



Rep. Mary Miller’s claim about Mexican caravan the size of Minneapolis not gonna make it after all

Republican Congresswoman Mary Miller claimed the migrant caravan that set off from the southern Mexico city of Tapachula is “the population of Minneapolis.” Minneapolis has nearly 430,000 residents, while the highest estimate we could find for the group leaving Tapachula was just under 1% of that total.

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A Republican congresswoman from east central Illinois took aim at President Joe Biden’s immigration policies by claiming hundreds of thousands of migrants are preparing to cross the nation’s southern border.

“The Biden-Harris caravan is the population of Minneapolis and will enter our country with no vetting, no criminal background checks, no COVID testing and no vaccine requirements,” freshman U.S. Rep. Mary Miller of downstate Oakland tweeted on Oct. 23 atop a video showing a large group of migrants marching from the southern Mexico city of Tapachula.

PolitiFact has debunked numerous claims from others that were part of Miller’s statement, including the Biden administration would allow anyone to cross the border or skip COVID testing and other public safety measures. So we decided to focus this fact-check on Miller’s claim about the size of the recent Tapachula group.

Minneapolis, Minn., is home to nearly 430,000 people, according to the U.S. Census, while the highest estimate we found for the group leaving Tapachula was less than 1% of that total. The congresswoman, who took office in January, did not respond to multiple requests for comment.

‘No one caravan could be that size’

The migrants featured in the video Miller shared set out on Oct. 23 from Tapachula, a city near the Mexico-Guatemala border where tens of thousands of Central Americans and Haitians have been waiting for Mexican authorities to process their asylum claims and permit them to move freely around the country.

U.S. Rep. Mary Miller, R-Ill., speaks at a news conference held by members of the House Freedom Caucus on Capitol Hill in July. *Andrew Harnik/AP file*

Reports from news outlets covering the trek have included estimates ranging from 2,000 to 4,000 migrants, including as many as 1,000 children. None of the experts we contacted had seen any estimates on par with Miller's comparison.

“This is an exaggeration designed to scare people into believing that we are experiencing an ‘invasion’ at the southern border in an attempt to advance anti-immigrant and anti-asylum policies,” said Nicole Hallett, director of the Immigrants’ Rights Clinic at the University of Chicago Law School.

Arrests of undocumented migrants along the Mexico border reached a record high of nearly 1.7 million from October 2020 through September 2021, according to U.S. Customs and Border Protection data first reported by The Washington Post. Neither Miller's tweet nor the video she shared make any reference to total border apprehensions, however.

State Rep. Chris Miller, left, and U.S. Rep. Mary Miller, center, with then President Donald Trump. *From Facebook.*

“It would be fair to say that the number of people encountered at the border was equal to several times Minneapolis’ population,” said Steven Camarota, director of research at the Center for Immigration Studies, a group that advocates for low immigration levels. “But no one caravan could be that size.”

As attempts by migrants to cross the border rise, Biden has faced increased criticism from Republicans for overturning some of former President Donald Trump's immigration policies, as well as from migrant advocates for his administration's continuation of an emergency health provision invoked under Trump to quickly expel migrants during the pandemic.

Similar though larger caravans also marched through Mexico in 2018 and 2019, according to The Associated Press.

Our ruling

Miller claimed the migrant caravan that set off from the southern Mexico city of Tapachula is “the population of Minneapolis.”

Minneapolis has nearly 430,000 residents, while the highest estimate we could find for the group leaving Tapachula was just under 1% of that total.

We rate Miller's claim **Pants on Fire!**

PANTS ON FIRE — *The statement is not accurate and makes a ridiculous claim.*

Sources

Tweet from U.S. Rep. Mary Miller, Oct. 23, 2021

U.S. Census figures for Minneapolis, Minnesota, April 1, 2020

“Over 2,000 migrants march out of southern city in Mexico,” The Associated Press, Oct. 23, 2021

“New migrant caravan in Mexico pushes past blockade to head north,” Reuters, Oct. 23, 2021

“Tired of waiting for asylum in southern Mexico, thousands of migrants march north,” The Washington Post, Oct. 24, 2021

“Kids of all ages among migrants in caravan across Mexico,” The Associated Press, Oct. 28, 2021

Email: Jessica Bolter, associate policy analyst at the Migration Policy Institute, Oct. 27, 2021

Email: Alex Nowrasteh, director of immigration studies at the Cato Institute, Oct. 27, 2021

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“Border arrests have soared to all-time high, new CBP data shows,” The Washington Post, Oct. 20, 2021