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Wind Of The Spirit

Immigrant Resource Center, N.J.

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Biden Has Drawn a Line Our Senators and Representatives Must Not Cross

For weeks, the worst-kept mystery in Washington DC has been what's in the "deal" being "negotiated" by a handful of Senators to trade short-term military funding desired by President Biden for permanent damage to American's system of welcoming new arrivals in desperate need, and protecting those who are already a longstanding part of our country's multicultural fabric.

Yes, the "deal" has been negotiated in secret, with not one member of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus or anyone representing the immigrant community or any constituency of color in the room. But it has been obvious from the start that no stakeholders are being consulted and that the outcome will reflect no compassion to millions of current and new Americans, or any rational consideration except for political calculation.

President Biden ended the mystery by issuing a statement this evening — when he presumably thinks the news cycle is dormant and the nation isn't looking — in which he wholeheartedly endorses this "agreement" that no one has seen, but makes clear that it gives him "a new emergency authority to shut down the border" which he will "use the day I sign the bill into law." What he's referring to is the return of Title 42, the violation of our own asylum laws and international treaty obligations that he campaigned on ending.

"For everyone who is demanding tougher border control, this is the way to do it," the president goes on to say. The people who have been demanding this are the MAGA fringe. What sensible people with a consistent moral compass have been calling for is adherence to the lawful right of migrants to present themselves for asylum at our border; paths to citizenship for the millions of people who have been denied a full place in the society they pay taxes into and provide essential services for; funding to the cities across the country doing their duty to shelter and welcome the families being shipped there as political pawns; and expedited work authority in an economy that has millions of jobs unfilled.

The President thinks he will make the border issue "go away," and following it out the door will be any voter or other supporter who ever trusted the pro-immigration values he claimed to run on the first time. He has in fact helped millions of human beings secure a place in the US through his parole programs. These were selective, and included arbitrary (and unlawful)

burdens of what type of travel you can afford and where you come into the country; even so, they provided a model of orderly immigration managed by the government, and demonstrated how many millions of American citizens were eager to step up and help with sponsorship and welcome. This was a success to build on, but the President himself not only won't defend it, but is ready to trade it away too.

Because to be clear, this is not about concessions forced upon him by any powerful opponents. The President opens his statement by saying "two months ago, I instructed my team to begin negotiations with a bipartisan group of Senators to seriously, and finally, address the border crisis." He might have thought twice about this "final solution" rhetoric, given the explicit white-supremacist foundations of those characterizing waves of immigrants no different than most of our forebears as an "invasion," but the cruel imperative is clear. Still, this does not stop him from disingenuously framing the denial of shelter and due process as a sensible and humane program, calling it "the toughest and fairest set of reforms to secure the border we've ever had in our country." Sweeping, hasty and permanent abandonment of our human rights obligations, in the name of electoral gain, is the farthest thing from "fair."

Many of our elected representatives have insisted on reserving comment on this bill because its contents have remained undisclosed. We feel that the President has now told everyone all we need to know. We call on Senators Booker and Menendez, and Representatives Sherril, Kim, Watson Coleman, Menendez, Pallone, Payne Jr., Pascrell, Norcross and Gottheimer, to REJECT this "deal" and return to a rational and humane debate amongst their colleagues, and a meaningful dialogue with affected communities and expert organizations, on serious immigration policies that preserve and advance American ideals.