

NEWS ARTICLES ON KEY ISSUES – JANUARY 18, 2024

U.S. BORDER PATROL STATISTICS

U.S. Border Patrol Southwest Border Encounters FY2019		
USBP	Demographic	Total
Southwest Border	Unaccompanied Alien Child	76,020
	Family Units	473,682
	Single Adult	301,806
Southwest Border Total Apprehensions		851,508

U.S. Border Patrol Southwest Border Encounters FY2020		
USBP	Demographic	Total
Southwest Border	Unaccompanied Alien Child	30,557
	Family Units	52,230
	Single Adult	317,864
Southwest Border Total Apprehensions		400,651

U.S. Border Patrol Southwest Border Encounters FY2021		
USBP	Demographic	Total
Southwest Border	Unaccompanied Alien Child	144,834
	Family Units	451,087
	Single Adult	1,063,285
Southwest Border Total Apprehensions		1,659,206

Data Sources: <https://www.cbp.gov/newsroom/stats/sw-border-migration/fy-2019> ; <https://www.cbp.gov/newsroom/stats/sw-border-migration/fy2020> ; <https://www.cbp.gov/newsroom/stats/southwest-land-border-encounters>

U.S. Border Patrol Southwest Border Encounters FY2022														
USBP	Demographic	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	Total
Southwest Border	Unaccompanied Alien Child	12,625	13,745	11,704	8,607	11,779	13,892	11,857	14,420	14,929	13,003	10,993	11,539	149,093
	Family Units	41,556	43,279	49,437	30,419	25,165	34,052	37,082	51,166	44,071	42,851	39,305	44,579	482,962
	Single Adult	104,932	109,991	109,461	108,851	122,226	163,237	154,565	158,784	133,399	125,980	131,476	151,479	1,574,381
Southwest Border Total Apprehensions		159,113	167,015	170,602	147,877	159,063	211,181	203,504	224,370	192,399	181,834	181,774	207,597	2,206,436

Data Source: <https://www.cbp.gov/newsroom/stats/southwest-land-border-encounters>

U.S. Border Patrol Southwest Border Encounters FY2023														
USBP	Demographic	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	Total
Southwest Border	Unaccompanied Alien Child	11,654	12,780	11,829	9,034	10,418	11,852	11,062	9,442	6,732	10,035	13,527	13,154	131,519
	Family Units	46,745	49,827	60,843	25,829	25,643	33,269	46,555	45,026	31,271	60,165	93,111	103,027	621,311
	Single Adult	146,735	145,073	149,346	94,650	94,460	118,551	126,304	116,914	61,535	62,442	74,416	102,582	1,293,008
Southwest Border Total Apprehensions		205,134	207,680	222,018	129,513	130,521	163,672	183,921	171,382	99,538	132,642	181,054	218,763	2,045,838

Data Source: <https://www.cbp.gov/newsroom/stats/southwest-land-border-encounters>

U.S. Border Patrol Southwest Border Encounters FY2024				
USBP	Demographic	OCT	NOV	Total
Southwest Border	Unaccompanied Alien Child	10,708	11,948	22,656
	Family Units	84,405	82,689	167,094
	Single Adult	93,667	96,476	190,143
Southwest Border Total Apprehensions		188,780	191,113	379,893

Data Source: <https://www.cbp.gov/newsroom/stats/southwest-land-border-encounters>

LATEST NEWS

Migrant encounters along southwest border reach all-time high of 302,000

By Luke Barr, ABC News, January 2, 2024

- ❖ There were 302,000 encounters along the southwest border in December, marking the highest monthly total ever recorded, sources told ABC News.
- ❖ Source: <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/migrant-encounters-reach-time-high-southwest-border/story?id=106050779>

Operation Lone Star Ramps Up Historic Response To Biden's Border Crisis

By the Office of the Texas Governor, Press Release, January 5, 2024

- ❖ As of January 5, Texas has bused:
 - Over 12,500 migrants to Washington, D.C. since April 2022
 - Over 35,600 migrants to New York City since August 2022
 - Over 29,400 migrants to Chicago since August 2022
 - Over 3,400 migrants to Philadelphia since November 2022
 - Over 15,000 migrants to Denver since May 18
 - Over 1,400 migrants to Los Angeles since June 14
- ❖ Press Release Source: <https://gov.texas.gov/news/post/operation-lone-star-ramps-up-historic-response-to-bidens-border-crisis>

Governor Abbott Signs Historic Border Security Measures In Brownsville

By the Office of the Texas Governor, Press Release, December 18, 2024

- ❖ On December 18, Governor Greg Abbott signed into law a transformative package of border security legislation passed during Special Session #3 and Special Session #4 of the 88th Texas Legislature at the Texas border wall in Brownsville.
 - Senate Bill 4 from Special Session #3 (Flores/Guillen) creates a mandatory ten-year minimum prison sentence for smuggling of persons and continuous smuggling of persons. The law enhances the criminal penalties for the operation of a stash house and creates a mandatory five-year minimum prison sentence.
 - Senate Bill 3 from Special Session #4 (Huffman/Jetton) appropriates \$1.54 billion in general revenue to the Truvested Programs within the Office of the Governor for border security operations and the construction, operation, and maintenance of border barrier infrastructure.
 - Senate Bill 4 from Special Session #4 (Perry/Spiller) creates a criminal offense for illegal entry into this state from a foreign nation. The law cracks down on repeated attempts to enter Texas by creating the offense of illegal reentry and penalizes offenders with up to 20 years in prison.
- ❖ Source: <https://gov.texas.gov/news/post/governor-abbott-signs-historic-border-security-measures-in-brownsville>

