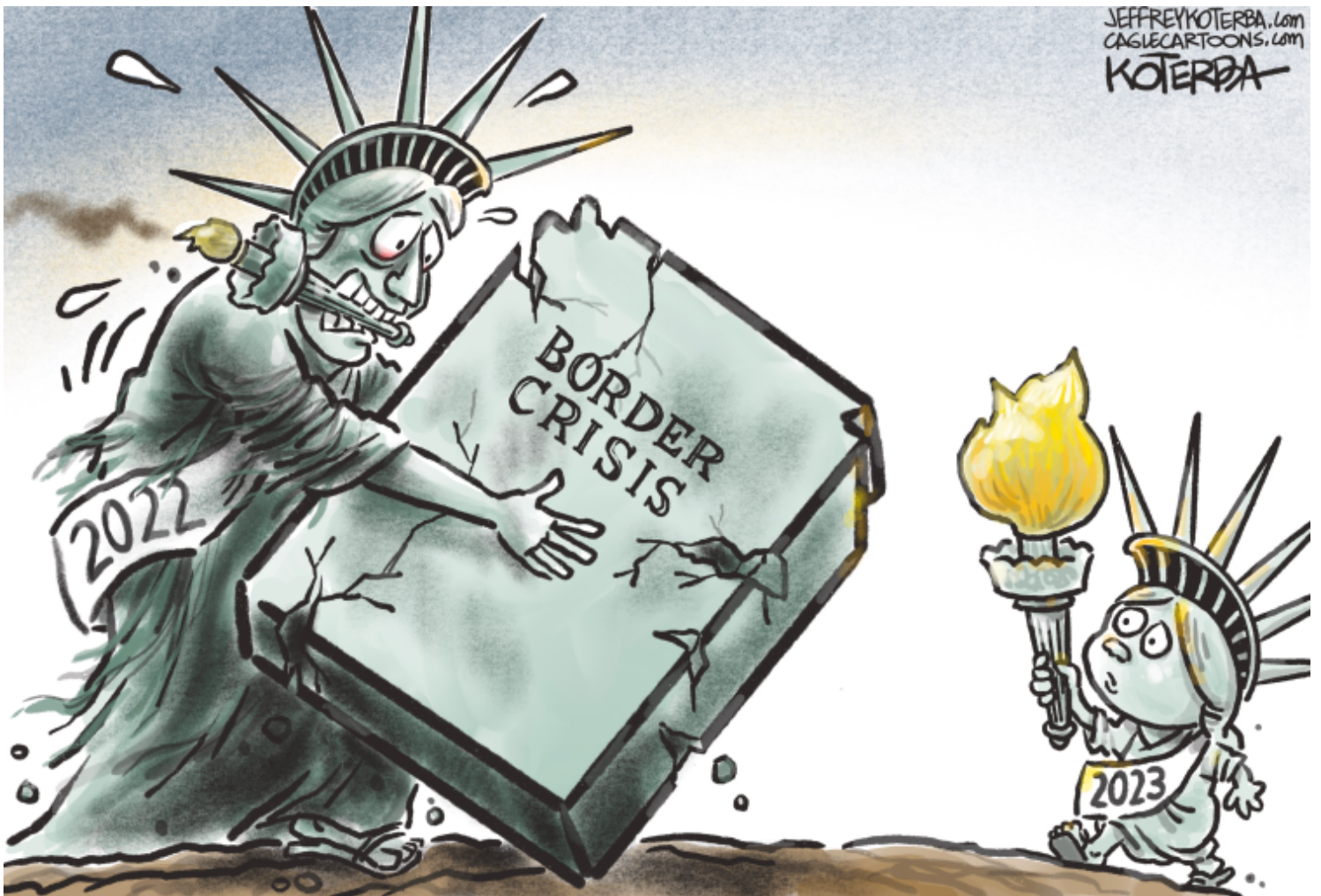


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BIDEN WILL HAVE TO FACE REALITY ABOUT BORDER SITUATION

by Carl Golden on January 4, 2023



Entering the second half of his first term, President Biden faces a hostile, Republican-controlled House of Representatives intent on curbing what they perceive as the administration's continued tilt to the far left.

