

FINISH THE WALL

A nation without borders is no nation at all. At one time, physical border barriers were considered a commonsense and bipartisan approach to securing our homeland. In 2006, more than 80 members of the United States Senate voted for the Secure Fence Act, authorizing the construction of physical barriers along the southern border.

Federal law enforcement officers responsible for patrolling the border and keeping Americans safe have long advocated for an effective border wall system as part of a comprehensive border security strategy.

Starting in 2017, U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CPB) started constructing a border wall system with several types of infrastructure, including but not limited to:

- ★ Internally hardened steel-bollard barriers that ranged from 18 feet to 30 feet high;
 - ★ New and improved all-weather access roads;
 - ★ Perimeter lighting; and
 - ★ Enforcement cameras.
- ★ An effective border wall system enables the U.S. government—not cartels and human traffickers—to decide where people and goods cross the border. Effective border wall systems cause illegal crossings and crime to fall.

Towards the end of the previous administration, nearly two miles of border wall were being built each day, and 450 miles of wall had been completed in high-priority areas identified by law enforcement officials.

Unfortunately, the current administration immediately halted border wall construction upon taking office. This decision endangered everyday Americans and Border Patrol agents on top of wasting billions of taxpayer dollars earmarked for construction. Malicious actors are taking full advantage of our porous border, and illegal immigration has surged since January 2021.

During 2021, we witnessed the highest number of southern border apprehensions in history. That is, until 2022, which set a new record before the fiscal year even ended. Hidden within the unvetted flood of illegal aliens are potential public safety and national security threats. We have also seen an immense spike in human trafficking, drug trafficking, and drug overdoses, largely due to the importation of illicit fentanyl. Drug overdoses now surpass car accidents as the leading killer of young Americans.

Absent federal leadership, states have begun taking steps to protect their citizens by enforcing state laws that curb illegal immigration. Texas began construction of the first-ever state-funded border wall system, and non-border states are now partnering to mitigate the crisis created by the decision to stop construction of the southern border wall.

THE FACTS

- ★ 450 miles of new border wall were built between January 2017 and January 2021, and 250-300 more miles had been fully funded.
- ★ In one short 12-mile section in the San Diego Sector, the wall reduced CBP manpower needs by 150 agents every 24 hours, saving taxpayers \$28 million per year in salaries and benefits.
- ★ In the Yuma Sector, illegal entries in areas with the new border wall system dropped by 87% from fiscal years 2019 to 2020.
- ★ In the El Paso Sector, drug smuggling efforts fell by as much as 81% in areas with the border wall system.
- ★ Illegal apprehensions at the southern border increased by 278% to a historic high of 1.7 million in fiscal year 2021 since the halted construction of the border wall.
- ★ More than 2.1 million apprehensions have taken

place so far in 2022.

- ★ The Border Patrol has estimated that there have been more than 900,000 gotaways since the beginning of the Biden Administration.

THE AMERICA FIRST AGENDA

At the federal level, support policies that:

- ★ Finish constructing the border wall system and fully fund the Border Patrol agents needed to secure the border.

At the state level, support policies that:

- ★ Construct physical border infrastructure and create or expand other non-wall buffers along the U.S.-Mexico border.
- ★ Expand, widen, and/or dredge waterways on the U.S. side of the Rio Grande River.

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STOP HUMAN TRAFFICKING BY INSTITUTING EFFECTIVE BORDER SECURITY AND IMMIGRATION ENFORCEMENT POLICIES

Human trafficking is extremely lucrative to those who seek to gain from enslaving others. It accounts for an estimated \$150 billion in annual global profits and is far more prevalent than many realize. The forms of exploitation, sex trafficking, forced labor, and domestic servitude that constitute human trafficking are completely antithetical to the principles of human dignity that Americans hold dear.

People become victims of human trafficking in several different ways. But no matter the method, origin, or type of exploitation endured, we must stop this evil practice in its tracks through effective policies. The previous administration made the fight against modern slavery one of its signature issues. In a relatively short amount of time, it issued two executive orders targeting human trafficking in the administration's first 100 days, signed a record-breaking nine pieces of bipartisan legislation into law, and created the President's Interagency Task Force to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons (PITF)—a Cabinet-level entity consisting of 15 departments and agencies that worked to prosecute traffickers and protect survivors. These actions should have served as a foundation for action going forward.