Immigrant rights groups sue Texas to halt new law allowing arrests of migrants

By Uriel J. García, Texas Tribune, December 19, 2023

- ❖ Immigrant rights organizations have sued Texas after Gov. Greg Abbott approved one of the strictest state immigration enforcement laws, which authorizes police to arrest immigrants suspected of crossing the border illegally. In their lawsuit, the American Civil Liberties Union, the ACLU of Texas and the Texas Civil Rights Project claim that Senate Bill 4, which Abbott signed on Monday and is scheduled to take effect March 5, violates the U.S. Constitution because Congress has given the federal government sole authority over immigration enforcement. The lawsuit, filed in an Austin federal court, says SB 4 would prevent immigrants from requesting asylum in the U.S., a right they have regardless of how they enter the country. The groups filed the lawsuit on behalf of El Paso County and two immigrant rights organizations — El Paso-based Las Americas Immigrant Advocacy Center and Austin-based American Gateways. The groups are asking a federal judge to prevent Texas from implementing SB 4 and declare it unlawful.
- ❖ Source: <https://www.texastribune.org/2023/12/19/texas-immigration-law-lawsuit-border-aclu/>

DOJ threatens to sue Texas over new immigration law

By Katy Blakey, NBC News DFW, January 2, 2024

- ❖ The Department of Justice (DOJ) is threatening to sue Texas over the state's new border law. Governor Greg Abbott signed Senate Bill 4 in December 2023. It will take effect in March 2024 and allow state and local law enforcement to arrest, jail, and prosecute people suspected of entering the U.S. illegally. The Justice Department calls the law unconstitutional. In a letter sent to Abbott, the DOJ said it would sue Texas unless federal authorities were notified by January 3 that the law would not be enforced.
- ❖ Source: <https://www.nbcdfw.com/news/local/texas-news/doj-threatens-to-sue-texas-over-new-immigration-law/3424003/>

Funding Bill For Ukraine, Israel, Taiwan Stalls In U.S. Senate Over Border Funding

By Steven Adams, Office of West Virginia Senator Shelley Moore Capito, December 9, 2023

- ❖ A bill to provide much needed funding for the Ukrainian war effort, Israel's fight against Hamas, and Taiwan defense spending hit a brick wall in the U.S. Senate over a debate whether to include funding for the U.S. southern border. Senate Republicans denied the national security supplemental bill the 60 votes necessary for cloture (a procedure for ending a debate and taking a vote). The \$110.5 billion package includes assistance to Ukraine as it continues to fight a Russian invasion; security assistance for Israel after terrorist group Hamas attacked the country in October; and support for Indo-Pacific countries — including Taiwan — concerned about Chinese encroachments. Republicans in the U.S. House of Representatives are wanting components of H.R. 2 — the Southern Border Transparency Act — included, which would require resumption of construction of the border wall, increases to the numbers of border agents, greater use of technology on the border to locate illegal crossings, and the end of catch-and-release policies.
- ❖ Source: <https://www.capito.senate.gov/news/in-the-news/funding-bill-for-ukraine-israel-taiwan-stalls-in-us-senate-over-border-funding>

U.S. reopening 4 entry points at southern border following dramatic drop in migrant crossings

By Camilo Montoya-Galvez, CBS News, January 3, 2024

- ❖ On January 4, U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) will resume commercial and legal travel at four official crossings along the U.S.-Mexico border that were partially or fully closed recently due to record levels of migrant crossings, senior U.S. officials told reporters. The impacted ports of entry are in Eagle Pass, Texas, Lukeville and Nogales, Arizona and San Ysidro, California. The U.S. Border Patrol processed roughly 2,500 migrants Monday, January 1, a sharp decrease from the record arrivals reported in December, one of the U.S. officials said. U.S. officials noted that since May, the U.S. has repatriated more than 460,000 migrants, including 75,000 parents and children traveling as families.
- ❖ Source: <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/southern-border-crossings-us-reopening-4-dramatic-drop-migrant-crossings/>

Johnson Calls Border 'Unmitigated Disaster' in Texas Trip

By Lindsay Wise, Katy Stech Ferek and Michelle Hackman, Wall Street Journal, January 3, 2024

- ❖ House Republicans traveled to the U.S.-Mexico border in Texas to rail against what they said were failures of the Biden administration to stem record flows of migrants, as Senate negotiators met in Washington in a last-ditch effort to strike a bipartisan deal to revamp U.S. border policies. On January 3, at a press conference, Speaker Mike Johnson (R., La.) decried what he called an “unmitigated disaster” that has strained border agencies and communities across the country. He reiterated that any border deal must be based on H.R. 2, a bill passed by the Republican-controlled House that would revive policies from the Trump administration, including provisions that would continue wall construction and make it nearly impossible for most migrants to qualify for asylum. Johnson led a delegation of more than 60 House Republicans to Eagle Pass, Texas, where they toured a Border Patrol processing facility and spoke with local residents and sheriffs.
- ❖ Source: https://www.wsj.com/politics/policy/house-republicans-rally-at-southern-border-as-senate-talks-continue-3fc8686e?reflink=desktopwebshare_permalink

