

# Blueprint

**TO:** Interested Parties  
**FROM:** Blueprint  
**DATE:** Feb. 7, 2024  
**RE:** **The Border Blame Game Message Test**

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*This Blueprint message test was informed by an online sample of 1,009 respondents fielded over web panels on Feb. 6 to Feb. 7 and weighted to education, gender, race, respondent quality, and 2020 election results. The margin of error is +/- 4.4. The full toplines can be found [here](#).*

- ✓ President Biden running in support of the deal beat Trump running against the deal 51-49 (winning independents 54-46).
- ✓ After hearing about the deal and fallout, Biden trust increases +1 overall and +10 with independents. House Democrat trust increased by +4 (+10 among independents) and Senate Democrats +3 (+4 among independents). House Republican trust remains unchanged and Senate Republican trust increases (+4), +3 among independents.
- ✓ A Democrat running in support of the deal beat a Republican who opposed the deal 51-49 (with 51-49 among independents), while a Democrat who opposed the deal running against a Republican who opposed the deal lost 45-55 (losing independents 42 to 58).
- ✓ Voters say that if Congress passes border security legislation, they will give the most credit to Biden and Democrats (45%) over Republicans and Trump (25%), suggesting there is immense upside to changing the law.

## TOPLINE FINDINGS

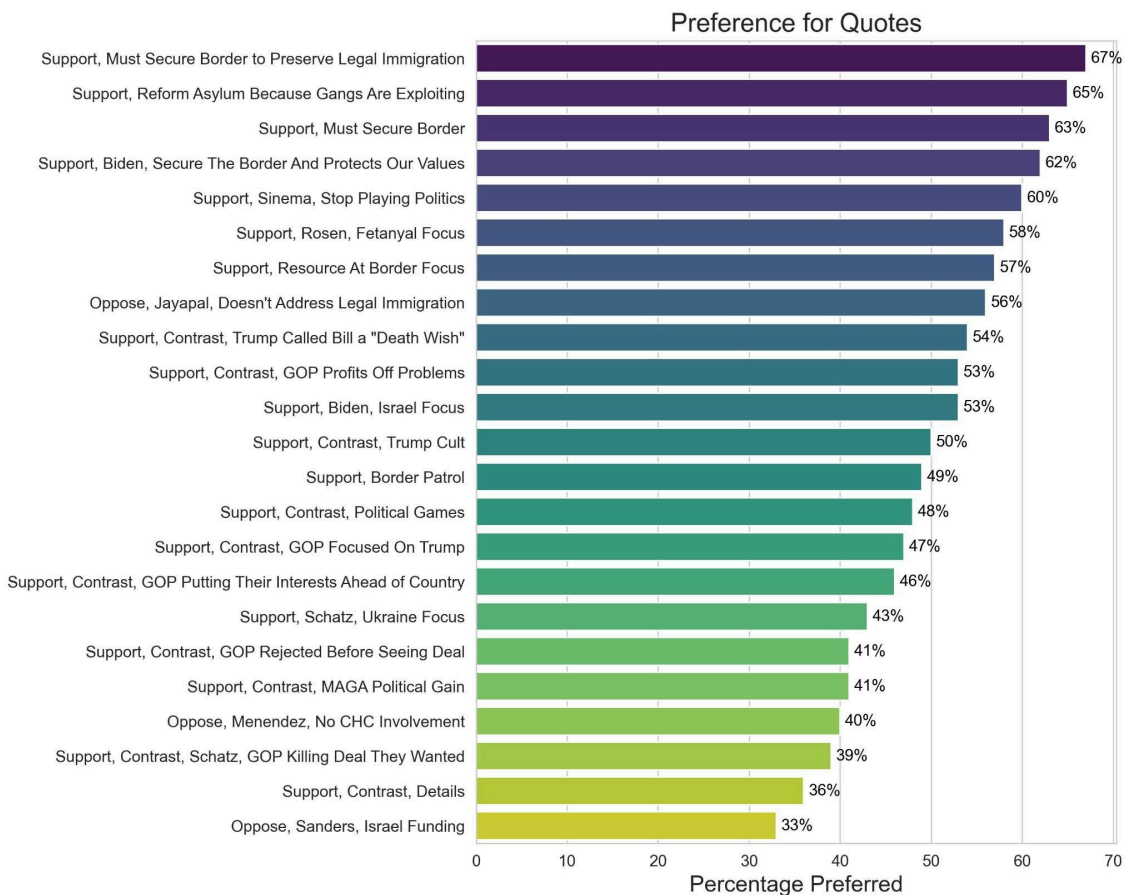
- Republican fumbling on the border gives Democrats a unique opportunity to seize the issue. However, Democrats must bear in mind that we enter this issue with far less trust among voters on immigration and the border. Democrats that message aggressively, and perhaps uncomfortably, on this issue can seize the advantage.
- The current situation increases Democratic trust on the issue of the border. However, we have been on the wrong side of public opinion on the issue for some time, which has only hardened over the last year. We need to seize the opportunity to win a lasting advantage.
- The messages opposing the deal performed dramatically worse than messages in support of the deal.
- Public attitudes on the border and immigration are quite draconian. We must understand how right-wing the public is to properly craft messaging.
- We believe that Democrats should consider advancing additional immigration policy proposals and using Executive authority to make material progress on the border.