Unfortunately, the federal government has not maintained this sense of urgency or forward progress. None of the current administration's unprecedented number of executive orders in its first 100 days addressed the scourge of human trafficking. And the current administration has done almost nothing of substance to combat this heinous crime. Inexplicably, it eliminated the Victims of Immigration Crime Enforcement (VOICE) office within the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) that provided support to the victims of crimes committed by removable aliens.

In the wake of this neglect, the southern border has essentially become a feeding zone for traffickers, a tragic effect of the current administration's open borders immigration policies. It has never been easier for traffickers to gain access to children, endangering our most vulnerable citizens.

THE FACTS

- ★ Cartels engaged in human trafficking and/or smuggling earn as much as \$14 million per day by taking advantage of the porous southern border.
- ★ Nearly 500,000 victims of human trafficking are located in the U.S.
- ★ Nearly 71% of all reported incidents of human trafficking were related to sex trafficking.
- ★ An unprecedented two million illegal apprehensions were made along the southern border in 2021.
- ★ More than 150,000 unaccompanied alien children (UACs) entered the U.S. in 2021, an increase of 339% from 2020 figures.
- ★ 140,000 UACs have already been apprehended at the border this fiscal year through August.

THE AMERICA FIRST AGENDA

At the federal level, support policies that:

- ★ Launch new awareness campaigns or expand upon existing ones that combat human trafficking.
- ★ Reconstitute the Victims of Immigration Crime Enforcement (VOICE) office within DHS.
- ★ Increase the outreach efforts by DHS, DOJ, and other government agencies engaged in the anti-human trafficking to their industry partners.
 - By doing so, these agencies can provide

education on identifying individuals potentially entrapped by human trafficking or goods produced through forced labor practices.

At the state level, support policies that:

- ★ Impose a fee on outgoing wire transfers to disrupt the ability of trafficking and smuggling networks to send money for illicit activities. This additional revenue could better fund law enforcement efforts to combat the cartels and recover the costs of illegal immigration imposed on state taxpayers.
- ★ Enhance scrutiny of and requirements for state-licensed facilities to house UACs.

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DEFEAT THE DRUG CARTELS

Each year, transnational criminal organizations (TCOs) pour tens of billions of dollars' worth of illegal contraband into American communities. The drugs and weapons infiltrating our country's neighborhoods have caused immeasurable harm, loss of life, and economic distress for millions of American citizens.

The cartels also facilitate the humanitarian crisis associated with their human trafficking and human smuggling operations. Lax border security and immigration enforcement measures have only emboldened these cartels to move even greater amounts of illegal drugs, weapons, and human beings throughout our Nation.

Tragically, 2021 was the worst year on record for both illegal border crossings and drug overdoses in the U.S. Nearly two million apprehensions were made at the southern border in 2021, and more than 100,000 Americans died from overdoses. These two phenomena are connected. The TCOs and drug trafficking organizations (DTOs) that operate throughout Mexico and have affiliates in hundreds of American cities are at the intersection of these dangerous trends.

Today, these cartels are operating freely in Mexico and control vast amounts of territory along the border. Just as our Nation prioritizes defeating terrorist organizations overseas, we should treat threats from TCOs and DTOs with equal seriousness.

Securing the border is the first step in addressing the cartels' scope and reach. When we reduce illegal immigration, we free up Border Patrol resources to target other criminal activity. Unfortunately, the current administration has significantly rolled back or discontinued many of the policies that made our border more secure in recent years. Such policies include the Migrant Protection Protocols (MPP) program that required aliens claiming asylum to wait in Mexico until

their claims were adjudicated.

The current administration also discontinued Asylum Cooperative Agreements, which allowed the U.S. to send asylum seekers to a safe "third" country if they had not first sought protection in a country passed through on the journey north. These and other policies made it more difficult for the cartels to operate with impunity, and they should fully resume immediately.