Mayorkas visits Texas border ahead of historic GOP impeachment proceedings

By Benjamin Wermund, Washington Bureau, January 8, 2024

- ❖ Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas traveled to Eagle Pass on Monday, January 8, to meet with Border Patrol agents as House Republicans prepare for hearings this week [Jan. 8-12] — centered on the Biden administration's handling of the border — that could make Mayorkas the first Cabinet secretary impeached in nearly 150 years. The GOP has laid the blame for a record number of border crossings on Mayorkas, whose agency oversees immigration enforcement. Eagle Pass has been among the most frequented crossings in the nation. The city is also the epicenter of Gov. Greg Abbott's border security crackdown that has sparked a series of legal battles between the state and the Biden administration. The secretary used the trip to push back on the GOP narrative and urge Congress to take action on immigration, including approving \$6 billion in emergency border security funding the Biden administration requested last year to hire Border Patrol agents and asylum officers and to install inspection machines meant to catch fentanyl at ports of entry. The House Homeland Security Committee, which has been investigating Mayorkas' handling of the border for months, is set to kick off the impeachment push with a hearing Wednesday, January 10. A spokesperson for the committee said additional hearings are expected and that the panel will draft articles of impeachment at the end of the process.
- ❖ Source: <https://www.houstonchronicle.com/politics/texas/article/mayorkas-border-impeachment-18595978.php>

SENATE BILLS 3 AND 4 [SB3 / SB4]

What to know about Texas' new immigration law

By the Dallas Morning News, December 19, 2023

- ❖ **What will Texas' new immigration law allow?** Abbott signed Senate Bill 4 into law. It creates a new state crime — illegal entry from a foreign nation — that will allow the state to charge migrants with a Class B misdemeanor, punishable by up to six months in jail or a \$2,000 fine. The penalty could increase to a state jail felony if they've previously been convicted of the crime. It will allow state judges to order the expulsion of migrants to the country from which they entered — presumably Mexico. Abbott also signed Senate Bill 3, which allocates \$1.54 billion for the state to continue building a border wall similar to one built under former President Donald Trump.
- ❖ **What are critics of the new immigration law saying?** Mexican officials, congressional Democrats, migrant activists and many Texans have criticized Abbott, saying the bill would lead to discrimination against Hispanic and Latino Texans and other residents of color.
- ❖ **What did Abbott say about potential litigation?** Abbott said that the bill was crafted with an approach that shouldn't get caught up in litigation. He argued Texas has the constitutional right to enforce immigration laws.
- ❖ **How has Mexico responded to Senate Bill 4?** Mexican Foreign Affairs Secretary Alicia Bárcena condemned the bill as it headed to Abbott's desk, but she did not say whether officials would reject migrants.
- ❖ Source: <https://www.dallasnews.com/news/immigration/2023/12/19/what-to-know-about-texas-new-border-security-law/>

ACLU files lawsuit challenging new Texas law that authorizes police to arrest migrants

By Armando Garcia, ABC News, December 19, 2023

- ❖ The ACLU of Texas filed a lawsuit in federal court Tuesday, December 19, challenging the state's new law that authorizes Texas law enforcement to detain and arrest migrants suspected of crossing the southern border illegally. The lawsuit was filed on behalf of the County of El Paso and advocacy groups Las Americas Immigrant Advocacy Center and American Gateways. It names Steve McCraw, director of the Texas Department of Public Safety, and Bill Hicks, a district attorney for the 34th District of Texas, as defendants.
- ❖ Source: <https://abcnews.go.com/US/aclu-files-lawsuit-challenging-new-texas-law-authorizes/story?id=105772514>

TEXAS BUOYS AND RAZOR WIRE BARRIERS IN THE RIO GRANDE

Court blocks US government destruction of Texas border razor wire fencing

By Daniel Wiessner, Reuters, December 19, 2023

- ❖ A U.S. appeals court on Tuesday, December 19, temporarily blocked the administration of President Joe Biden from destroying razor wire fencing that Texas placed along its border with Mexico to deter illegal border crossings. The New Orleans-based 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals said a judge was wrong to rule that the U.S. government was immune from a lawsuit by Texas claiming a federal policy of removing the fencing was illegal. The court ordered U.S. immigration authorities not to destroy the fencing while Texas appeals the judge's ruling. The judge had refused to block the destruction of the fencing pending the outcome of the state's lawsuit.
- ❖ Source: <https://www.reuters.com/legal/court-blocks-us-government-destruction-texas-border-razor-wire-fencing-2023-12-19/>

ASYLUM SEEKERS

Biden fast-tracks work authorization for migrants who cross legally

By Lauren Villagran, USA TODAY, December 31, 2023

- ❖ The Department of Homeland Security, the parent agency of USCIS, announced in September it would accelerate processing of work permits for migrants paroled into the country after their CBP One appointment. The agency is also providing on-the-ground work permit registrations in New York City, Chicago, Boston and Denver — resulting in nearly 5,000 work permits, USCIS said. It's a fraction of the 1,450 individuals per day, nearly 45,000 a month, who are processed via CBP One appointments at ports of entry from California to Texas.
- ❖ Source: <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2023/12/31/biden-work-permits-for-migrants/71931816007/>

NYC Mayor Eric Adams, other Democratic mayors ask for federal help coordinating migrant buses from Texas

