

# The Journal Times

## **U.S. Rep. Bryan Steil calls for wall to continue being built during visit to southern border**

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U.S. Rep. Bryan Steil, R-Wis., following a visit to the U.S.-Mexico border this week, advocated for construction on the border wall to resume — but also acknowledged that the wall itself matters little in actually preventing illegal immigration.

Rather, during a radio interview Tuesday, he and Jay Weber of WISN (1130 AM) agreed that the messaging and policies of President Joe Biden’s administration are what is drawing more migrants across the border, wall or otherwise.

But, a completed wall (or at least continuing construction on it, as the State of Texas is looking to do without federal help) could send a deterring message that might stop some of the thousands flooding toward the U.S. from wanting to come here.

In August 2020, while Donald Trump was still president, there were about 50,000 “Southwest Land Border Encounters” (i.e. attempted illegal border crossings), the Border Patrol reported. In August 2021 with Joe Biden in the Oval Office, there were about 200,000 attempted border crossings.

Also, under Trump, very few of those people were allowed to stay in the country — even if they claimed asylum. Under Biden, far more are being allowed in and given court dates that are often months or years down the road.

In August, the U.S. Supreme Court by a 6-3 vote said that Biden's attempt to killing Trump's Remain in Mexico policy likely violated federal law and thus ordered the policy to be put back in place, although it's unclear what that decision could mean in actuality. Steil, the second-term Republican from Janesville whose district includes all of Racine and Kenosha counties, visited the Del Rio area of Texas. It's where thousands of Haitians fleeing their tumultuous home country recently camped.

Haiti at the moment is in disarray: its president was murdered in his home July 7. Gang killings are rampant, especially after the assassination. An Aug. 14 earthquake has put 650,000 people in need of humanitarian aid and left more than 2,200 dead. And Haiti was already the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere.

In the final weeks of September, those migrants were cleared from their food-strapped camp under the International Bridge near Del Rio. There are reports of both thousands being allowed into the U.S. under a temporary legal status with a court date months or years down the road, and thousands more being deported but with the Biden administration vowing to send them aid abroad — although Time Magazine reported that even a week after deportations began support never arrived.

Still, 60,000 more people could be coming from Haiti; it could be the biggest one-time surge in migrants in U.S. history if such rumors are true.

The Haitian situation is a litmus test for Americans on how those knocking at the door should be treated: Are they lawbreakers who should be kept out of the U.S.? Or should they be treated as refugees seeking a better life while their lives are at risk in their homeland?

Upon being sent back to Haiti, "Returnees reacted angrily as they stepped off flights at Port-au-Prince airport after spending thousands of dollars on arduous voyages from the troubled Caribbean nation via South America hoping for a better life in the United States. On Tuesday (Sept. 21), they found themselves back where they started," Reuters reported. "Tempers ran high, exacerbated by news the Haitian government had accepted the deportations."

The head of the United Nations' refugee agency condemned the U.S., saying last month that the deportations may violate international law as it "may constitute refoulement."

According to the United Nations, "Under international human rights law, the principle of non-refoulement guarantees that no one should be returned to a country where they would face torture, cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment and other irreparable harm. This principle applies to all migrants at all times, irrespective of migration status."

The Washington Post reported last week that "Haitian migrants thought Biden would welcome them. Now deported to Haiti, they have one mission: Leave again," indicating that deporting these thousands may have only prolonged the problem.

Still, Weber called the Haitians' claims of wanting asylum in the U.S. "bogus" on Tuesday.

Steil said that the U.S. border still remains unprepared for the constant flow of those seeking a better life in the U.S.

"Every single border agent that I talked to, and I talked to dozens yesterday, are beyond frustrated with the situation that they're dealing with," Steil said Tuesday during the radio interview. He said that the Del Rio contingent of the Border Patrol has 1,500 officers — hundreds short of the desired employment level — to guard "hundreds of miles of border."

#### Safety concerns

There has never been a terrorist attack perpetrated by someone who came into the U.S. illegally through the southern border. According to Cato Institute, a libertarian think tank, "From 1975 through the end of 2020, only nine people convicted of planning a terrorist attack entered the United States illegally — some of them on ships, airplanes, and walking across the border ... Only three of the nine who entered illegally came across the border with Mexico as young children in 1984, 23 years before they were arrested for a comically planned terrorist attack on Fort Dix in 2007."

Regardless, the border situation has been linked with a fear of attack and American vulnerability.

“There is zero chance that Islamist terrorists groups and other American enemies are not taking advantage of this open border situation,” Weber claimed on air Tuesday. “If they want to get new spies into the country completely unknown to us, without so much as a tourist visa application in our system to flag them, this is the way to do it.”

“There is a major national security risk,” Steil said, adding that the Del Rio section of the Border Patrol said it encountered people in the past year from 90 different countries — including as far away as Nigeria.

Primarily, Steil called on the Biden administration to change its presentation of its border policies.

Vice President Kamala Harris’ June 7 speech in which she repeated in a message, supposedly for would-be migrants — “Do not come” — seems to have failed.

“The Biden administration has cleared out the optics of this, but has done nothing to clear out the underlying problem,” Steil said Tuesday. “The message continues to be: The borders are open.”