



Harris prepares for first foreign trip as VP as she's tasked to lead other efforts

Scott Thuman

June 3, 2021

They're some of the heaviest burdens for the Biden administration: protecting voter rights, boosting vaccines and controlling immigration.

Many of those are resting on the shoulders of Vice President Kamala Harris, who will soon be heading to Central America.

"I'm asking Vice President Harris to help these efforts and lead them among her many other responsibilities," President Joe Biden said Wednesday. "But it's going to be a hell of a lot of work."

Biden knows that; as vice president, he was tasked with gun control after the Sandy Hook massacre but failed to make major changes. He also oversaw U.S. troop withdrawals from Iraq, but critics say it allowed Isis to take control.

More recently, it was former Vice President Mike Pence trying to clear up confusion as head of the Trump administration's coronavirus task force.

"Trying to control immigration policy and find a way to fix it is something that multiple governments in the U.S. have been unable to do for the last 35 years or so, so expecting Vice President Harris to have a substantial impact on this in the short run is extremely unrealistic," said Alex Nowrasteh, the Director of Immigration Studies at the Cato Institute.

The White House says critics need not be concerned.

"That's the role of the modern-day vice president," said White House press secretary Jen Psaki. "So he's confident in her ability to take on a robust agenda, which she certainly has on her plate."

It's a very full one.

"I would say that Vice President Harris is in a no win situation. She doesn't have the power to reform immigration policy ... Congress is not going to cooperate with her to fix this problem permanently," Nowrasteh continued. "So, if I were a cynic, I would say that people have set Kamala Harris up to fail."

Biden gave an optimistic view, saying he and the vice president must find the courage to change the things we know we can change, and that's what they're focused on.