By the Associated Press, December 21, 2023

- ❖ On December 27, the mayors of Chicago, New York City and Denver renewed pleas for more federal help and coordination with Texas over the growing number of asylum-seekers arriving in their cities by bus and plane. Gov. Greg Abbott's busing operation has transported more than 80,000 migrants to Democratic-led cities since last year. Chicago has cracked down on so-called "rogue" buses, with lawsuits, fines and tickets. New York City Mayor Eric Adams said New York City would put similar rules in place as Chicago and announced an executive order requesting buses arrive only between 8:30 a.m. and noon on weekdays at a single drop-off site, or face fines, lawsuits or buses being impounded. Denver has similar rules on weekday drop-offs during specified hours. New York City has offered migrants one-way tickets out of town and traveled to Latin America to discourage people from coming to the city.
- ❖ Source: <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/eric-adams-democratic-mayors-ask-federal-help-coordinating-migrant-bus-rcna131396>

Texas sheriff says his agency lacks manpower to handle both the surge of migrant border crossings and local matters

By Rafael Romo, Maxime Tamsett and Raja Razek, CNN, December 25, 2023

- ❖ Amid an unprecedented surge of migrants crossing into the United States, Maverick County, Texas, Sheriff Tom Schmerber told CNN his officers are struggling to keep up with both the immigration issues and local matters. Federal authorities reported a seven-day average of more than 9,600 migrant encounters along the US southern border in December, a Homeland Security official said last week. That number is among the highest amounts ever recorded. The seven-day average reported on November 28 was around 6,800 encounters.
- ❖ Source: <https://www.cnn.com/2023/12/24/us/texas-migrant-border-crossings-surge-maverick-county/index.html>

Biden and Congress are mulling big changes on immigration. What are they and what could they mean?

By Rebecca Santana, Associated Press, December 10, 2023

- **HUMANITARIAN PAROLE:** Using humanitarian parole, the U.S. government can let people into the country by essentially bypassing the regular immigration process. Migrants are usually admitted for a pre-determined period and there's no path toward U.S. citizenship.
- **WHAT MIGHT CHANGE WITH ASYLUM?** Asylum is a type of protection that allows a migrant to stay in the U.S. and have a path to American citizenship. To qualify for asylum, someone has to demonstrate fear of persecution back home due to a fairly specific set of criteria: race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group or political opinions. Asylum-seekers must be on U.S. soil when they ask for this protection. They generally go through an initial screening called a credible fear interview. If they are determined to have a chance of getting asylum, they are allowed to stay in the U.S. to pursue their case in immigration court. That process can take years. In the meantime, asylum-seekers can start to work, get married, have children and create a life. Some of what lawmakers are discussing would raise the bar that migrants need to meet during that initial credible fear interview. Those who do not meet it would be sent home.
- ❖ Source: <https://apnews.com/article/immigration-border-congress-humanitarian-parole-asylum-trump-5b5808183c1642bae520b7d9456cc36d>

Texas has arrested thousands on trespassing charges at the border. Illegal crossings are still high

By Associated Press, December 28, 2023

- ❖ Starting in March, Texas will allow police to arrest migrants who enter the state illegally and give local judges the authority to order them out of the country. The new law comes two years after Texas launched a smaller-scale operation to arrest migrants for trespassing. But although that operation was also intended to stem illegal crossings, there is little indication that it has done so. Since 2021, Texas authorities have arrested nearly 10,000 migrants on misdemeanor trespassing charges under what Abbott has called a "arrest and jail" operation: Border landowners enter agreements with the state authorizing trespassing arrests, clearing the way for law enforcement to apprehend migrants who enter the U.S. through those properties.
- ❖ Source: <https://www.orlandosentinel.com/2023/12/28/texas-has-arrested-thousands-on-trespassing-charges-at-the-border-illegal-crossings-are-still-high/>

California Offering Health Insurance To Undocumented Immigrants: What To Know

By Arianna Johnson, *Forbes*, December 30, 2023

- ❖ Undocumented adults between the ages of 26 and 49 in California will qualify for health insurance under the state's Medi-Cal program beginning Monday, January 1, provided they meet eligibility requirements for the program, which is designed to insure low income residents. This move expands the state's health insurance coverage to include all undocumented immigrants—the state previously only covered undocumented children, those between 19 and 25 and those 50 years and older. This expansion—which was approved in legislation in May—will make around an additional 700,000 undocumented residents eligible for health insurance, according to California State Sen. María Elena Durazo.
- ❖ Source: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/ariannajohnson/2023/12/30/california-offering-health-insurance-to-undocumented-immigrants-what-to-know/?sh=26dd200261c8>

DEVELOPING STORIES

The US sees a drop in illegal border crossings after Mexico increases enforcement

By Valerie Gonzalez and Elliot Spagat, *Associated Press*, January 7, 2024

- ❖ Mexico's immigration agency sent at least 22 flights from its border region with the U.S. to southern cities during the last 10 days of December, according to Witness at the Border, an advocacy group that tracks flight data. Most were from Piedras Negras, which is across the border from Eagle Pass, Texas. Mexico also ran two removal flights to Venezuela with 329 migrants. The stretch was punctuated by U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken's visit to Mexico City on Dec. 28 to confront unprecedented crossings to the United States. Arrests for illegal crossings into the U.S. from Mexico fell to about 2,500 on Monday, down from more than 10,000 on several days in December, according to U.S. authorities. In the Border Patrol's busiest area, arrests totaled 13,800 during the seven-day period ending Friday, down 29% from 19,400 two weeks earlier, according to Tucson, Arizona, sector chief John Modlin. The drop led U.S. Customs and Border Protection to reopen the port of entry in Lukeville, Arizona, on Thursday after a monthlong closure on the most direct route from Phoenix to its nearest beaches. The U.S. also restored operations at Eagle Pass and three other locations.
- ❖ Source: <https://apnews.com/article/mexico-immigration-enforcement-crossings-drop-b67022cf0853dca95a8e0799bb99b68a>

Biden is asking for Mexican help to stop the record surge of migrants. Here's what Mexico wants in return.

