

Transcript of Speaker Mike Johnson's January 31, 2024 floor speech

It's been nearly 100 days since my colleagues elected me to lead this chamber and I cannot express how grateful I am for their trust. This is the honor of my life. And it means everything to us. And despite our challenges that we face day in and day out, and the tough fights that lawmaking inevitably brings, I still believe that we can again be a shining city on a hill. I believe that that we can champion again, what I call the seven core principles of American conservatism, but really, they're the seven core principles of America. They are foundations. I believe it boils down to individual freedom, and limited government and the rule of law, peace through strength, fiscal responsibility, free markets, human dignity. These are the things that made us the most successful, most extraordinary nation in the history of the world. Were also the most benevolent, but it can't be maintained if we sacrifice those foundations. Today, however, I need to address the burning issue. The unprecedented challenge that we find ourselves in, demands that we all address the issue of the day. And it is no surprise to anyone in this chamber that that issue is America's border security. And as I said here on the night that I took my oath, we have a catastrophe at our Southern border. It is because the border has been deliberately opened wide, that we see the terrific horrors that are taking place across our country right now.

Here's a short list. From Texas to New York, waves of illegal immigrants are now overwhelming our communities. Just since the time I was elected Speaker less than 100 days ago, more than 700,000 illegals have been welcomed into our country illegally by the Biden Administration. American schoolchildren have been forced into virtual schools. Why? So migrants can sleep in their school buildings. Korean War veterans of the US have been booted from nursing homes that were sold to house migrants. Our streets are being flooded with fentanyl. Hundreds of thousands of children and adults are being poisoned and losing their lives. Vulnerable children and women are being exploited and trafficked by cartels. And that's happening even within our borders. The fallout goes on and on and on. And I am here this morning to beg of my colleagues to help us force the administration to take action. We have to stop this now and put Americans and Americans border security first.

In January, I took the largest ever congressional delegation down to the Southern border. We had 64 members, 64 House Republicans representing more than half the states in this country. Why? Because now every state is a border state. And during our trip, we met with senior Border Patrol officials and officers and local sheriffs and ranchers and landowners and community leaders who are dealing with this crisis right there at the line. And we heard about how they're struggling to deal with the overwhelming surge of illegals who are flooding into our nation.

And while the Senate and the White House were negotiating a so called border security deal, one Border Patrol official compared the situation this way, he said what we're being asked to do right now, this is a 33 year veteran of the Border Patrol, a high ranking official in the agency, he said, what we're being asked to do right now is administer an open fire hydrant. He said please convey to our friends in Washington, we don't need more buckets, we need to turn off the flow. And his metaphor explains the situation perfectly. Since President Biden and Alejandro Mayorkas assumed office, there have been more than 7 million encounters with illegal aliens just at our southern border alone. 35 of our 50 states including my home state of Louisiana, don't have a population that large. Yet that's how many people have been apprehended in just the past three years, among those who've been apprehended on the Southern border but between ports of entry, more than 300 individuals who are on our terror watchlist. Terrorist watch list. The frightening question is, if so

many terrorists were caught attempting to cross our borders, how many have entered undetected? We suspect it is a much higher number. And we know that there are at least 1.8 million got aways that we know have escaped CBP. Who knows what dangerous plans those gotaways are making and what foreign adversaries they may be speaking with. Understand the situation at our border presents a clear and present danger to our national security and it demands that it be addressed. Even officials within the executive branch are saying so. FBI director Christopher Wray told the Homeland Security Committee just in November that these getaways are a great concern for the agency and that all 56 of our Joint Terrorism Task Forces are trying to identify who these people are. Well, we don't know how many terrorists are inside our borders. It's an unknowable number.

