families are risking grievous harm crossing the jungles into Panama and dying crossing the Rio Grande into the United States. They are being terrorized by cartels, shaken down by corrupt police, and forced to live destitute on the streets with no viable path to enter and live legally in the United States. These new programs offer that viable path.

Biden's plan is not perfect. A skeptic may focus not on the policies, but on the desire or ability to implement them effectively. By waiting this long to act, Biden has earned that skepticism. But if the president truly wants to fix the problems at the border, this plan is the right start. His critics should hold him to it.

Immigrants are faced with misguided compassion on the left and unearned animus on the right. Biden's approach isn't perfect, but it can start to obtain order at the border.

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