By Julia Ainsley, *NBC News*, January 8, 2024

- ❖ In a press conference on Friday, January 5, López Obrador called on the U.S. to approve a plan that would deploy \$20 billion to Latin American and Caribbean countries, suspend the U.S. blockade of Cuba, remove all sanctions against Venezuela and grant at least 10 million Hispanics living in the U.S. the right to remain and work legally. Mexico is willing to help the U.S. by increasing enforcement, one Mexican official told NBC News, though no numbers have been discussed so far. Mexico and the U.S. recently resumed deportation flights of Venezuelans, one of the top one or two nationalities now trying to cross into the U.S. In return for its cooperation, the officials said, Mexico wants more financial aid for policing its borders.
- ❖ Source: <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/immigration/biden-asks-mexico-help-stop-record-surge-migrants-rcna132711>

Fact check: Did Obama deport more people than Trump while in the White House?

By Maria Ramirez Uribe, *PolitiFact*, January 8, 2024

- ❖ Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis said that if elected president, he'd do better at deporting people who are illegally in the country than former President Donald Trump did. "Trump promised the largest deportations in history," DeSantis said Jan. 2 during a town hall hosted by Gray Television. "He deported less, believe it or not, than Barack Obama even did." PolitiFact ruling: True. Federal data tracking the removals, returns and expulsions of noncitizens supports this claim. During each of his terms, Obama deported more people than Trump did during his term.
- ❖ As a presidential candidate in 2016, Trump promised to deport every immigrant living in the U.S. illegally (then estimated to be 11 million people). He failed to do so, earning him a Promise Broken on PolitiFact's Trump-O-Meter promise tracker. But did Trump deport fewer people than Obama? There are different deportation metrics, and Obama surpassed Trump's numbers in each one. Immigrant rights advocates had dubbed Obama the "deporter-in-chief" by the time he left office in 2017. The federal government classifies deportations as the removal of noncitizens from the U.S. It tracks it in a few different ways:
- ❖ During Obama's first term, fiscal year 2009 to fiscal year 2012, there were 3.2 million deportations (removals and returns). Fiscal year 2009 included about four months of the second George W. Bush administration. During Obama's second term, covering fiscal years 2013 through 2016, there were 2.1 million deportations (removals and returns).
- ❖ Source: <https://www.houstonchronicle.com/politics/texas/politifact/article/fact-check-ron-desantis-deportation-18591863.php>

Rep. Cuellar on border dispute between Texas, federal officials after migrant deaths

By *Laura Barrón-López, Shrai Popat and Ali Schmitz, PBS, January 15, 2024*

- ❖ Following the death of a woman and two children in the Rio Grande along the southern border, a dispute between Texas and federal officials has intensified. The migrants drowned while attempting to cross into Eagle Pass at a section of the border recently seized by Texas Gov. Greg Abbott. Laura Barrón-López discussed more with Democratic Rep. Henry Cuellar, who represents a Texas border district.
- ❖ Source: <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/rep-cuellar-on-border-dispute-between-texas-federal-officials-after-migrant-deaths>

New York, Chicago team up to press feds for migrant-funding flexibility

By *Sally Goldenberg, Politico, January 16, 2024*

- ❖ New York City Comptroller Brad Lander and Chicago Budget Director Annette Guzman joined forces to implore Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas to loosen rules around collecting identification numbers given to migrants when they enter the U.S. In a written request sent to Mayorkas and obtained by POLITICO via freedom-of-information request, the money managers say his agency only informed cities of the requirement to gather “A-numbers” in November, more than a year after migrants began arriving. “Since the Spring of 2022, our cities have expended tremendous local resources to provide immediate shelter and care for tens of thousands of newly arrived migrants, filling in the gaps of a broken immigration system,” Lander and Guzman wrote, noting the cities have shelled out “many times more on services for migrants than we have been awarded by the federal government.” “To date, however, we have not received all the federal reimbursement funds that were awarded to our cities, due to significant administrative barriers in the requirements for reimbursement,” they added. At stake in New York is more than \$100 million in unlocked federal money, Lander said in an interview. Since spring of 2022, 168,500 migrants have arrived in New York, according to City Hall’s latest figures. During a visit to Washington, D.C., in November, the New York comptroller said he learned the city had only received \$45 million of \$145 million it was granted by the Department of Homeland Security.
- ❖ Source: <https://www.politico.com/news/2024/01/16/new-york-chicago-migrant-funding-00135668?cid=apn>

Florida's immigration law brings significant unintended consequences, critics say

By *Manuel Bojorquez, CBS News, January 12, 2024*

- ❖ The new sweeping immigration legislation, signed into law by Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis in May of 2022, prohibits anyone from transporting illegal immigrants into the state. Among other restrictions, the law imposes penalties on Florida businesses that hire undocumented immigrants, and requires a citizenship question on patient forms for hospitals that accept Medicare. Under the law, Florida also no longer recognizes drivers' licenses issued to undocumented immigrants from other states. But after Hurricane Idalia devastated parts of the state in August, some businesses say the law created a worker shortage, slowing Florida's recovery.
- ❖ Source: <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/florida-immigration-law-significant-unintended-consequences/?ftag=CNM-00-10aac3a>