We do know that fentanyl is pouring into our communities like an open sewer. Right now the leading cause of death, the leading cause of death in America for Americans aged 18 to 46 is fentanyl poisoning. And fentanyl seizures have increased two and a half times since President Biden took office. That's just the seizures. The rest of it flows right in. But even as some of it is seized, we know much more is making its way into our schools and our neighborhoods in virtually every community in America. Just a quick snapshot of my state in New Orleans, in my home state, 95% of the drug overdoses in New Orleans are caused by fentanyl. 95%. We see that this poison is ripping families apart. Victoria McCauley from Baton Rouge was only 29 years old when she lost her life to fentanyl. She was buried by her parents, leaving behind her brother and her sister and her young son. Alex Stenson is another victim like Victoria. He was from Baton Rouge. And sadly, also like Victoria he died from fentanyl poisoning before his 30th birthday, leaving behind a heartbroken mom and dad and sister near Slidell, Louisiana. Just last week, a precious two year old child was found dead in her home with fentanyl in her system. Moms and dads, brothers and grandmothers, all of us are losing loved ones to a drug that has been smuggled across the border in droves. It's a parent's worst nightmare, of course, burying a child. And sadly, because of our open border, more and more parents are having to experience that unspeakable tragedy that leads the American people to ask a very important question. And it is one that we've been asking on this side of the aisle for a long, long time. Where in the world is Secretary Mayorkas on all of this?

He is the Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security. It's his responsibility to prevent these harmful drugs from flowing into our country and to secure that border. And he's done nothing of the sort. As we've heard from border patrol agents, he's doing exactly the opposite. He's handicapping law enforcement. He's limiting their ability to catch narcotics like fentanyl. He's making it virtually impossible. They say in their own words, and they told us down on the border at Eagle Pass, it's impossible to do the job that they were trained to do. Perhaps the Secretary is busy identifying more people on on the list that he can release on parole. Because just since fiscal year 2022. Secretary Mayorkas has released into the country more than 1.5 million aliens, just sent them out into the country on what they call parole. Remember, the Immigration and Nationality Act states very clearly that parole should only be used on a case by case basis and a temporary basis. But millions of illegals right now are being granted parole and spending many years in the United States before they're ever even expected to appear before a judge. Some of them are given a piece of paper that says we'll see you in a decade. It's absurd. This mass parole is neither temporary nor selective. It is a clear violation of federal law. And it is dangerous and it is subversive and it's intentional. And to make matters worse, we've learned that the Biden Administration is now simply just simply releasing 85% of the illegals who come across that border right into the country. They're coming to a neighborhood near you. For reference, by the way, if you're watching the metrics in 2013, the Obama Administration, listen to this, the Obama administration detained 82% of illegal aliens. How do we go from detaining 82% to releasing 85%? It only happens if this is by design. It only happens if

it's an orchestrated, intentional effort by the administration to do exactly that. And that is what the evidence shows. John Adams famously said, facts are stubborn things. And these are the facts and you can't look away. This is only part of why Chairman Green and the House Homeland Security Committee marked up Articles of Impeachment last night. They wrapped that up at about 1:15 this morning. And they did very important work for our country. And we will be moving forward swiftly on those articles. It's long overdue.

