

Opinion America's immigration problems don't stop at the border

President Biden's executive action is too late, and not enough — in more ways than one.

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Regarding the June 5 front-page article "Biden looks to counter critics with asylum cap":

If President Biden feels that there is indeed a crisis at the border, why has he waited until the end of his first term to address it? Border Patrol reported nearly 250,000 migrant encounters in December; the monthly number has fallen by nearly 30 percent in recent months. Even if the administration believes this new executive order might be thrown out by the courts, what harm would there have been in attempting this tactic much earlier?

Steven James Peterson, *Irvine, Calif.*

Did Glinda the Good Witch recently inform President Biden that he had the power to close the border all along? Since the beginning of fiscal year 2021, there have been more than 8 million encounters between migrants and federal agents at our southern land border. This does not include at least 1.7 million migrants who evaded the Border Patrol and are now living in the United States without documentation and without having undergone any vetting by immigration officials. President Biden's action here is too little, too late.

Larry Penner, *Great Neck, N.Y.*

President Biden, your executive order to turn away asylum seekers reeks of election year politics. Americans, please do not buy into racist propaganda. We must follow international law that protects asylum seekers. If there is a daily limit capacity issue, our leaders in Congress should increase the resources necessary to accommodate every asylum seeker who crosses our border.

We are facing a refugee crisis like we have not seen since World War II. We need a Marshall Plan 2.0. Many of these refugees come from around the world, not just the Americas. Many of these tired and huddled masses come to us after fleeing bombs, war criminals and transnational gangs. It's a travesty and a dishonor to the American story that these people should undertake such a long and perilous journey only to be turned away. This is no longer the America that many of our ancestors found at Ellis Island. We should return our Statue of Liberty to France if we refuse to live up to our calling as the shining city on a hill.

Whose recipe for chaos?

Regarding George F. Will's June 6 op-ed, "Once again, Biden proves he's an expert at disorder":

Those of us who are often delighted by Mr. Will's syntactic erudition and historical allusions should be shocked by this column's descent into jingoistic immigrant bashing. His references to caravans, aliens and "immigration inundation" parrot the rhetoric of the felon he so often eloquently disparages. Mr. Will's standard understanding of political nuance abandons him in his diatribe on the evils of executive discretion, hinting at congressional "green room" dysfunction while overlooking the well-documented Republican capitulation to demagoguery earlier this year, when lawmakers scuttled bipartisan immigration legislation, apparently at Donald Trump's behest.

If all of this weren't enough to throw into question Mr. Will's reputation for highly polished, historically informed political commentary, the essay strangely exaggerates immigration's threats to societal "order" with a shrillness that puts restrictionist messages like Stephen Miller's to shame in its failure to acknowledge the United States' rich and vital immigration heritage. Mr. Will's nod to immigration's important contribution to economic growth is commendable, but falls short in overlooking the thankless labor of countless farm and hospitality workers whose legal status might still be pending.

Perhaps more importantly, Mr. Will's essay signals a complete misunderstanding of American values, such as compassion and care for the weak and needy among us, including those "huddled masses" often fleeing persecution and poverty on foreign shores.

Edward Trevelyan, *St. Michaels, Md.*

As George F. Will knows, our two political parties and all three branches of government have battled over, and mostly failed to improve, immigration policy for ... well, forever. Recent iterations include failed efforts under Presidents George W. Bush, Barack Obama, Donald Trump and Joe Biden. Mr. Biden collaborated with one of the most conservative members of Congress, Sen. James Lankford (R-Okla.), who described their compromise as a "once-in-a-generation opportunity." Who killed that opportunity? Congressional Republicans acting on behalf of Mr. Trump — he wanted the issue to remain unresolved and available as a cudgel for his campaign, the very same Republicans who view governance as "a spectator sport," as Mr. Will put it.

But it's not only Mr. Will's treatment of the immigration debate that left me baffled. He mocked Mr. Biden's focus on saving democracy even as the former president takes actions and makes statements that put it at risk. Mr. Will talked about "societal fraying" due to Mr. Biden's supposed failures, without acknowledging that Mr. Biden must contend with the legacy of a man who has fueled the widest divisions in American life since the Civil War. Mr. Will criticized the "syntactical labyrinths" of Mr. Biden's speech patterns, even though the president is known to have a stutter, and even though the alternative is a guy who delivers hours upon hours of nonsensical garble every time he opens his mouth.

