

Opening Statement of Ranking Member Mark DeSaulnier (CA-10)

Subcommittee on Health, Employment, Labor, and Pensions Hearing

The Impact of Biden's Open Border on the American Workforce

2175 Rayburn House Office Building

Wednesday, September 13, 2023 | 10:15 a.m.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I am pleased to be back here after spending time in our districts. While I hope we can have a productive and respectful discussion today, I would be remiss if I did not note that this hearing will focus on issues related to immigration and border security, both of which are outside the subcommittee's jurisdiction.

As members of this subcommittee, our job is to uphold and create legislation that benefits the American workforce. For the vast majority of Americans, earning a paycheck is how families are able to pay their bills. Since the 1970s, however, the highest-income households in America have pulled ahead further and further, and even more dramatically after Covid than average working families. This is the problem of economic stagnation in America is the extreme concentration of greed and wealth in this country not immigration. The Congressional Budget Office shows that between 1989 and 2019, the total wealth held by families in the top 10 percent increased by 240 percent, while the other 90 percent barely increased at all.

Unfortunately, I am concerned that we are using our time here today to talk about dangerous rhetoric that fuels racial and prejudiced conspiracy theories rather than focus on the important, extremely important work for American families in the workforce.

By contrast, the Biden Administration and Congressional Democrats have made our priorities crystal clear. We have prioritized the needs of workers and their families and delivered meaningful solutions to grow our economy from the bottom up and the middle out.

Last Congress, Democrats passed the *Inflation Reduction Act*, which invested in our workforce and the economy while lowering costs for working families. Moreover, because of the *Inflation Reduction Act*, families are saving on energy bills and prescription drug costs, thus giving them more purchasing power.

Additionally, the *American Rescue Plan Act* provided a solution to the multiemployer pension crisis, saving the pensions of over one million workers and preventing the closure of thousands of businesses.

Today's hearing is also happening as we race closer to the deadline to fund the federal government – an obligation I know we all take seriously as Members of Congress, or I hope we do.

Regrettably, once again, we find ourselves in a precarious situation, with some in the Majority threatening to hold our economy hostage and risk a government shutdown unless they pass cruel and regressive immigration policies and severely weaken critical federal programs that protect workers. I am unaware of anyone who believes in open borders other than the marketing people by a small percentage of the Majority party, I hope.

Research by the Joint Economic Committee confirms that these dangerous tactics only lower consumer confidence, reduce economic output, and interrupt essential government operations, including federal employee pay.

It is important to note that the last three government shutdowns cost the government at least \$338 million in additional processing costs and late fees. Also, Fitch Ratings downgraded the US credit rating for this exact type of brinksmanship on the debt ceiling.

Instead of wasting time on political games, it is my hope that the Congressional Republicans can join Democrats, as they have historically in the past, in backing legislation that builds on our unprecedented economic development while also ensuring American workers have access to fair pay, adequate benefits, and workplace safety.

The *Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act*, which will repair and upgrade old infrastructure around the country, as well as the *CHIPS and Science Act*, which will further boost our economy and revive our manufacturing workforce, are examples of what can happen when we move past this divisive rhetoric and focus on what matters most to those we serve.

As we enter the next legislative session, let us put politics aside and focus on improving the lives of American workers and their families.

Thank you Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

