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Josh Christenson

## **Bipartisan House group floats \$66B national security bill — to help border and Ukraine**

### ***Група Двопартійної Палати представників внесла законопроект про національну безпеку на суму 66 мільярдів доларів***

*Політичний репортер «New York Post» Джош Крістенсон інформує, що законодавці Палати представників внесли на розгляд новий двопартійний законопроект, який посилить безпеку на проблемному кордоні США та Мексики та надасть таку необхідну допомогу Україні. Спонсорами законопроекту є представники Республіканської партії Майк Лоулер з Нью-Йорка, Дон Бекон з Небраски та Лорі Чавес-Деремер з Орегона, а також представники Демократичної партії Марі Глюзенкамп Перес із Вашингтона, Джим Коста з Каліфорнії та Ед Кейс із Гаваїв. Тим часом законопроект Сенату, який не передбачає імміграційного контролю, був відхилений спікером Майком Джонсоном при голосуванні.*

<https://nypost.com/2024/02/16/us-news/house-bipartisan-group-floats-66b-national-security-bill/>

House lawmakers on Friday floated a new bipartisan national security bill that would beef up security at the problematic US-Mexico border and provide much-needed aid to Ukraine.

The “Defending Borders, Defending Democracies Act” would restore the Trump administration’s “Remain in Mexico” policy for one year, while also allowing border enforcement authorities to detain and immediately expel illegal aliens who don’t meet the threshold for asylum claims.

The “Remain in Mexico” policy requires most migrants who reach the southern border — usually after leaving Central America or the Caribbean — to remain in Mexico while US courts review their asylum claims. However, the policy does require cooperation from the Mexican government.

“Congress must secure our border,” said Rep. Jared Golden (D-Maine), a co-sponsor on the bill.

“Restoring the Remain in Mexico policy would address SCOTUS’s ruling that this authority is discretionary.”

The bill, which was introduced by moderate members of the House Problem Solvers Caucus, also provides \$66.32 billion for defense funding to Ukraine, Israel and Taiwan — less than the \$95 billion passed in the Senate earlier this week.

Specifically, the bill gives \$47.69 billion for Ukraine’s defense, \$10.40 billion to Israel’s defense systems, \$4.91 billion to US and allied deterrence operations in the Indo-Pacific and \$2.44 billion to US Central Command operations.

“Ukraine, Israel, and Taiwan are all freedom-loving democracies, they are our allies, and we must assist them in protecting their borders just as we must protect our own,” said Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick (R-Pa.), the lead sponsor of the bill.

“We can, and must, achieve all of the above.”

The legislation is also sponsored by GOP Reps. Mike Lawler of New York, Don Bacon of Nebraska, and Lori Chavez-DeRemer of Oregon, as well as Democratic Reps. Marie Gluesenkamp Perez of Washington, Jim Costa of California and Ed Case of Hawaii.

U.S. Representative Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA) speaking at a hearing of the House Committee on Education and the Workforce at the U.S. Capitol.

Meanwhile, a Senate bill without immigration enforcement has been withheld from a floor vote by Speaker Mike Johnson (R-La.).

Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.), who worked with Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY) on the bill, had expressed “hope” that Johnson would put it up for a floor vote — but the speaker responded that the House would “work its own will on these important matters” since the legislation lacked border policy changes.

President Biden and congressional Democrats have attacked House Republicans for holding further aid to US allies hostage after an earlier \$118 billion supplemental package with border enforcement items was also scrapped.

House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries (D-NY) on Tuesday suggested that his conference had been discussing a discharge petition with members supportive of further funding to Ukraine.

Bacon was involved in discussions about the discharge petition — but it remains unknown whether the unusual method would be used to put forward the revamped national security legislation.

Johnson and other GOP members took issue with the initial Senate bill’s immigration provisions, insisting that Biden already had the power to enforce laws like the Immigration and Nationality Act and secure the border.

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James Keivom

Since Biden took office, more than 8.5 million migrants have crossed the US border, according to Customs and Border Protection data, with upward of 7 million entries on the southern border.

Roughly 85% of those migrants are subsequently being released into the US, Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas admitted to Border Patrol agents in Texas last month, according to National Border Patrol Council president Brandon Judd.

Another 1.8 million known “gotaways” have evaded arrest when coming into the country. Gluesenkamp Perez said she hopes the new legislation will end “months of political grandstanding and shifted goalposts,” as the record-setting number of migrants arriving at the southern border poses “a growing humanitarian crisis.”

Under the House bill, Mayorkas — who was impeached Tuesday for failing to enforce federal laws on immigration — would be able to detain and immediately expel migrants to Mexico or their country of origin.

Those would include migrants who have been convicted of crimes, either inside or outside the US, or who pose a danger to national security — but not those who suffer from disabilities or acute medical conditions.

“Our porous border and state-sponsored aggression pose an existential threat to the democratic world order and to our nation,” Lawler said. “We simply cannot let partisanship or gridlock prevent us from tackling these challenges.”

It would further bar any federal funds from assisting migrants in being transferred out of detention facilities to other locations in order to adjudicate their asylum status.

Under former President Donald Trump, the Department of Homeland Security rolled out its “Remain in Mexico” policy, also known as Migrant Protection Protocols, in January 2019.

The Biden administration quietly ended the program in August 2022 after the Supreme Court ruled 5-4 that the Department of Homeland Security had the authority not to enforce it.

It remains unclear whether the bill strikes a sufficient compromise between border security measures sought by House Republicans in their signature package last year, H.R. 2, while preserving foreign aid and humanitarian funding sought by House Democrats.

Reps for Johnson, Jeffries and the Department of Homeland Security did not immediately respond to a request for comment.