

IMMIGRATION

# The Biden Administration Is Already Breaking Promises On Immigration

Advisors say it will take months to cancel 'Remain in Mexico,' despite Biden promises to end it on 'day one.'

By LORELEI LAIRD

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*(Photo by Drew Angerer/Getty Images)*

The bar was low when I voted for Joe Biden. My top goal was to get Donald Trump out of the White House and put a grownup back in charge. That seems to be proceeding as planned.

Another goal was to undo the extensive damage that the Trump administration has done to the basic human rights of immigrants. I had every reason to expect that Biden would do this

asylum-seekers to wait months in dangerous parts of northern Mexico before they are even permitted to make an asylum claim.



For some reason, the Biden transition team is backpedaling on ending it. Just before Christmas, incoming domestic policy advisor Susan Rice and incoming national security advisor Jake Sullivan gave [a detailed interview to EFE](#), a Spanish-language wire service (like the AP), that included a lot of comments about immigration. Some of those comments are deeply disappointing. Take Sullivan's answer when the interviewer asked how soon "remain in Mexico" will be canceled:



MPP [the Trump administration's Orwellian name for the program] has been a disaster from the start and has led to a humanitarian crisis in northern Mexico. But putting the new policy into practice will take time. The current administration dismantled much of the necessary capacity to ensure the safe and orderly processing of migrants. We need time to increase processing capacity and to do so consistent with public health requirements.

Or Rice's answer to a similar question about the pandemic-related public health order that the Trump admin used to keep asylum-seekers out. The order has so little legal ([or public health](#)) basis that a federal judge in November [ordered the Trump administration to stop](#), although they've [apparently been ignoring that order](#):



Processing capacity at the border is not like a light that you can just switch on and off. Migrants and asylum seekers absolutely should not believe those in the region peddling the idea that the border will suddenly be fully open to process everyone on Day One. It will not.

Look, I'll admit that it is going to take some time to rebuild the asylum system, which Trump pretty much set on fire, and modify it to deal with COVID-19. But "processing capacity" was also the Trump administration excuse for Remain in Mexico and the related policy of "metering" which limits the number of asylum seekers CBP will accept on any

capacity." I also doubt that the people who work there have lost all record of how things were done five years ago. This doesn't need to take six months.



ould it. It's not an exaggeration to say that lives are at stake. Parts of northern Mexico are dangerous that [the State Department tells Americans not to go there](#). Most of the people who appear at the border asking for asylum are extremely poor, so they're not waiting it out in hotels; they often live in tent cities where they lack basic hygiene and are sitting ducks for [crime](#) and [COVID-19](#). This (intentionally, I'm sure) [incentivizes people to try crossing illegally](#), which has a decent chance of [killing them](#), and allows the government to tar them as "criminals" and steal their children if they're caught. It's an obscene [human rights violation](#) with [no basis in the law](#).

I hate with every fiber of my being that my tax dollars are were used to create this situation. I voted for Biden because I thought that provided my best chance of ending it. And — despite the gleeful criticisms they are now facing from the left — I still think so. Dragging a center-left president left is clearly more possible than attempting to reason with an authoritarian racist who hates facts. But this interview shows that it's going to take some work.

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*Lorelei Laird is a freelance writer specializing in the law, and the only person you know who still has an "I Believe Anita Hill" bumper sticker. Find her at [wordofthelaird.com](http://wordofthelaird.com).*



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