



Written by [David Kelly](#) on January 18, 2024

House Speaker Rejects Senate Border Deal After Meeting With Biden

House Speaker Mike Johnson (R-La) stood firm on securing the border during a meeting at the White House on Wednesday, rejecting President Biden's offer of concessions on a bipartisan border security deal that includes funding Ukraine's war effort.

Johnson [reportedly](#) said after the meeting on the [border deal](#) that what the "Senate is devising doesn't go far enough to end the chaos at the border."

"We must have change at the border," Johnson [said](#). He added that House Republicans "understand the necessity about Ukraine funding," but that the "status quo is unacceptable."

The Senate's proposed border legislation would allow illegal immigrants crossing the border to be eligible for work permits immediately and allow up to 5,000 migrants to cross the border daily.

However, Speaker Johnson [said](#) that "the border deal must include the Remain in Mexico Policy, end catch and release, reform the asylum and parole process, and restart construction of a border wall," all key provisions of [H.R. 2](#), the House's border proposal.

"Those elements are critically important," he said. "You can't choose from among those on a menu and assume that you're going to solve the problem."

The Washington Times [reported](#) that during Wednesday's meeting, "Mr. Biden appeared to move toward the House Republicans' position, perhaps out of desperation to send money to Ukraine or from election-year pressure to address the growing border crisis."

The *Times* continued:

"I will do a big deal on the border," the president said during the Cabinet Room sit-down, according to an account Rep. Jim Himes, Connecticut Democrat, gave to The Associated Press.

Another meeting attendee, Rep. Michael McCaul of Texas, chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee, said Mr. Biden called the border "broken."

"I'm ready to make significant changes to the border," he said, according to Mr. McCaul, who spoke to reporters afterward at the Capitol.

Noting Biden's desire to seek compromise in the emergency funding request for Ukraine and Israel that is tied to border security, Johnson [told](#) reporters, "We are insistent that the elements have to be



Gage Skidmore/Wikimedia Commons
Mike Johnson



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meaningful. The House is ready to act, but the legislation has to solve the problem and that's the critical point."

House Republicans in Congress have blocked emergency funding, threatening to force a partial shutdown of the government if [H.R. 2](#) is not part of any funding deal. They blame Biden's policies for the massive influx of illegal immigrants into the United States.

[According to the Times](#), Johnson "argued that the border must be the 'top priority' for Mr. Biden and Congress. 'We understand that there is concern about the safety, security [and] sovereignty of Ukraine, but the American people have those same concerns about our domestic sovereignty and our safety and security,' he said."

The White House claimed that Biden was optimistic about the bipartisan talks on the funding request. Reuters [shared](#):

"The President called on Congress to quickly provide additional funding to support Ukraine and send a strong signal of U.S. resolve. The President also made clear that we must act now to address the challenges at the border," the White House said in a statement. "He expressed his commitment to reaching a bipartisan agreement on border policy and the need for additional resources at the border."

Johnson said he wanted clarity on how the war in Ukraine would be brought to an end. "We need the questions answered about the strategy, about the endgame and about the accountability for the precious treasure of the American people," he told reporters after the meeting.

Senate Republicans [warned](#) House members on Wednesday to stop playing political games with the current immigration negotiations "because they won't get a better deal down the road under a potential second Donald Trump presidency."

NBC [reported](#):

"To those who think that if President Trump wins, which I hope he does, that we can get a better deal — you won't," Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., told reporters Wednesday. "You got to get 60 votes in the United States Senate."

"To my Republican friends: To get this kind of border security without granting a pathway to citizenship is really unheard of. So if you think you're going to get a better deal next time, in '25, if President Trump's president, Democrats will be expecting a pathway to citizenship for that," he said. "So to my Republican colleagues, this is a historic moment to reform the border."

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