## TOP MESSAGES

On the whole, the non-contrast messages performed slightly better. The best three are:

- I support this deal. We need to secure the border and end the flood of illegal immigration, which is exploiting our broken asylum system. We are a nation of immigrants, and I support legal immigration, but we cannot have a legal immigration system without a secure border.
- I support this deal. Transnational gangs, drug cartels, and human traffickers are abusing our asylum system and we need to restrict eligibility. We need more judges so that we can deny false claims more quickly and end the practice of millions of asylum seekers flooding our cities. This bill will fix our broken and exploited asylum process.
- I support this deal. It will make our country safer, make our border more secure, and treat people fairly and humanely while preserving legal immigration, consistent with our values as a nation. It would give the President a new emergency authority to shut down the border when it becomes overwhelmed.

**\*\* See full message test results below and corresponding table at end of memo for full message text\*\***



## TOP CONTRAST MESSAGES

Although the contrast messages tested slightly worse (likely due to Republicans being less likely to select them), these messages tested strongest:

- I support this deal. This deal will secure our border and strengthen our fight against fentanyl. Republicans are opposing it because Trump said the deal would be a “death wish,” for the Republican Party politically, not because of the merits of its policies. We cannot play politics with the lives of people on the border.
- I support this deal. This deal will secure our border and strengthen our fight against fentanyl. Republicans showed their hand; they have no interest in solving the issue, only politically benefiting from the problem.

## PUBLIC OPINION LANDSCAPE

- Voters do not trust Democrats on immigration and the border. Biden has -10 trust on the border (-26 with independents), Trump has -2 (-17 among independents), Senate Republicans are -8 (-28 among independents), House Republicans -6 (-24 independents), House Democrats -10 (-31) and Senate Democrats -11 (-25).
- 43% of voters say Biden is far more liberal than they are on the border (13% somewhat more liberal, while 35% say Trump is far more conservative (10% somewhat). 42% say Trump is close to their views on the border, only 28% say the same about Biden.
- Voters have quite draconian views on immigration. By a 59% to 41% margin, voters said border security was more important than “the humane treatment of immigration.” Only 26% thought treatment of immigrants and refugees at the border is “too harsh,” while 31% said it was about harsh enough and 43% said “too soft.”
- By a 36-point margin, “having a secure border” (68%) was more important than “being a nation of immigrants” (32%).
- However, 53% of voters prefer addressing both legal and border security at the same time, rather than focusing on the border first (47%).

## BALLOT TEST

- A Democrat running in support of the deal beat a Republican who opposed the deal 51-49 (with 51-49 among independents), while a Democrat who opposed the deal running against a Republican who opposed the deal lost 45-55 (losing independents 42 to 58).
- President Biden running in support of the deal beat Trump running against the deal 51-49 (winning independents 54-46).

## FALLOUT

- After hearing about the deal and fallout, Biden trust increases +1 overall and +10 with independents. House Democrat trust increased by +4, including +10 among independents and Senate Democrats by +3 (+4 among independents). House Republican trust remains unchanged and Senate Republican trust increases by +4 (+3 among independents).
- Voters say that if Congress passes legislation, they will give the most credit to Biden and Democrats (45%) over Republicans and Trump (25%), suggesting there is immense upside.
- By a 33-point margin (50% to 17%), voters support Democrats passing a stand alone immigration bill over holding out for a broader deal. We believe that Democrats should continue to push for a border security bill to drive home the narrative. Most voters will need to hear more before changing their opinions.

# # #

#	Code	Full Message
1	Oppose, Menendez, No CHC Involvement	I oppose this deal, because members of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus were not involved in the negotiations. I cannot support a plan that directly impacts millions within Hispanic communities and will forever reshape America's immigration system without any meaningful opportunity for input from those of us who know best the pulse of our immigrant communities.
2	Oppose, Sanders, Israel Funding	I oppose this deal. For the sake of the Palestinian people and our own standing in the world, we must not provide another dollar for the Netanyahu war machine.
3	Oppose, Jayapal, Doesn't Address Legal Immigration	I oppose this deal. We have clear evidence that shows the way to reduce border crossings is to establish legal pathways, including the ability for migrants to apply to come to the U.S. in their home countries, and increase resources to provide orderly processing at the border and of visa backlogs. No amount of tough rhetoric or enforcement-only policies will change that reality.
4	Support, Contrast, Political Games	I support this deal. This deal will secure our border and strengthen our fight against fentanyl. Democrats are ready to make a deal; Republicans are only ready to play political games. The American people can see what's happening and aren't fooled by their smoke and mirrors.
5	Support, Contrast, GOP Focused On Trump	I support this deal. This deal will secure our border and strengthen our fight against fentanyl. Democrats are working hard to solve this problem and do what's right for the country; meanwhile, Republicans are more concerned with doing what's right for Donald Trump.
6	Support, Contrast, GOP Profits Off Problems	I support this deal. This deal will secure our border and strengthen our fight against fentanyl. Republicans showed their hand; they have no interest in solving the issue, only politically benefiting from the problem.