Majority Leader Steve Scalise previewed Republican priorities dealing with spending, inflation, energy production, abortion regulations, crime and global economic competitiveness.

Scalise included the issue on which the administration is increasingly vulnerable – immigration and border security – not so much for policies and programs put in place, but for the perception it is totally bereft of ideas to deal effectively with the record-setting level of asylum seekers crossing the southern border.

Fearful of alienating its progressive left wing and its demands for loosening immigration restrictions and abolishing Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), the administration's response has ranged from denial, to minimizing it, ignoring it, blaming Congress and the prior administration, repeating falsehoods, shifting and often conflicting explanations.

It's been a contradictory mash up of indecision and paralysis seemingly in the hope the economic and humanitarian crisis created by the unprecedented surge in immigration will somehow cure itself and disappear.

Since its outset, the administration has undercut its credibility by refusing to describe the border emergency as a "crisis" (referring to it as a challenge, a situation, a problem, etc.) while clinging stubbornly to the border is "closed" or "secure" narrative – characterizations used repeatedly and without apparent embarrassment by Vice President Kamala Harris, Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro Mayorkas and White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre.

With a record 2.4 million unauthorized crossings in fiscal 2022 which ended in September and an average of 230,000 per month in October and November, the official administration line is farcical.

When the vice president was designated the point person on immigration, she quickly realized it was politically fraught and distanced herself from it, failing to visit the region and choosing other pursuits which took her from one friendly audience event to another where she was unlikely to be asked about the border crisis.

Mayorkas seems out of his depth and frequently appears befuddled when questioned by Congress and doggedly toes the administration line claiming border security.

As press secretary, Jean-Pierre has little choice but to advance the narrative, even insisting falsely that Biden had visited the border since assuming office. She appears fond of arguing that the administration inherited an unworkable immigration system and former president Donald Trump bore responsibility for the crisis.

Granted, as the voice of the administration in responding to the media, Jean-Pierre is expected to reflect the official position of the White House, but it's become increasingly untenable and starkly at odds with reality.

Border state Democrats in Congress – most notably Arizona Sens. Mark Kelly and Krysten Sinema – have been outspoken in their criticisms, citing a lack of interest on the part of the Administration and a refusal to understand the extent of the economic and social disruptions in communities faced with accommodating the surge in immigrants.

Two Republican governors – Texas' Greg Abbott and Florida's Ron DeSantis – have responded to the Administration's failure to act by sending busses and planes of migrants to self-declared sanctuary cities in the north, accusing officials there of hypocrisy for objecting while remaining silent on the hardships endured by communities in their states.

Democratic accusations that the governors were guilty of heartlessly using migrants as political pawns in a political stunt were not totally unfounded, but Abbott and DeSantis set out to drive home a point and were willing to accept the consequences of doing so.

In his outlook for the new Congress, Scalise called for legislation to restore "operational control" of the border by denying entry to certain migrants and to notify

(ICE) as well as local law enforcement if a person in the country illegally attempts to purchase a firearm.

With Democrats in control of the Senate, the outlook for the Republican bills is problematic, but border state Democrats cannot afford to appear opposed to a tougher stance on immigration.

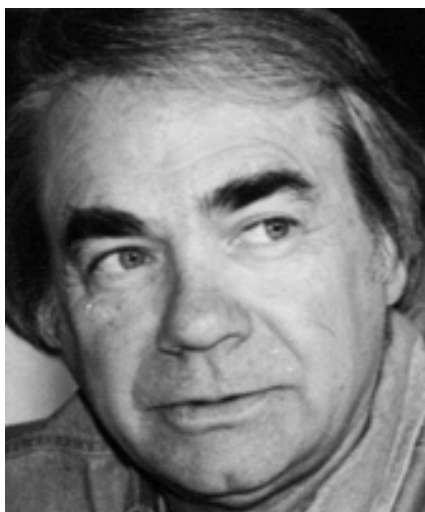
It's been said numerous times in numerous contexts that "hope is not a strategy," a message Congress may deliver to the White House to open 2023.

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