Texas officers take “full control” of Eagle Pass park against city’s wishes

By *Uriel J. García, Texas Tribune, January 11, 2024*

- ❖ The Texas Department of Public Safety has closed and taken over a park in Eagle Pass on the banks of the Rio Grande against the wishes of city officials, Eagle Pass Mayor Rolando Salinas said Thursday, January 11. In a video posted on Facebook, Salinas said he received a call from DPS officials on Wednesday [January 10] to let him know that Gov. Greg Abbott had signed an emergency declaration and that officers would take “full control” of 47-acre Shelby Park indefinitely. Salinas said he was told that the reason for the operation is to prevent immigrants from illegally crossing the Rio Grande into Texas.
- ❖ Source: <https://www.texastribune.org/2024/01/11/texas-border-eagle-pass-park-seized-dps-immigration/>

Woman, 2 children die crossing Rio Grande as Border Patrol says Texas troops prevented them from intervening

By *Dennis Romero, NBC News, January 13, 2024*

- ❖ A woman and two children drowned in the Rio Grande on Friday night [January 12] in Eagle Pass, Texas, after U.S. border agents were prevented from responding, federal officials said Saturday [January 13]. In a statement, a Department of Homeland Security spokesperson said U.S. Border Patrol agents were made aware of the migrants' distress by the Mexican government but were unable to enter the area from the U.S. side after Texas National Guard troops, under the direction of Texas Gov. Greg Abbott, prevented them from doing so. Mexican authorities recovered the bodies of three of the migrants Saturday [January 13], Cuellar said in a statement. Identities and exact ages were unavailable.
- ❖ Source: <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/woman-2-children-die-crossing-rio-grande-border-patrol-says-was-preven-rcna133842>

Feds demand Texas stop blocking Border Patrol agents access to border

By Neelam Bohra And Sneha Dey, Texas Tribune, January 13, 2024

- ❖ The Biden Administration has demanded Texas authorities stop blocking federal Border Patrol agents' full access to part of the U.S. border with Mexico in a cease and desist letter sent to Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton. Last Wednesday [January 10], Texas troopers took control over Eagle Pass's 47-acre Shelby Park along the Rio Grande, denying federal Border Patrol agents entry to the park. On Friday evening [January 12], a woman and two children drowned trying to cross and two others were rescued by Mexican authorities. The letter sent to Paxton's office signed by Jonathan Meyer, general counsel for the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, insists that Texas' actions have "impeded operations of border patrol," and are in "conflict with the authority and duties of Border Patrol under federal law," and are unconstitutional. The state has until Wednesday [January 17] to stop blocking Border Patrol's access and remove all barriers. If the state does not comply, federal authorities will "refer the matter to the Department of Justice for appropriate action and consider all other options available to restore Border Patrol's access to the border," the letter said.
- ❖ Source: <https://www.texastribune.org/2024/01/13/henry-cuellar-texas-border-eagle-pass/>

Texas Gov. Abbott defends remarks about stopping short of 'shooting' migrants

By Suzanne Gamboa, NBC News, January 12, 2024

- ❖ Texas Gov. Greg Abbott defended his comment that the state is doing everything it can to stop people from crossing the border illegally, short of shooting them. On Jan. 5, Abbott said on the radio show of right-wing conservative Dana Loesch that Texas is using every tool and strategy possible to stop people at the border. "The only thing we are not doing is we're not shooting people who come across the border, because, of course, the Biden administration would charge us with murder," Abbott said. Mexico's Secretary of Foreign Relations office condemned Abbott's comments in a statement. "Mexico expresses its absolute concern at any type of expression that encourages violent acts and the dehumanization of the migrant community," the statement said. "We respect human rights and denounce all types of aggressive insinuations against a person's life."
- ❖ Source: <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/latino/texas-gov-abbott-defends-remarks-stopping-short-shooting-migrants-rcna133748>

