

Senate Democrats provide key votes to fast-track Trump's mass detention plan

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In a bipartisan 61-35 vote Friday, Senate Democrats joined with Republicans to invoke cloture and end debate on the “Laken Riley Act.” The Senate is scheduled to hold a final vote on the bill Monday, all but ensuring that it will be one of, if not the first bills Donald Trump signs into law after he takes the oath of office that same day.

Ten Democrats joined Republicans to vote in favor of the bill, even after Republicans had rejected amendments offered by Democrats, including some that would have shielded immigrants currently facing domestic violence and human trafficking abuse from deportation. The 10 Democrats who voted to overcome the filibuster include Nevada senators Catherine Cortez-Masto and Jacky Rosen; Michigan senators Gary Peters and Elissa Slotkin; New Hampshire senators Maggie Hassan and Jeanne Shaheen; Arizona senators Mark Kelly and Ruben Gallego, as well as Georgia’s Jon Ossoff and Virginia’s Mark Warner.

One of the few amendments that passed, in a robust 70-25 vote, was one offered by far-right Texas Senator John Cornyn which expands the list of criminal offenses for which immigrants must be detained to include charges of assaulting police. Only 23 Democrats and two independents that caucus with them, Angus King (Maine) and Bernie Sanders (Vermont), voted against it. It is expected that the Senate will vote to approve the amendment, at which point the bill would be sent back to the House for final approval before being sent to Trump for his signature.

After Republicans rejected Democratic amendments, Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (Democrat-New York) released a statement pledging to still cooperate with their “Republican colleagues” to carry out Trump’s mass deportation operation.

“We Democrats want to see our broken immigration

system fixed,” Schumer said on Friday. “We worked with Republicans last year on the strongest immigration bill in a decade. While I do not support this particular bill, I stand ready to work with both sides to pass smart, effective, tough and common sense legislation to secure our borders and reform our immigration system.”

For over a decade Trump has used Hitlerian language to demonize and attack immigrants, blaming them for all of the ills created by modern capitalist society. These attacks are aimed at dividing the working class and deflecting from the fact that it is the financial oligarchy that Trump is a part of, and whose profit interests he represents, which has hoarded all the wealth created by the working class to waste on themselves and on imperialist war.

During this most presidential recent campaign, Trump escalated his attacks on immigrants and repeatedly promised that if reelected, he would carry out the “largest deportation operation” in US history. Throughout the campaign, Trump used the tragic killing of 22-year-old Georgia college student Laken Riley to demonize all immigrants as murderers and rapists.

Speaking at a pre-inauguration rally Sunday in Washington D.C., Trump’s neo-Nazi senior policy adviser Stephen Miller said that after he is inaugurated Monday, Trump will sign “an executive order ending the border invasion, sending the illegals home and taking America back.” Hinting at a military incursion into Mexico, Miller said the Trump administration “is going to mean the eradication of the criminal cartels and the foreign gangs that are preying on our people.”

Miller added, “And it’s going to mean justice for every American citizen who has lost a loved one to an illegal alien. It’s going to mean justice for Laken Riley.

... It's going to mean justice for every precious soul stolen from us by Joe Biden's open border."

With Friday's vote, Democrats have made themselves party to the deportation operation and have ensured that the person they were characterizing as a "fascist" less than three months ago now has legal authority to begin carrying out his authoritarian campaign pledges.

The legislation, as the WSWS noted earlier this month, greatly expands the power of police agencies to detain and deport immigrants, who have merely been accused, not convicted, of petty crimes. It requires federal immigration police to take custody of immigrants simply accused of theft, burglary or shoplifting totaling \$100.

Current federal law already requires immigration police to detain and/or deport immigrants who have been convicted of serious violent crimes, such as murder and rape, as well as some drug offenses. The new law would require incarceration of a much larger proportion of the roughly 12 million undocumented persons currently in the United States.

Democratic staff on the Senate Appropriations Committee, in a memo leaked to Semafor last week, estimated the cost to implement the legislation would be \$83 billion over three years. The staff estimated that 118,500 new detention beds would have to be constructed to house incarcerated persons before they are deported. This would also necessitate hiring another 40,000 police and guards and a 25 percent increase in removal flights. Officials with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) estimated that the costs during the first year would be \$26 billion.

In addition to expanding the scope and scale of the already sprawling US prison-industrial complex which, in 2024, incarcerated over 1.9 million people in more than 6,000 facilities, according to PrisonPolicy.org, the bill would also empower states to challenge federal immigration policy if the state can show that it has suffered more than \$100 in financial harm.

Under the legislation, states could bring any number of lawsuits challenging the detention and deportation of either individual immigrants, or entire countries, inundating courts with lawsuits in the process. Right-wing state attorneys general could bring lawsuits challenging the visas of every person from a country or region that is targeted by Trump or the Republicans.

Far from opposing Trump's attacks on the democratic rights of the working class, Democrats, even before losing the presidential election, were joining in on the attacks. During the presidential campaign, Vice President Kamala Harris promised to continue building the Southern border wall and work with Republicans to pass a new \$20 billion border police state bill.

Following Trump's November victory, Democrats have completely dropped any reference to Trump's fascistic personality and tendencies and are quickly acquiescing to his program. The Laken Riley Act was co-sponsored in the Senate by Pennsylvania Democrat John Fetterman and Arizona's Ruben Gallego. Friday's vote follows an earlier procedural vote in which 32 Senate Democrats joined with Republicans to initially advance the bill. At the time, Democrats claimed that they would introduce amendments to protect Dreamers (immigrants brought to the US as children) and others in the US currently here through no fault of their own.

While no amendments are forthcoming, Politico reported on Sunday, citing anonymous sources "familiar with the matter," that Trump is expected to sign executive orders declaring a national "emergency" at the Southern border and another ordering the start of "mass deportations of immigrants in the US illegally."



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