But Secretary Mayorkas is only part of the problem. Because earlier this month, I released a memo documenting 64 specific actions that the Biden Administration has taken to undermine our border security and to promote the mass release of illegals and dangerous persons into our country. 64 times. And here's just a couple of the many alarming actions, and this is all public. Everybody can go see this. The day he took office, the very first day that he walked into the Oval Office, President Biden revoked executive order 9844. You know what that did? It ended construction of the border wall that Congress had already paid for. Everybody's seen the images on TV, the materials out there rotting in the sun and the elements. Why? Because Joe Biden decided unilaterally, he didn't want a wall. In February 2021, the administration stopped applying Title 42 expulsions to children and incentivized, by doing that, incentivized families to send unaccompanied children through Mexico, under the watch of who? Cartels and traffickers. Since then, the Administration has lost track, they admit to this number, they admit that they've lost track of more than 80,000 unaccompanied children somewhere in the US. When we were down there at Eagle Pass, at the Del Rio sector, we went through one of these processing centers. And what we saw down there was heartbreaking. It was infuriating. But you see these small children, they're unaccompanied minors. Some of them, of course, aren't even, they can't even speak the language. Obviously, they have interpreters there. But they don't even know who they are. I mean, these are young children. They don't know what their full names are, where they hail from, who their parents are. And they sit them there. And they ask questions, some preliminary questions. And if the children don't know it, you know what they do? Literally, they take a sticker, and they put it on the chest of the little child that says Jane Doe or John Doe. What happens to them after that? Border patrol says "Gosh we don't know. Our job is just to process them here." Well, they're released, presumably into the hands of NGOs, nongovernmental organizations who are being refunded, by the way, by American taxpayers, who do something with the children, and then they just disappear. Well, we know 80,000 of them are missing. We don't know where they are. Have they been put into trafficking rings? We can only guess. We know that some of these kids are being trafficked for free labor and being forced to do things that are too appalling for us to articulate on this floor. Everybody here knows that's happening. Everybody here knows that's happening. And we're not demanding the president stop it. He can he has the power to do it.

I'll continue. In October 2021, the Biden Administration revoked the Migrant Protection Protocols that had been instituted under President Trump. That's the the policy that we all know, colloquially as Remain in Mexico, right? The Remain in Mexico policy kept asylum seekers in a safe haven third country while they were seeking asylum in the United States. You know why that works so magically well? Because it sent a message around the world, that you shouldn't pay your life savings to a cartel to traffic you through Mexico and drop you over the US border because you're not going to be dropped over the US border. Hey, save your time and treasure and trouble. Don't take that dangerous journey, because the word goes out on social media to countries all around the world. They're not going to let you in. Man is that the most common sense rule you've ever thought of? The President doesn't agree. President Biden doesn't agree. Because he stopped it. He issued an executive order to stop that common sense rule. A senior border patrol officer told us on that trip to

Eagle Pass, that if the Biden Administration, if President Biden by the stroke of a pen, would issue an executive order today, to just simply reinstate Remain in Mexico, they think that that would stop the flow by 70%. 70. One stroke of a pen by the president. He does not seem to care. I told President Biden this myself on multiple occasions, most recently, a couple of weeks ago on the phone, I read him the law that says that he has all this authority, but he refuses to act. And even that's even despite court orders, by the way that instructed the Administration to reinstate reinstitute Remain in Mexico while the litigation was going on. You know what they did? They ignored it. The administration refused.

And I can keep going, September 2022, the Biden Administration reversed a 2019 DHS public charge rule. What was that about? They began granting entry to aliens who we know will be a burden to taxpayers to receive immigration benefits. This matters because it's one of many instances in which the Biden Administration is actively incentivizing illegals to come to the United States. We have sent, laid out the welcome mat. We told everybody around the world. Come on, come on, you know what the US taxpayer will take care of you. You know how much it's costing you at home, the American people, all of our constituents, billions and billions and billions of dollars. To do what? To provide for people who are intentionally breaking our laws. Billions and billions of dollars to house them and educate them and clothe them and take care of them. Why should we bear that burden when they break our laws? That's what our constituents are asking. And more people in this chamber need to be asking it as well. We're asking it on the House Republican side. We need our Democratic colleagues to join us. Instead of threatening illegal aliens with deportation, we're rolling out the welcome mat. We're including aliens who will drain resources. You know what? Here's the other tragedy, the resources, those precious taxpayer dollars are intended for and paid by American citizens. But when you drain those resources and you spend them on illegals from other countries, you cannot take care of your own. It's a travesty.

