

Democrats capitulate to Trump, agree to wall funding

By Eric London
12 February 2019

Just 15 minutes before Donald Trump was scheduled to address a rally in the Texas border town of El Paso, Senate leaders announced that the Democrats and Republicans had reached a deal to avert another government shutdown, set to begin on at 12:01 AM Saturday.

The agreement is a complete capitulation by the Democratic Party to Trump's fascistic agenda. According to initial news reports, it includes \$1.4 billion in funding for a steel wall and no lowering of the cap on the total number of immigrants who can be detained on any given night.

Senior congressional aides claim the deal would allow Trump to expand Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) detention by over 20 percent. The *Hill* noted that the agreement provides "enough flexibility to reach the president's requested level of 52,000 beds."

According to CNN, the deal also includes an additional \$1.7 billion in increased spending for the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), which includes ICE and Customs and Border Protection (CBP).

Between chants of "USA! USA!" and "Build the wall!" at his El Paso rally, Trump denounced "socialism" and the "radical left" and claimed he was not yet aware of the details of the agreement. "We probably have some good news," he said, referencing the fact that the Democrats were likely to cave on calls for a cap on immigrant detentions.

"We're setting the stage," he added, indicating that he would be able to move billions of dollars to build his wall regardless of the total amount officially appropriated by Congress. "We're building the wall, anyway. The wall is going to be built."

White House Chief of Staff Mick Mulvaney told

"Fox News Sunday" over the weekend that any deal would provide Trump with political cover and administrative flexibility to allocate billions of dollars as he sees fit: "We'll take as much money as you can give us and then we will go off and find the money someplace else legally in order to secure that southern barrier. But this is going to get built with or without Congress," he said.

Democratic House Speaker Nancy Pelosi has agreed to the deal and the Democratic Party is wheeling out its pathetic excuses for its inevitable capitulation. Democratic House Appropriations Committee Chairman Nita Lowey, who is one of the leaders of the bipartisan joint House-Senate conference committee that worked out the agreement, meekly said, "We did the best we could."

Democratic Senator Patrick Leahy added, "There's not a single one of us who's going to get every single thing we want, but nobody does. But we are going to get what is best for the United States."

The capitulation means that thousands more will die in the desert after being forced to cross in more inhospitable terrain, and tens of thousands more will be detained in the US as they await immigration hearings.

Also Monday, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled in favor of the Trump administration's wall construction plans, issuing a decision finding that the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996 (IIRAIRA) gives the Department of Homeland Security the legal power to construct wall fencing regardless of environmental regulations.

The 2-1 ruling by the most "liberal" federal appellate court was issued by Judge M. Margaret McKeown, a Clinton appointee, and Jacqueline Nguyen, an Obama appointee.

HIRAIRA, the legislation that grants the president the power to build border walls, was passed by unanimous voice vote in the Senate and by almost the entire current Democratic Party leadership, who then served in the House, including James Clyburn, Charles Schumer, John Lewis, Steny Hoyer, Nancy Pelosi and former congressman Luis Gutierrez. Bernie Sanders also voted for the legislation.

In his speech yesterday, Trump touted the construction of a border wall in El Paso, claiming it had reduced crime in the city. Construction of the wall in El Paso was completed by Barack Obama in 2009.

As Trump was speaking, thousands of soldiers and federal agents swarmed Eagle Pass, Texas in an operation that CBP is calling a “show of force” aimed at deterring Central American refugees from crossing the Rio Grande. More than 100 federal police vehicles lined a one-mile stretch of the border at Eagle Pass over the weekend.

Maverick County, Texas Sheriff Tom Schmerber told the *Washington Examiner*: “To me, it’s like showing force. It would give a message to the immigrants that want to come illegally through Texas that Texas is always prepared and has a lot of manpower at the border--that they would go to another state.”

This “show of force” has dangerous symbolic significance.

Under the Clinton administration in 1993, El Paso Sector Border Patrol Chief Sylvestre Reyes (who later became a Democratic congressman and co-chairman of Hillary Clinton’s 2008 presidential campaign) deployed hundreds of agents in their vehicles in a similar “show of force” along a section of the border between El Paso and Ciudad Juarez. This was the opening salvo of what became known as “Operation Hold-the-Line”--the first major military border operation on the US-Mexico border.

As a result of the Clinton administration’s militarization of the border cities, immigrants now cross through the desert. Up to 20,000 immigrants have died attempting to cross the border since Operation Hold-the-Line was enacted in El Paso. In 1994, Clinton Attorney General Janet Reno announced the initiation of a similar program to construct a border wall to separate San Diego from Tijuana.

On the other side of Eagle Pass, where the newest “show of force” is taking place, 1,800 refugees are

being detained in Piedras Negras under subhuman conditions by the Mexican government of President Andrés Manuel López Obrador (known as “AMLO”).

Hundreds of Mexican police in riot gear and soldiers armed with assault weapons are guarding the detention center, prohibiting the immigrants from leaving. AMLO has agreed, on behalf of the Trump administration, to detain the Central American asylum seekers whom the US refuses to let stay in the US pending the adjudication of their asylum applications, in clear violation of international law.

The Mexican paper *Reforma* described the conditions in the Piedras Negras detention center. It wrote: “Since their arrival in this border city, the close to 1,850 immigrants of the caravan are held inside the former Macesa maquiladora [factory] and its exits are guarded.” The immigrants “have to stay within a perimeter delineated by a wire mesh fence with barbed wire on top. The immigrants are watched by soldiers and federal police, who stay on their feet by the fence with anti-riot gear.”

Meanwhile, tens of thousands of workers in the maquiladoras of Ciudad Juarez are discussing taking strike action, as strikes spread in Matamoros, located across the border from Brownsville, Texas. It is this emerging movement of the working class that embodies the fight to unite workers in the US and Mexico against the militarization of the border by both the US and Mexican ruling class and all of the political parties in both countries.

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