



COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson

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Hearing Statement of Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS)

Republican Border "Hearing" #747

September 20, 2023

Well, Mr. Chairman, here we are again—not at a legitimate oversight hearing, but yet another political dog-and-pony show. This isn't serious border oversight — that much is obvious to anyone who actually understands oversight or the border. Republicans don't really want to address border challenges, and they surely don't want to fix our broken immigration system. They don't even want to fulfill their responsibility to fund the government, including our border security agencies.

Republicans are threatening to cut funding for critical border security operations, which would create chaos at the border, empower the cartels, hurt our economy, and put the lives of border agents and officers at risk. That's the *exact opposite* of what you'd do if you *actually* cared about strengthening border security.

Instead of working with Democrats to avert a government shutdown, and instead of working with Committee Democrats on meaningful legislation, Republicans are squabbling amongst themselves and holding show hearings.

Instead of dealing with the problems of their own making, Republicans are projecting their own dysfunction on the Department of Homeland Security and pursuing a baseless impeachment effort against Secretary Mayorkas. They prefer to yell, try to twist Democrats' words to fit their false narrative, and play the blame game to score political points with their base. They want a wedge issue, not solutions. They want to distract from their own in-fighting and obvious inability to govern. They want to appease the extreme MAGA members of their party. They don't want the American people to realize their extreme MAGA members have the Republican Party in a chokehold and are squeezing the life right out of it.

There used to be Republicans who wanted to make progress on issues Americans care about. Last Congress, for example, Ranking Member John Katko and I worked together to get 47 Committee measures enacted. By contrast, this Congress Republicans have been on a crusade to impeach Secretary Mayorkas though there's *zero* justification for it. That spectacle has now apparently been overshadowed by an equally baseless impeachment of President Biden.

In fact, just Monday, the Chairman lamented to PunchBowl News that impeaching Secretary Mayorkas is not as, "juicy," as impeaching the President. Cabinet Secretaries or a President shouldn't be impeached over policy differences. That's not what the Constitution says. That's not what the Founders intended. And they *certainly* shouldn't be impeached because it's "juicy" enough to hold the attention of fringe, right-wing Republican members. Republicans hope this sham exercise will be "juicy" red meat for their extreme MAGA base, but it looks like Swiss cheese to everyone else.

Actions speak louder than words when it comes to addressing the border, and unfortunately at every turn Republicans have offered divisive rhetoric and political games rather than actual resources or

meaningful action. They want to dupe Americans into thinking they're "tough" on border security by embracing the ex-President's old, failed policies, while doing almost nothing to address the dysfunction those policies helped create. Fortunately, the American people aren't easily fooled by these theatrics.

Last week Republicans invited a witness, supposedly to testify about sex trafficking. It turns out their "star witness" reportedly resigned from the organization he founded after an investigation uncovered alleged sexual misconduct with seven women. That speaks volumes about the kind of hearings the Majority is holding. They didn't care about the character of the witness they invited or his organization's false claims and dubious fundraising activities—they just wanted someone to attack Secretary Mayorkas.

Also last week, some Republicans all but mocked Democrats for caring about thousands of kids intentionally taken from their parents by the Trump Administration. They even downplayed the fact that hundreds of children remain separated from their parents, years after they were taken away by the Trump Administration. Apparently, they want people to think it's old news—but it's not.

Donald Trump is currently the frontrunner for the Republican Presidential nomination. He's their standard-bearer. And he said he'd bring back that policy and others like it if he's re-elected.

Democrats are unwavering in our opposition to immoral policies like family separation. Mr. Chairman, no Republican grandstanding will ever, "move the needle," on that. Democrats are steadfast in support of efforts to achieve an orderly and humane border. We refuse to believe that the only way to address border and immigration challenges is to embrace the cruel and ineffective policies of the Trump administration.

Today, we're going to hear a lot about the cost of migration and its effects on communities. There are near-term costs, to be sure. So, we must do what we can to support places like New York, Chicago, and DC and cities along the Southwest border receiving asylum seekers. I'm heartened that the Biden administration is increasing resources for communities and NGOs assisting migrants and requesting additional funding for the Shelter and Services Program. That's a very good start, but more remains to be done.

We have to make it possible for asylum seekers to support themselves by working and paying taxes while their cases are adjudicated. The Biden administration is working to inform those eligible to apply for work authorization about the necessary steps to access the process.

Migrants overwhelmingly want to contribute to our society — *and they do contribute*. Data shows that immigrants of all types contribute significantly to the U.S. economy, fuel our growth, and provide a net benefit to our country's finances by paying *billions* in taxes annually. There's no reason to think these asylum-seekers will be any different than those who came before them.

I would like to think this Committee could have a productive discussion about the way forward on the border, but if the last half dozen Republican hearings are any indication, I won't count on it. MAGA extremists probably wouldn't find it "juicy" enough.

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