Mexican cartels have become more brazen and are putting our frontline Border Patrol agents and officers at risk. We must disrupt the cartels by ending policies they exploit for financial gain, and we should also consider launching offensive cyber operations.

When possible, the U.S. should partner with Mexico, but we should never forget that border security and national security are unilateral obligations of the federal government. Confronting cartels, TCOs, and DTOs begins with maintaining border integrity and reducing the demand from American citizens for addictive narcotics.

THE FACTS

- ★ TCOs and DTOs represent a clear and present danger to stability in Central America and have widespread secondary and tertiary impacts on the U.S.
- ★ Illegal immigration, which has skyrocketed under the Biden Administration, contributes to the growth and power of TCOs and DTOs.
- ★ Illegal immigration is an integral part of the drug supply chain, as the cartels move illicit drugs into the country while the Border Patrol is preoccupied with apprehending illegal aliens.
- ★ Mexican cartels reportedly earn upwards of \$14 million per day for their human smuggling activities.

THE AMERICA FIRST AGENDA

At the federal level, support policies that:

- ★ Adopt a whole-of-government approach to combatting the cartels along the U.S.-Mexico border, including disrupting their human and drug smuggling operations and freezing assets.
- ★ Limit the supply of fentanyl, methamphetamines, and pill processing equipment from China through tariffs and sanctions.
- ★ Return U.S. Border Patrol personnel to the front lines to secure vulnerabilities along the border.

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MODERNIZE AND RESTORE INTEGRITY TO THE IMMIGRATION SYSTEM

A successful legal immigration system must be orderly and prioritize the interests of U.S. citizens. The legal immigration framework should have a deliberate design that matches America's needs with the aspirations, skills, and qualities of those who lawfully seek to enter our shores. Unfortunately, the current system fails on all counts, as most new immigrants are selected based on a familial relationship with another immigrant, and very few are selected on the basis of merit.

To restore integrity to the legal immigration system, we must prioritize the selection of new immigrants based on individual merit and skill, which facilitates success both for the immigrants and Americans.

America's excessive reliance on chain migration—a policy that enables one immigrant to bring his or her extended family, who then can bring their families, and so on—undermines the interests of U.S. citizens. It does so by encouraging high levels of low-skilled immigration that puts downward pressure on the wages of the most vulnerable Americans and strains public services. The U.S. should discontinue chain migration and the visa lottery that randomly awards green cards to people with little education or skills and no ties to our country.

The same problem exists with the current temporary foreign worker visa programs. These are ripe for exploitation in both blue-collar and white-collar industries as they lack meaningful labor protections for American workers. In the past, the U.S. has tried to upskill the selection of H-1B visas by replacing the lottery with a skills-based selection process. The Biden Administration abandoned this reform, ensuring that most H-1Bs go to the lowest skilled alien workers.

Recent college graduates are especially harmed by

Optional Practical Training (OPT), which allows foreign graduates to work in the U.S. for up to three years while being exempt from payroll taxes. Congress never authorized this program, and its operation allows hundreds of thousands of foreign workers each year to obtain jobs at a discount compared to American citizens.

The ability to become a naturalized U.S. citizen is the greatest immigration benefit our country offers. Anyone seeking to join in our great experiment in freedom and opportunity must fully assimilate, embody our virtues, and respect our laws. An immigration system that puts an alien on a path to U.S. citizenship must ensure that it prioritizes the interests of American citizens.

THE FACTS

- ★ The U.S. has more immigrants than any other country in the world, with more than 45 million people having been born in another country.
- ★ The U.S. awards approximately 1.1 million lawful permanent residents (LPR) with a green card each year. Less than 15% of this total is based on the alien's merit.
- ★ Hundreds of thousands of aliens are in the U.S. on temporary work visas across the economy, with no meaningful labor protections for American workers.

THE AMERICA FIRST AGENDA

At the federal level, support policies that:

- ★ Prioritize merit-based immigration to better ensure that incoming immigrants have skills that serve the economic interests of America and its citizens.
- ★ Ensure guest worker programs have a meaningful

labor market test to prevent foreign workers from replacing qualified American workers.