You can also see this with how DHS has abused the CBP One app, right? We've got an app. We've made it even easier now. In January 2023, they expanded the use of the app. So aliens could just make appointments and then be released immediately right into America's interior. Sure enough. Guess what? 95% of all illegals who simply scheduled appointments through the app were released right in the United States on what they call parole. That's right. All you got to do is just download the app because they all have smartphones, many of them coming over the border. Download the app, make an appointment and the President of the United States will release you into a network of NGOs who will put you on a plane to the destination of your choice without any identification, by the way, while Americans are waiting in line to get through TSA. All on the dime the American taxpayer. Ask yourself, is that right? Is that just? Is that good for America or anybody else involved? It's not. The open border, combined with the incentives to come have produced a catastrophic year for our border patrol agents. In September 2023, US Border Patrol recorded more than 270,000 illegal alien encounters at the Southern border in one single month. That was the largest ever up to that point. But guess what? That record was broken just a couple of months later, because in December, this past December 2023, CBP recorded more than 302,000 encounters, almost double the population in my hometown of Shreveport, Louisiana in just one month. 302,000. People just walked right into the country, and we saw it down there with our own two eyes.

And most recently, as President Biden has failed to exercise his constitutional obligation to police the border and protect Americans, now he's undermined Texas's ability to protect its citizens, its residents. You know, Texas has a constitutional authority to take care of its people. Their first job of the government is to protect its citizens. And when Texas has acted to do that, the Biden

Administration and the President himself have intervened. They've taken him to court, they're cutting their razor wire, they're taking away the measures that the state of Texas has taken out of desperation to protect its own people. I could go on and on and on about all this and the numbers and the actions, the 64 actions that we've documented, that President Biden has specifically taken to open that border wide up. But it's crystal clear. His policy choices and Secretary Mayorkas, his refusal to comply with the law, are driving this border catastrophe. The Biden Administration has replaced detain and deport with catch and release. Instead of order they have chosen for us disorder and chaos. Rather than securing the homeland, they've ceded the homeland to cartels and traffickers. By the way, at the at the Del Rio sector alone at Eagle Pass, Texas, they told us the cartels are estimated, I think they said they're making \$3.5 million a day trafficking human beings into the country. Do the math. They're making over a billion dollars a year bringing undocumented children, traffic children victims right into the country and bringing them in. They're doing this intentionally. They have chosen disorder and chaos. They have ceded the homeland to the traffickers and the cartels. And the Department of Homeland Security has effectively become a taxi driver to just help traffickers complete the last few miles of their human smuggling operation. And they're making billions of dollars in the process. It's all absolute madness, and it is dismantling the safety of our communities.

The House Judiciary Committee where I served before I became Speaker recently released a report showing that right now, there are more than 617,000 aliens on ICE's non detained docket who also have criminal convictions or pending criminal charges. That's right. You heard it right. That means that more than half a million known criminals, illegal aliens, are in the US in our communities free to reoffend and victimize American people. The President's actions are also creating a permanent underclass in our society. Here's another sad secondary effect of this. An underclass of non citizens who received many of the benefits of citizens' citizenship. He's inviting chaos and disorder within our land that is tearing into the very fabric of our society. The president can put a stop to this. President Biden and Secretary Mayorkas have designed this catastrophe. And now rather than accept any accountability or responsibility for what they've clearly done, President Biden wants to somehow try to shift the blame to Congress for his Administration's catastrophe by design. It's absolutely laughable. No one's falling for this.

My counter is this. President Biden wants us to believe he's serious about protecting our national security. He needs to demonstrate good faith and take immediate action to secure the border. But he won't do it. He needs to immediately stop the mass release of illegals into our country, but he won't do it. If he wants our House Republican Conference to view him as a good faith negotiator, he could start with a stroke of a pen. But he's got to do it quickly. Last week, I received a letter from former top FBI intelligence officials, including the former Assistant Director of intelligence. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask unanimous consent that the text of this letter be submitted into the Congressional Record. In the letter, the signer said that America is facing a, quote, new and unfamiliar threat. As my colleagues know, you never want to hear our intelligence leaders speak about an unfamiliar threat. But these former FBI officials told us that we are suffering "a soft invasion along our Southern border." They're stating what is obvious to all of us. They noted that we are experiencing a surge. Listen to this, of military aged single men who are pouring into our country over the Southern border from adversarial nations, by the way, and from terrorist regimes. When we were at Eagle Pass at the Del Rio sector in January earlier, January 3, with 64 House Republicans, they told us that between 60 to 70% of the people coming across the border right there at that epicenter are single adult males. They're military aged. These are not huddled masses of families seeking refuge and asylum. These are people coming into our country to do only God knows what.

