

Bob Vander Plaats: America is better than Biden's border policy

Commentary by Bob Vander Plaats

In a June 2018 New York Times column, I criticized then-President Trump for enforcing a policy that separated children from their families at the U.S. southern border. Governments, I wrote, should never divide the nuclear family, our most fundamental societal unit, except under extreme or abusive circumstances.

So it would be hypocritical of me not to call out President Biden for effectively doing the same.

Under Biden's current, selective enforcement of Covid-19 border policy, parents know that if they illegally cross into the U.S, they will be sent back as Covid-19 risks. But if they send their children across alone, America will keep them. The result for families facing kidnapping, violence, and destitution in Mexico's crowded border cities and camps is an agonizing decision no parent should have to make: divide the family, sending their children across the border alone, or risk their child's death on the Mexico side.

"Biden has so far left a Trump-era Covid-19 emergency policy in place, which allows U.S. authorities to expel almost all undocumented migrants seeking entry," BBC News reports. "But unlike Mr Trump, Mr Biden has decided not to refuse entry to migrant children or teenagers. Now, hundreds of migrant children are crossing the border each day, and thousands of minors have been detained in holding facilities at the country's southwest border."

U.S. border agents are now encountering undocumented migrants

at our southern border at the highest rates seen “in at least a decade,” the New York Times reports. And, according to Politifact, the number of unaccompanied children has seen an exponential spike in just the few months Biden has been in office.

According to CNN.com, nearly 5,500 unaccompanied children are currently being held in Customs and Border Protection facilities “akin to jail-like conditions,” while the Department of Health and Human Services is struggling to house over 12,500 – with projections to need an additional 34,100 beds to keep up with increasing demand through September. What’s more, nearly half of those children in Customs and Border Protection custody are being held for longer than the maximum of 72 hours allowed by law.

In my column calling out Trump, I asserted that whether we agree or disagree with the federal government’s border enforcement policies, “We can all call on our government to do better. We can demand that the government deliver justice consistent with our values.”

During Trump’s administration, many of us did call on our government to do better. Money.com published a list of CEOs – including me, Facebook’s Mark Zuckerberg, Tesla’s Elon Musk, Apple’s Tim Cook, and more – who publicly spoke out against separating families at the border.

Now I challenge those same CEOs, and other public voices, to demand Biden do better, too. Do not allow politics to come before people. Separating families at the border under the banner of “zero tolerance” was wrong, and so is dividing them under the banner of Covid-19.

I believe America is a better country than this. And whether Trump or Biden is president, I still believe it. It’s time to act like it. It’s time to do better.

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