Texas Pulls an Ugly Stunt on the Border

By Jerusalem Demsas, The Atlantic, January 13, 2024

- ❖ The Texas National Guard has taken hostage a 2.5-mile stretch of the U.S. border with Mexico. According to a shocking Supreme Court filing by the Justice Department, armed soldiers and vehicles deployed by the state have repeatedly denied U.S. Border Patrol agents access to the Shelby Park area in Eagle Pass, Texas. The state did not immediately deny this; a spokesperson for Governor Greg Abbott said the state will keep "utilizing every tool and strategy to respond to President Biden's ongoing border crisis." It's an ugly stunt, part of a long series of provocations by Abbott, who is clearly more interested in garnering headlines than in generating solutions to the chronic delays and underinvestment that plague the U.S. immigration system. But national leaders have also left a policy vacuum. In 2016, the courts that judge whether migrants qualify for asylum had a backlog of 163,451 cases; that total grew to 614,751 in 2020 and 1,009,625 last year. Asylum seekers wait about four years on average just to get their hearing. Federal officials do not have the resources to process and manage the asylum flows at the border, and, as members of Congress drag their feet, Texas is running to take charge of the situation—not to provide order, but to publicize the disorder for political ends. All indications suggest that Texas's actions are creating more chaos. "Because Border Patrol can no longer access or view this stretch of the border, Texas has effectively prevented Border Patrol from monitoring the border," the Justice Department asserted. In sworn testimony included in the filing, Robert Danley, the lead Customs and Border Protection field coordinator in the Del Rio area, recounted that the state is refusing to let Border Patrol or Department of Defense personnel into the 2.5-mile stretch, and that Texas "does not want Border Patrol to be able to arrest, process, or transport migrants out of the identified area." This is a major impediment to federal enforcement, the U.S. government suggested. In mid-December, Danley explains, as many as 6,000 migrants were waiting to be processed in the staging area now blocked from Border Patrol oversight. On practical grounds, federal agents are unable to police and process migrants at this crucial juncture and have been forced to move their operations to a small area along the shoulder of a busy two-lane highway that, Danley wrote, comes with "an increased risk to both migrants and agents of traffic-related injury." If Abbott's show of force is supposed to deter would-be immigrants, it doesn't seem to be working. "This tactic has had no impact on migrant flow," a Fox News correspondent reported, citing Border Patrol sources. The federal government is now hoping that Abbott's overstep will force the Supreme Court to step in and clarify Texas's authority—or lack thereof—to set and enforce immigration policy.
- ❖ Source: https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2024/01/texas-border-stunt-abbott/677118/?utm_source=apple_news

Ayala: Interfaith volunteers brace for anti-immigrant backlash they know is coming

By Elaine Ayala, San Antonio Express-News, January 10, 2024

- ❖ Immigrant advocates can't think of any recent year that was good for asylum-seekers and those living out their faith by welcoming the stranger. Each year brings more complex struggles and tensions piled atop the already dangerous journeys migrants make to get to U.S. borders. But this year is likely to be worse. "I'm not sure what we're bracing for," said Tori Salas of the San Antonio-based Interfaith Welcome Coalition,. "But we know when there's an election, both sides start getting stricter on immigration." Democrats and Republicans "play those games," she said. Think Gov. Greg Abbott's Operation Lone Star and Texas' attempt under Senate Bill 4 to take over immigration enforcement, which prompted a Justice Department lawsuit. Abbott is clearly aware of the constitutional overreach of the law that, come March, will allow police officers to arrest migrants and judges to deport them. Think U.S. House Speaker Mike Johnson suggesting he'd use a government funding deadline to push for harsher border policies. Think President Joe Biden potentially caving to demands for harsher border enforcement. And think razor wire on fences and floating buoys and netting that remain in the Rio Grande, further endangering the lives of migrants attempting to cross into the United States to legally apply for asylum. As a presidential election year, 2024 will see more tension around immigration, even against those who provide humanitarian aid. Over the weekend, the Interfaith Welcome Coalition experienced a disturbing episode at the downtown bus station, said Salas, its coordinating director. "Someone got into the bus station to take pictures of migrants and threatened to pepper spray a volunteer," she said. Bus station security stepped in. The man was asked to leave and has been "banned from the property," Salas said. The group deals with phone calls described as anti-immigrant. A recent one asked, "Why are you helping the illegals?" Calling human beings illegal says so much about where that argument begins. It says so much about the rhetoric that lies ahead. Like other immigrant rights groups, coalition members see reforming immigration law as the key to meeting the need to enforce it, to better govern the process of importing new workers, to protect those fleeing persecution. "Keeping people in Mexico is not a solution. Giving money to Mexico is not a solution," Salas said. "Impeaching Mayorkas is not the answer," she added of the effort by congressional Republicans to oust Homeland Security chief Alejandro Mayorkas. Shutting down the border isn't an answer, either. Still, Salas figures 2024 won't be the worst year for migrants. "It's better than when (former President Donald) Trump was separating children from their parents," she said. During the past few months, the coalition has seen a steady increase in migrants arriving in San Antonio, most from Venezuela but also smaller populations of Hondurans, Guatemalans and Haitians. Few stay long. San Antonio is a transit hub. They pass through on their way to somewhere else. Other agencies and groups come to their aid, including Catholic Charities and the Mennonite Church. What the interfaith volunteers do largely amounts to whatever they can stuff into a backpack — a first aid kit, a water bottle, a sandwich — and "travel navigation," a little geography lesson that explains where they are, where they'll stop along the way and how long it will take to get where they're going. Once in a while, they can provide more, including lodging if a migrant requires hospitalization and his family needs to stay a few days. Its advocacy committee on immigration reform met Monday night to stay informed, Salas said. "We follow through politically," she added. Salas worries about asylum-seekers who have become a business for Mexican cartels, and about those who stay in Texas. "The whole South isn't safe, but Texas is the most unsafe," she said. Salas foresees harsher immigration policy ideas from Biden in the run-up to November. But what she most fears is a Trump reelection, another dismantling of the system that helps process asylum-seekers and a renewed family separation policy. And she worries about the financial strains on her own group and others doing such work. Funding streams are being squeezed, shifted to cities led by Democrats where GOP governors are moving immigrants by the tens of thousands. The work of the Interfaith Welcome Coalition won't change much in 2024 or the long term, at least not until Congress passes immigration reform. A presidential election pushes that goal further into an uncertain future. Until then, the volunteers will stuff backpacks with a little humanitarian aid and a few kind words at the bus station.
- ❖ Source: [https://expressnews.com/columnist/elaine-ayala/article/san-antonio-interfaith-volunteers-expect-migrant-18597866.php?utm_campaign=CMS%20Sharing%20Tools%20\(Premium\)&utm_source=share-by-email&utm_medium=email](https://expressnews.com/columnist/elaine-ayala/article/san-antonio-interfaith-volunteers-expect-migrant-18597866.php?utm_campaign=CMS%20Sharing%20Tools%20(Premium)&utm_source=share-by-email&utm_medium=email)