And we are allowing it. The Biden Administration is allowing it. And we've noted that they're coming from adversarial nations, from terrorist regions. We have no idea what what they're planning. But in fiscal year 2023, border patrol encountered illegals from 170 different countries, including hundreds from Iran, Syria, thousands from Russia. Tens of thousands who have come in from China. Tell me that's not dangerous. In this letter, law enforcement and intelligence leaders are warning us that we may very well suffer a preventable terrorist attack here on the homeland if we don't immediately secure the border and remove these dangerous terrorists from inside our borders.

House Republicans, of course, have acted. Last year, we passed the Secure the Border Act. This legislation would address the catastrophe. It would fix the asylum and parole processes that are so broken. It would support our Border Patrol agents. The Senate could take that bill up today. Chuck Schumer and the Democrats in the Senate have been sitting on it in their majority for nine months. They could do it right now. They could vote on that and send it to the president's desk but they won't. Why? Because they're apparently okay with all this as well. And while there may be some who think that it's not a good time to act, I disagree. Good policy, like a strong border and securing our nation and defending our sovereignty is always good politics. It's the right thing to do. It's the moral thing to do. It's the constitutional thing to do. It's the common sense thing to do. And I cannot for the life of me understand why the President won't agree with that. I've asked him myself repeatedly, Mr. President, do something about it. And him haws and pretends that he doesn't understand what his authority is. He knows what it is. To be sure we're not going to agree to a fix. That doesn't actually solve the problem. We would be derelict in our duty if we did that. Because we know what the problems are. We know how to fix them. And just like the border official told us on that trip to the Rio Grande, House Republicans are not here to supply more buckets. We are here to stop the flow. And stopping the flow is not rocket science. It takes political courage. It takes transformational policy changes and we know what policy changes will accomplish that. This is not conjecture. It's not Republican talking points. This is what the experts at the border at the epicenter tell us is necessary and needed. And it is insane that we will not supply it.

We're also taking action this very week. Right now. We're doing this every day. I'd like to thank Representative Ciscomani and McClintock and more, for their hard work on very important bills that the House is considering, even this week. These bills will hold foreign persons like criminal aliens accountable for their crimes, and keep them out of our communities. One of those bills is the Agent Raul Gonzalez Officer Safety Act, of course named for Border Patrol agent Raul Gonzalez, who died in the line of duty while pursuing a group of illegal aliens. It would provide stiffer penalties for aliens who attempt to evade arrest by the Border Patrol. We'll also consider a bill to ensure that aliens who are convicted of drunk driving are both deportable and inadmissible. Believe it or not, they're not currently. The third bill would provide stiffer penalties for illegal aliens who engage in Social Security identity theft. The fourth bill would ensure that aliens who have ties to Hamas and the Palestinian Liberation Organization will not be granted entry into the United States. These bills are obviously common sense measures to protect the American people. They should gain support of Republicans and Democrats, but my guess is not many Democrats are supportive. And Republicans in the House will continue to press for secure borders to ensure America's immigration system serves the national interest and does not benefit aliens who are a danger to our own people.