I don't understand how Mr. Will can say a president who has achieved near full recovery from a historic pandemic (that was grossly mishandled by Mr. Trump), record-low unemployment, stock market highs, massive investments in infrastructure, attenuating inflation, \$35 insulin, expansions of veterans benefits, a stronger North Atlantic Treaty Organization, support for Ukraine and so much more is a failed president. These are significant accomplishments achieved in a most difficult time.

No, the country is not disintegrating because of Joe Biden — it's surviving because of Joe Biden. If it feels like it's falling apart (and that might be the one thing we can agree on), it's because one uniquely destructive con man and one uniquely craven political party fell in love with each other, all to the detriment of the American people, our nearly 250-year-old democracy and, frankly, the well-being of the entire world.

Rebecca Spence, *New Providence, N.J.*

How Mr. Biden can win Latinos

As an undocumented immigrant from Mexico with Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals status, I was moved to respond to Luis Miranda's May 31 op-ed, "[Democrats are taking Latinos for granted.](#)"

I agree with Mr. Miranda's overriding point: The Latino community is diverse, and President Biden is in serious danger of losing our votes through neglect. I would like to add one point of clarification about what I see as the best way for Mr. Biden to remedy this lapse in attention.

Mr. Miranda writes that "Democrats often assume that immigration reform is their only hope of winning Latino voters." He is correct that immigration reform is not the only issue of concern for Latino voters. By definition, Latino voters are at least five years into their immigration journey, the typical time one must be a permanent resident before becoming naturalized. They have moved on to other issues that more directly affect their families. And, of course, 9.7 percent of Latinos in the United States are Puerto Rican and therefore U.S. citizens, so immigration may never have been a pressing personal concern for them.

But for voters such as my sister-in-law, my aunts, uncles and cousins, and the [more than 10 million U.S. citizens who live](#) with an undocumented person, immigration reform is an existential issue. These voters are concentrated within the 60.5 percent of Latinos in the United States who are of Mexican origin. Our mixed-status households are highly vulnerable to drastic changes in immigration policy, such as an end to DACA.

It is likely that both parties will ignore the substantial Mexican American vote in reliably blue California or predictably red Texas. But Mexican American voters and mixed-status families could help determine who wins Arizona and Nevada and even other swing states, including Wisconsin, Michigan, Pennsylvania, and Georgia.

Given this practical and political reality, I urge Mr. Biden to use his executive authority to grant legal status and work permits to the undocumented spouses and parents of U.S. citizens and to the “dreamers” without DACA status. President Barack Obama issued DACA to young undocumented immigrants like me in 2012. That fall, he won 71 percent of the Latino vote, up from 67 percent in 2008.

It would be humane for Mr. Biden to take this step. If he does so, he would also give millions of voters in families like mine an excellent reason to turn out and support his reelection.

Erendira Rendon, *Chicago*

The writer is vice president at the Resurrection Project.

The workers businesses need

As reported in the May 23 front-page article “Job market could suffer with Trump’s migrant plans,” inaction on immigration reform is exacerbating the ongoing labor shortage in our country. There are nearly 8.1 million job openings in the United States, yet about 6.6 million unemployed workers are seeking to fill them. That means if every job seeker were hired, nearly 1.4 million positions would remain unfilled. No wonder many industries are grappling with critical staffing deficits, stalling economic growth and undermining American competitiveness.

Immigrants have historically been a vital part of our workforce. But our outdated, overly restrictive workforce policies prevent many willing individuals from contributing to our economy, stifling innovation and productivity but placing undue strain on businesses that are struggling to meet demand.

Creating more guest worker opportunities and streamlining the asylum seeker work authorization process could provide much-needed relief to struggling business owners, ensure access to a long-term talent pipeline and help those looking to provide for their families in the United States.

Lawmakers must act now. U.S. employers need workers, and there are people willing to fill those jobs. Let’s not put politics before policy and get to work.

Misty Chally, *Washington*

The writer is executive director of the Critical Labor Coalition.