7	Support, Contrast, Details	I support this deal. By opposing this deal, Republicans are opposing an increase of ICE detention capacity, hundreds more ICE deportation officers, Border Patrol agents, and USCIS asylum officers, and a dramatic increase in the number of deportation flights.
8	Support, Contrast, Schatz, GOP Killing Deal They Wanted	I support this deal. I've never seen anything like what is happening among the Republican Party. They demanded a border security deal, negotiated a bipartisan deal giving them what they wanted, and then killed it.
9	Support, Border Patrol	I support this deal. It has the backing of the border patrol, who are the brave men and women dealing with the border crisis.
10	Support, Biden, Secure The Border And Protects Our Values	I support this deal. It will make our country safer, make our border more secure, and treat people fairly and humanely while preserving legal immigration, consistent with our values as a nation. It would give me, as President, a new emergency authority to shut down the border when it becomes overwhelmed.
11	Support, Contrast, GOP Rejected Before Seeing Deal	I support this deal. It's a bipartisan solution that House Republicans have rejected before they even saw the language of the deal. Republicans say there is a crisis at the border and then reject out of hand the best solution we have.
12	Support, Schatz, Ukraine Focus	I support this deal. The fate of the free world is on the line in the war in Ukraine, and whether or not the United States continues to step up to help Ukraine fight back against Putin's unrelenting assault will define our leadership on the global stage for generations to come.
13	Support, Sinema, Stop Playing Politics	I support this deal. There is a crisis at our border, and our bipartisan border security package fixes it. Now, senators must make a decision: pass our package and solve the crisis or accept the status quo, do nothing, and keep playing politics while our system breaks and our communities continue to suffer.
14	Support, Biden, Israel Focus	I support this deal. This agreement also provides Israel with what they need to protect their people and defend itself against Hamas terrorists. And it will provide life-saving humanitarian assistance for the Palestinian people.
15	Support, Contrast, MAGA Political Gain	I support this deal. This deal will secure our border and strengthen our fight against fentanyl. Biden has a plan to secure the border, but MAGA Republicans are blocking it for political gain.
16	Support, Contrast, Trump Cult	I support this deal. This deal will secure our border and strengthen our fight against fentanyl. Congressional Republicans are acting like cult members, doing whatever their leader Donald Trump wants. They are following him, not what the American people want.
17	Support, Contrast, GOP Putting Their Interests Ahead of Country	I support this deal. This deal will secure our border and strengthen our fight against fentanyl. Trump and Congressional Republicans aren't interested in solving the problem, they are putting their own personal interests and cynicism over the nation's well-being
18	Support, Reform Asylum Because Gangs Are Exploiting	I support this deal. Transnational gangs, drug cartels, and human traffickers are abusing our asylum system and we need to restrict eligibility. We need more judges so that we can deny false claims more quickly and end the practice of millions of asylum seekers flooding our cities. This bill will fix our broken and exploited asylum process.
19	Support, Resource At Border Focus	I support this deal. We need more money to hire border patrol and immigration agents, hire more judges to speed the immigration process, and strengthen our defenses on the southern border. This bill provides the resources we need to ensure order at the border.
20	Support, Must Secure Border	I support this deal. We need to secure the border, manage immigration into our country, and fix our broken asylum system. We are a nation of laws, and that means we must secure our border.

21	Support, Must Secure Border to Preserve Legal Immigration	I support this deal. We need to secure the border and end the flood of illegal immigration, which is exploiting our broken asylum system. We are a nation of immigrants, and I support legal immigration, but we cannot have a legal immigration system without a secure border.
22	Support, Contrast, Trump Called Bill a "Death Wish"	I support this deal. This deal will secure our border and strengthen our fight against fentanyl. Republicans are opposing it because Trump said the deal would be a "death wish" for the Republican Party politically, not because of the merits of its policies. We can't play politics with the lives of people on the border.
23	Support, Rosen, Fentanyl Focus	I support this deal. The situation at our southern border is nothing short of a crisis, law enforcement is overwhelmed by the unprecedented surge of migrant crossings, and communities across Nevada and the nation are being overwhelmed by the flow of deadly drugs like fentanyl. It's past time we take common sense steps to secure the border and keep fentanyl from getting into our country.