Now, last Friday, President Biden came out in support of the Senate's deal, which we haven't seen yet. There's no text yet. But from what we've heard this "so called deal" does not include from what we've heard these transformational policy changes that are needed to actually stop the border

catastrophe. Among the reported details of the bill, again, I'm working off reports because I haven't seen the text. But apparently, reportedly, a new authority would be created in the law. So the President can "shut down the border," once daily crossings exceed 5000 a day. You heard that right. Okay. So it is illegal to cross our border but apparently we're concocting some sort of deal to allow the President to shut down the border after 5000 people break the law. Why is it 5000? If you add that up, that'd be a million more illegals into our country every year before we take remedial measures. It's madness. We shouldn't be asking what kind of enforcement authority kicks in at 5000 illegal crossings a day. The number should be zero. And I don't care what congressional district you go into in America, pull up people at random on the street and ask them "hey, should we allow 5000 people to break our law each day to get a million into the country? Or should we stop it at zero and enforce our law?" It's mad. I don't know what another word to describe this madness. Anything higher is simply surrender. Anything higher than zero is surrendering our border, surrendering our sovereignty and our security.

And it's important to point out and I want to make this very clear. The President's statement on Friday, he falsely claimed, it was a false claim that he needs Congress to pass a new law to allow him to close the Southern border. He knows that's not true. The President has been around Washington a long time. And the President repeated his claim yesterday on the White House lawn, he said, "I've done all I can do. Just give me the power I've asked for." Moments after his comments, the President's own spokeswoman contradicted him and said, "there are things that are within his power to secure the border." Well, hello, of course there are! The law is very clear. Anybody can Google this, any American citizen could just pull this up and read it for themselves. Let's set the record straight. What he said is demonstrably false. I've explained to him specifically, I read the President of the United States the law, the black letter law, on the phone about two and a half weeks ago. I said, Mr. President, it says very clearly, you have all the tools and the executive authority necessary to reverse the catastrophe that you have created. He has those tools right now. And he has since day one. The Immigration and Nationality Act, for example, coupled with recent Supreme Court precedent, give the president "ample authority to suspend the entry of all aliens or any class of aliens or impose any restrictions he may deem appropriate." That's the broadest authority that Congress probably has ever given a president. And it's been there for a long, long time. In fact, the very provision that I just read you was used by the Obama Administration more than 19 times. It's been used, I think, 69 times by presidents since 1980. But not by President Biden. He pretends it's not there. Any attempt by this President to pretend that he's a bystander bereft of any ability to secure the border is patently absurd. And we're going to continue to remind the American people of that.

If we take a step back and we consider the current catastrophe at the border, we can all see that our country is at a critical decision point. We're at a moment where we have to decide right now, as a Congress, as a people, we have to decide, as the American people, if we have borders or not. We have to decide if we believe in the rule of law or not. We have to decide if we're a sovereign nation or we're not. House Republicans do believe that America has borders and that we are a sovereign nation. We believe we must set limits on the number of immigrants who enter obviously. And the American people have a say on immigration policy. Understanding who enters and enforcing our immigration laws are critical components to maintain a sovereign country. If you do not have sovereignty, you do not have a country. I also believe that border security is part of our solemn obligation to safeguard the well being of our citizens and uphold the principles that define who we are as a nation. In no sense is border security somehow an act of hostility to neighboring countries, it's exactly the opposite. Because a weak border weakens America, and a strong border is good for

America. And a stronger America is good for everybody around the world. And everybody in this chamber should acknowledge that. And just as we lock our doors at night to protect our homes, we secure our borders to protect our homeland. And my friends, that is our sacred obligation.

We in the House Republican Conference desperately want to protect our homeland because we want to ensure that all of our children and grandchildren can continue to enjoy the blessings of liberty that we have enjoyed and that we have loved and experienced. And we can continue this grand experiment and self governance that we began in 1776. But here's the question. I'll leave you with this. Does President Biden want that? Does President Biden believes in the rule of law, does President Biden believe that we're a sovereign nation? Does he believe that Americans and not those from other countries should be put first? Every American citizen should be asking these questions of the President and helping us demand his answers. We won't stop. We're going to continue. And with that, I yield back.