



Biden releases 21-point immigration plan amid bipartisan criticism

Rafael Bernal and Morgan Chalfant

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The Biden administration on Tuesday unveiled an outline of its full strategy on immigration, with activists and advocacy groups decrying a new push for expedited removals.

The 21-point plan released by the White House comes as the administration is taking flak from both sides of the aisle: from the left over the call for swift deportations, and from Republicans over the increase in migrants at the southern border.

“Success in building this fair, orderly, and humane immigration system won’t be achieved overnight, especially after the prior Administration’s irrational and inhumane policies, but this Administration has a blueprint to get there and is making real progress,” a White House fact sheet says announcing the plan, criticizing the immigration policies of former President Trump.

“We will always be a nation of borders, and we will enforce our immigration laws in a way that is fair and just. We will continue to work to fortify an orderly immigration system,” it says.

The plan, which includes multiple initiatives previously announced by the Biden administration, was made public shortly after its most controversial section, the renewal of expedited removals, was disclosed by the Department of Homeland Security on Monday.

Under expedited removals, border officials can quickly make a determination of whether migrants caught entering the country are eligible for asylum.

Immigrant advocates say leaving that final determination to border officials violates both the principles and laws of the asylum system and potentially returns qualified asylum-seekers to the danger they sought to flee.

The Biden administration is also still expelling immigrants under the public health order Title 42, which allows border officials to immediately expel migrants they encounter between ports of entry under the guise of coronavirus pandemic sanitary protections. The administration is making exceptions for unaccompanied minors.

“It remains in place, and it will remain in place as long as that is the guidance from our health and medical experts,” White House press secretary Jen Psaki told reporters Monday, saying there was no timeline for lifting the order.

The outline of Biden's immigration policy makes no mention of Title 42.

Although the document is deeply critical of the Trump administration, it leads with border management, relegating the Biden administration's "root causes" initiative to the last section.

Among other border measures, it calls for assisting regional partners in their border management.

One of the most criticized elements of the Trump administration's migration policies was reliance on Mexican and Central American security forces to prevent irregular migration in the region, turning a blind eye to widespread human rights violations.

While the Biden administration's diplomatic approach to Mexico and Central America has been drastically different from Trump's, the United States still relies on enforcement in those nations to manage the regional flow of migrants.

The document also includes a section on "strengthening collaborative migration management with regional partners," which focuses on humanitarian assistance and access to asylum, refugee and visa programs.

And it reiterates Biden's support for Democrats in Congress trying to pass immigration reform through budget reconciliation, a process that allows them to sidestep the usual 60-vote threshold to end the filibuster.

It encourages Congress to pass the U.S. Citizenship Act and the Dream and Promise Act “through reconciliation or other means.” The decision whether those bills can be rolled into a multitrillion-dollar reconciliation package is ultimately up to the Senate parliamentarian, however.

Vice President Harris, whom Biden has tasked to address the root causes of regional migration, traveled to the southern border at the end of last month after she came under growing pressure to do so. Harris last week met with immigration advocates, telling them she supports reform but warning it will be difficult to achieve.

The immigration blueprint released on Tuesday also details the Biden administration's earlier proposals to address the root causes of migration, noting that his fiscal 2022 budget request asks Congress for \$861 million to enable the administration to boost economic opportunities for those who live in Central America.

Still, the immigration plan's focus on the southern border rankled some advocates who had hoped for a more holistic approach.

"This plan is just focused on the southern border. So far, the U.S. government is on track to issue about 100,000 fewer green cards this year than the law allows and the Biden administration is

not doing anything to remedy that," said Alex Nowrasteh, the director of immigration studies at the Cato Institute.