New York City built a migrant tent camp on a remote former airfield. Then winter arrived

By Philip Marcelo and Anthony Izaquarre, NPR, January 11, 2024

- ❖ When New York City officials erected a sprawling tent complex on a remote former airport in Brooklyn to house asylum-seeking migrants this fall, many of the recent arrivals and their advocates questioned the wisdom of placing thousands of people in a flood zone, miles from schools and other services, just as winter set in. Those worries became reality this week when forecasts of a storm packing drenching rains and punishing winds forced a hasty evacuation Tuesday of the complex built on Floyd Bennett Field's Runway 19. Nearly 2,000 people, many of them families with children, were loaded onto city buses just as the storm hit and sent to a nearby high school, prompting school administrators to close the building and switch to remote classes for students the next day. The situation quickly became a flashpoint in the national debate over migrants entering the country's southern border. Conservative politicians and pundits seized on the issue, and the school received threatening phone calls. It also renewed criticism over how New York and other big cities are responding to the immigration surge, with many turning to makeshift accommodations to house the growing numbers. Chicago, which had used police stations and airports to temporarily house migrants, is now turning to city buses as a stopgap. Migrants in Massachusetts have had to bed down in airport lounges, hospital waiting rooms and churches. Earlier this week, New York City began enforcing 60-day limits for migrant families on stays in city shelters.
- ❖ Source: <https://apnews.com/article/new-york-migrants-brooklyn-floyd-bennett-field-5a1c7c5b31b60731150d81e7b456e55c>

Border Patrol official says migrants drowned before agents were blocked by Texas guardsmen

By Benjamin Wermund, Washington Bureau, January 16, 2024

- ❖ A top Border Patrol official said three migrants who died crossing the Rio Grande near Eagle Pass on Friday [January 12] had already drowned when agents received a distress call from Mexico, countering initial claims that the woman and two children had drowned after state soldiers blocked federal agents from reaching them. Still, Robert Danley, the chief patrol agent in the Del Rio sector, said in a sworn statement that Texas soldiers blocked Border Patrol officers from getting to two other migrants who were struggling in the river Friday night. Those migrants were rescued by a Mexican airboat and were suffering from hypothermia. The statement was submitted late Monday [January 15] as part of the Department of Justice's plea for the Supreme Court to restore federal access to a stretch of the border the state took over last week. It is the most detailed account yet of the deaths, which sparked outrage over the weekend, and it appears to corroborate key aspects of the Texas Military Department's account of the incident. The military department said late Sunday that "claims that TMD prevented Border Patrol from saving the lives of drowning migrants are wholly inaccurate." More broadly, the DOJ has argued that the state's takeover of Shelby Park in Eagle Pass is preventing Border Patrol from monitoring a critical 2.5-mile stretch of the border and keeping agents from responding quickly to emergencies.
- ❖ Source: <https://www.houstonchronicle.com/politics/texas/article/border-patrol-migrant-drownings-18610592.php>

Texas authorities have begun arresting migrants at a public park near the US-Mexico border, official says

By Rosa Flores, Sara Weisfeldt, Aya Elamroussi and Alisha Ebrahimji, CNN, January 18, 2024

- ❖ Texas authorities arrested migrants at Shelby Park in Eagle Pass, Texas, late Wednesday evening [January 17] and charged them with criminal trespassing, marking the first arrests of migrants since the state took control of the area at the US-Mexico border last week, an official said. The arrests were announced by Lt. Chris Olivarez at the Texas Department of Public Safety on social media, where he also posted videos on X showing migrants being handcuffed and taken away by authorities. Single adult migrant men and women were taken into state custody, while migrant families and children were transferred to US Border Patrol, Olivarez said. Migrants arrested for criminal trespassing first face the state charge before they are transferred to US Border Patrol officials, Olivarez said. The arrests took place at Shelby Park and private lands where the landowner granted the state authority to make arrests, Olivarez explained.
- ❖ Source: <https://www.cnn.com/2024/01/18/us/texas-border-patrol-us-mexico-thursday/index.html>

Texas Gov. Abbott wins legal maneuver in Fifth Circuit to keep buoy barrier in Rio Grande

By Jeremy Wallace, Houston Chronicle, January 17, 2024

- ❖ Gov. Greg Abbott has won another victory in the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals to keep his floating buoy barrier in the Rio Grande. In December the court ruled against Abbott in an order that would have forced him to move the barrier from the river. But on Wednesday [January 17], the court granted Abbott's request for a rehearing of the case with the entire Fifth Circuit instead of the three-judge panel that made the initial call. The decision means Abbott will get to keep the buoy barrier in the water at least through May when the new hearing is scheduled to be held. It's a blow to the U.S. Justice Department which initially sued Abbott in July for putting the barrier in the water without prior permission from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, as required by the federal Rivers and Harbors Act.
- ❖ Source: <https://www.houstonchronicle.com/politics/texas/article/fifth-circuit-buoy-lawsuit-rio-grade-18613406.php>