

Remarks on Border Security and an Exchange With Reporters

June 4, 2024

The President. Good afternoon.

I've come here today to do what the Republicans in Congress refuse to do: take the necessary steps to secure our border.

Four months ago, after weeks of intense negotiation between my staff and Democrats and Republicans, we came to a clear—clear—bipartisan deal that was the strongest border security agreement in decades. But then Republicans in Congress—not all, but—walked away from it.

Why? Because Donald Trump told them to. He told the Republicans—it has been published widely by many of you—that he didn't want to fix the issue; he wanted to use it to attack me. That's what he wanted to do. It was a cynical and a—extremely cynical political move and a complete disservice to the American people, who are looking for us to—not to weaponize the border, but to fix it.

Today I'm joined by a bipartisan group of Governors, Members of Congress, mayors, law enforcement officials, most of whom live and work along the southern border. They know the border is not a political issue to be weaponized—the responsibility we have to share to do something about it. They don't have time for the games played in Washington, and neither do the American people.

So today I'm moving past Republican obstruction and using the executive authorities available to me as President to do what I can on my own to address the border.

Frankly, I would have preferred to address this issue through a bipartisan legislation, because that's the only way to actually get the kind of system we have now—that's broken—fixed, to hire more Border Patrol agents, more asylum officers, more judges. But Republicans have left me with no choice.

Today I'm announcing actions to bar migrants who cross our southern border unlawfully from receiving asylum. Migrants will be restricted from receiving asylum at our southern border unless they seek it after entering through an established lawful process.

And those who seek—come to the United States legally—for example, by making an appointment and coming to a port of entry—asylum will still be available to them—still available. But if an individual chooses not to use our legal pathways, if they choose to come without permission and against the law, they'll be restricted from receiving asylum and staying in the United States.

This action will help us gain control of our border and restore order to the process. This ban will remain in place until the number of people trying to enter illegally is reduced to a level that our system can effectively manage. We'll carry out this order consistent with all our responsibilities under international law, every one of them.

In addition to this action, we recently made important reforms in our asylum system: more efficient and more secure reforms. The goal is to deliver decisions on asylum as quickly as possible.

The quicker the decision—the quicker decision means that a migrant is less likely to pay a criminal smuggler thousands of dollars to take them on a dangerous journey, knowing that if in fact they move in the wrong direction, they'd be turned around quickly.

And 2 weeks ago, the Department of Justice stated—started a new docket in the immigration courts to address cases where people who've recently crossed the border and make—they'll make a decision within 6 months rather than 6 years, because that's what happens now.

Additionally, the Department of Homeland Security has proposed new rules to allow Federal law enforcement to more quickly remove asylum seekers that have criminal convictions and remove them from the United States.

My administration is also—recently launched new efforts to go after criminal networks that profit from smuggling migrants to our border and incentivize people to give tips to law enforcement to provide information that brings smugglers to justice.

We're also sending additional Federal prosecutors to hot spots along the border and prosecute individuals who break our immigration laws.

One other critical step that we are—we'll be taking, and that is—made a huge difference: We continue to work closely with our Mexican neighbors instead of attacking Mexico, and it's worked.

We built a strong partnership of trust between the Mexican President, López Obrador, and I'm going to do the same with the Mexican-elect President, who I spoke with yesterday.

We've chosen to work together with Mexico as an equal partner, and the facts are clear. Due to the arrangements that I've reached with President Obrador, the number of migrants coming and shared—to our shared border unlawfully in recent months has dropped dramatically.

But while these steps are important, they're not enough. To truly secure the border, we have to change our laws, and Congress needs to provide the necessary funding to hire 1,500 more border security agents; 100 more immigration judges to help tackle the backlog of cases, more than 2 million of them; 4,300 more asylum officers to make decisions in less than 6 months instead of 6 years, which is what it takes now; and around 100 more high-tech detection machines to significantly increase the ability to screen and stop fentanyl being smuggled into the United States.

These investments were one of the primary reasons that the Border Patrol union endorsed the bipartisan deal in the first place. And these investments are essential and remain essential.

As far as I'm concerned, if you're not willing to spend the money to hire more Border Patrol agents, more asylum officers, more judges, more high-tech machinery, you're just not serious about protecting our border. It's just as simple as that.

I believe that immigration has always been a lifeblood of America. We're constantly renewed by an infusion of people with—and new talent. The Statue of Liberty is not some relic of American history. It stands for who we are as the United States.

So I will never demonize immigrants. I will never refer to immigrants as "poisoning the blood" of a country. And further, I'll never separate children from their families at the border.

I will not ban people from this country because of their religious beliefs. I will not use the U.S. military to go into neighborhoods all across the country to pull millions of people out of their homes and away from their families to put detention camps and await—while awaiting deportation, as my predecessor says he will do if he occupies this office again.

On my first—very first day as President, I introduced a comprehensive immigration reform plan to fix—to fix—our broken system, secure our border, provide a pathway for citizenship for "Dreamers," and a lot more. And I'm still fighting to get that done.

But we must face a simple truth: To protect America as a land that welcomes immigrants, we must first secure the border and secure it now.

The simple truth is, there is a worldwide migrant crisis, and if the United States doesn't secure our border, there is no limit to the number of people who may try to come here, because there is no better place on the planet than the United States of America.

For those who say the steps I've taken are too strict, I say to you that—be patient, and good will of the American people are going to wear—are wearing thin right now. Doing nothing is not an option. We have to act. We must act consistent with both our law and our values—our value as Americans.

I'll take these steps today not to walk away from we—who we are as Americans, but to make sure we preserve who we are for future generations to come.

Today I've spoken about what we need to do to secure the border. In the weeks ahead—and I mean the weeks ahead—I will speak to how we can make our immigration system more fair and more just.

Let's fix the problem and stop fighting about it. I'm doing my part. We're doing our part. congressional Republicans should do their part.

Thank you very much.

[At this point, several reporters began asking questions at once.]

Q. Mr. President, why are you taking this action now?

[The President addressed participants as follows.]

The President. Welcome to Washington.

Q. Mr. President, why did it take this long to do this?

Q. Why did you wait so long, Mr. President, to take this action?

Q. Why did you wait so long, Mr. President?

[Several reporters asked questions at once.]

The President. I'll talk to you later.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel

Q. Mr. President, is Netanyahu playing politics with the war?

The President. What was that?

Q. I asked, sir: Is Prime Minister Netanyahu playing politics with the war?

The President. I don't think so. He's trying to work out a serious problem he has.

Thank you.

Q. *[Inaudible]*—before the election, Mr. President? Why now, Mr. President?

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:20 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Sens. Kyrsten L. Sinema, Christopher S. Murphy, and James P. Lankford; former President Donald J. Trump; and President-elect Claudia Sheinbaum of Mexico. He also referred to Proclamation 10773.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Border security; Interviews With the News Media : Exchanges with reporters, White House.

Locations: Washington, DC.

Names: Lankford, James P.; López Obrador, Andrés Manuel ; Murphy, Christopher S.; Netanyahu, Benjamin; Sheinbaum, Claudia; Sinema, Kyrsten L.; Trump, Donald J.

Subjects: Asylum claims process, improvement efforts; Bipartisanship; Border security; Human trafficking, efforts to combat; Illegal drugs, interdiction efforts; Illegal immigration; Immigration reform; Israel, President; Mexico, border with U.S., infrastructure and security; Mexico, immigration enforcement cooperation with U.S.; Mexico, President; Opioid epidemic, efforts to combat; Transnational criminal organizations; U.S. Border Patrol.

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