- ★ Ensure robust worksite enforcement after placement to verify that employers and foreign workers are abiding by the terms of their work visas.

At the state level, support policies that:

- ★ Mandate E-Verify usage by every state government agency to ensure all employers only utilize authorized workers.
- ★ Establish criminal and civil penalties (such as the suspension of business licenses) for employers who knowingly hire illegal aliens or conceal their presence.

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BOOST COUNTERTERRORISM CAPACITY AND DEFEND CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE

The national security of the U.S. requires that all individuals seeking entry to our country be properly and thoroughly vetted and screened, ensuring no individuals have a nexus to terrorism. Our Nation's ability to defend the homeland from potential terrorists is largely dependent upon our ability to prevent these individuals from entering the U.S. in the first place. Accomplishing this objective and expanding America's "virtual borders" within the framework of an evolving threat environment requires continued cooperation with our global and interagency partners, as well as enhanced and streamlined information sharing protocols.

During the previous administration, DHS greatly matured these processes through the opening of the National Vetting Center (NVC). The NVC allows agencies vetting individuals seeking entry into the U.S. to have a common framework for sharing and interpreting information, streamlining the process and ensuring that key information is not missed or "lost in translation" when communicated between different agencies and partners. The current administration's failure to continue this whole-of-government approach to counterterrorism has critically reversed many of those recent gains.

Over the past year, the Biden Administration has hampered the capabilities of CBP, one of the world's largest law enforcement organizations and the agency responsible for administering the NVC. The CBP must now constantly divert its limited resources to screen illegal aliens and care for unaccompanied alien children—a problem that is exacerbated by the current administration encouraging and incentivizing illegal immigration.

Counterterrorism efforts are a critical mission of

CBP as it anticipates, detects, and intercepts threats before and at ports of entry. Key efforts include disrupting terrorist travel through passenger name record data, sharing watchlists of affiliated terrorists, and providing our allies with key tools such as the Automated Targeting System, which uses data for risk-based scenario assessments. These essential roles in our national security activities are less prioritized because of the border crisis.

Additionally, our Nation is currently seeing an inclination among some officials to significantly curtail federal, state, and local law enforcement collaboration. This collaboration is integral to our country's ability to identify and prevent terrorist attacks.

The Biden Administration's decision to halt participation in Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) 287(g) program has also significantly decreased our internal capacity to protect the homeland. This highly successful collaborative program allows for the delegation of limited federal immigration authorities to participating state or local law enforcement entities. Moves among some officials to eliminate state or local participation within federal law enforcement task forces have had a similar effect.

The current approach places American citizens and communities at risk while compounding the risks to our digital and critical infrastructure—essential elements of America's national and economic security. Since the 9/11 attack, the threats against our homeland have evolved and become even more sophisticated. Vigilance in the face of these threats requires a willingness to commit to the principles of collaboration and information sharing that are essential to the identification and interdiction of terror attacks, whether physical or cyber in nature.

THE FACTS

- ★ Every day, DHS stops an average of 10 aliens on the terrorist watchlist from entering the U.S.
- ★ Today, nearly 200 Joint Terrorism Task Forces exist throughout the Nation.
- ★ Cyberattacks using malware spiked 358% in 2020, and cyberattacks using ransomware increased by 435%.

THE AMERICA FIRST AGENDA

At the federal level, support policies that:

- ★ Require cooperation with and participation in ICE's 287(g) program.
- ★ Appropriate funding for DHS's Homeland Security Grant Program to ensure continued robust support for the Nation's network of fusion centers.
- ★ Continue to expand America's "virtual borders" by enhancing our cooperative efforts with trusted global partners.
- ★ Facilitate partnership between the government and private industry to protect our cyber resources and critical infrastructure.
- ★ Direct the Intelligence Community to raise the priority of collecting, identifying, and disseminating information about cyberattacks from nation-state and non-state actors to private entities.

At the state level, support policies that:

- ★ Promote collaboration between state and local law enforcement with their federal counterparts through task force participation.
- ★ Develop Suspicious Activity Reporting protocols for state and local law enforcement agencies through participation in the Nationwide Suspicious Activity Reporting Initiative.

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