



# TRUMP BLASTS BIDEN OVER LAKEN RILEY'S DEATH AFTER BIDEN SAYS HE REGRETS USING TERM 'ILLEGAL' - ASSOCIATED PRESS

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President Joe Biden said Saturday that he regretted using the term "illegal" during his State of the Union address to describe the suspected killer of Laken Riley, as his all-but-certain 2024 GOP rival, Donald Trump, blasted the Democrat's immigration policies and blamed them for her death at a rally attended by the Georgia nursing student's family and friends.

Biden expressed remorse after facing frustration from some in his party for the use of the term to describe people who arrived or are living in the U.S. illegally.

"I shouldn't have used illegal, it's undocumented," he said in an interview with MSNBC's Jonathan Capehart taped in Atlanta, where the president was meeting with small business owners and holding a campaign rally.

Trump, campaigning in Rome, Georgia, at the same time, blasted Biden for the comments.

"Joe Biden went on television and apologized for calling Laken's murderer an illegal," he said to loud jeers and boos. "Biden should be apologizing for apologizing to this killer."

The back-and-forth underscored how Riley's murder has become a flashpoint in the 2024 campaign and a rallying cry for Republicans who have seized on frustrations over the Biden administration's handling of the U.S.-Mexico border amid a record surge of migrants entering the country. An immigrant from Venezuela who entered the U.S. illegally has been arrested and charged with her murder.

Trump was joined at his rally by Riley's parents, her sister and friends and met with them before he took the stage. They were welcomed with a standing ovation and large signs handed out by the campaign that featured Riley's photograph and the words "SAY HER NAME!"

"REMEMBER OUR ANGELS," they read on the back.

"We share your grief," Trump told them in his remarks.

Trump, in a lengthy speech that lasted nearly two hours, hammered Biden on the border and for mispronouncing Riley's name during his State of the Union address this past week.

"What Joe Biden has done on our border is a crime against humanity and the people of this nation for which he will never be forgiven," Trump charged, alleging that Riley "would be alive today if Joe Biden had not willfully and maliciously eviscerated the borders of the

United States and set loose thousands and thousands of dangerous criminals into our country."

Trump, who had made immigration a centerpiece of his campaign, has repeatedly vowed to mount the largest deportation in the nation's history if he wins.

He contrasted his rhetoric with Biden's — "I say he was an illegal alien. He was an illegal immigrant. He was an illegal migrant" — and accused Biden, who has long been seen as an empathetic leader, of having "no remorse. He's got no regret, he's got no empathy, no compassion, and worst of all, he has no intention of stopping the deadly invasion that stole precious Laken's beautiful American life," Trump said.

Biden earlier this year bucked activists within his party by agreeing to make changes to U.S. immigration law that would have limited some migration. The deal that emerged would have overhauled the asylum system to provide faster and tougher enforcement, as well as given presidents new powers to immediately expel migrants if authorities become overwhelmed. It also would have added \$20 billion in funding, a huge influx of cash.

The changes became part of a short-lived bipartisan compromise that was quickly killed by Republican lawmakers after Trump made his opposition known.

After the deal's collapse, Biden has been considering taking executive action to try to curtail migration, but he's expressed frustration that his lawyers have yet to devise options that they believe can pass muster with federal courts. Biden, instead, has insisted that Congress take up the measure again, trying to flip the script on Republicans and arguing they are more interested in being able to talk about the issue in an election year than taking action to fix it.

Among those who attended the rally was Republican Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene, who represents Rome in Congress and yelled at Biden during Thursday's State of the Union to "Say her name!"

The phrase was popularized by civil rights activist Kimberlé Crenshaw in 2015 following the death of Sandra Bland, a 28-year-old black woman who was found dead in a Texas jail cell a few days after she was arrested during a traffic stop.

Crenshaw and others began using the phrase to draw attention to cases in which Black women are subject to police brutality. In 2020, the hashtag #SayHerName helped put more public scrutiny on the shooting death of Breonna Taylor, a 26-year-old Black woman in Louisville, Kentucky, who was shot and killed in her home during a botched police raid.

The term "illegal" was once common but is far less so today, particularly among Democrats who more fully embraced immigrant rights' issues during Trump's presidency.

Biden used the term Thursday night during an exchange in which the president pressed Republicans in his address to pass the bipartisan border security deal. Greene, a stalwart Trump ally, then shouted at the president to say Riley's name, adding she was killed "by an illegal."

"By an illegal, that's right," Biden responded immediately, before appearing to ask how many people are being killed by "legals." He added, "To her parents, I say: My heart goes out to you. Having lost children myself, I understand."

Speaking to Capehart, Biden said, "Look, when I spoke about the difference between Trump and me, one of the things I talked about in the border was his, the way he talks about vermin, the way he talks about these people polluting the blood. I talked about what I'm not going to do. What I won't do. I'm not going to treat any, any, any of these people with disrespect. Look, they built the country."

Trump campaign senior adviser Chris LaCivita slammed Biden for apologizing for his language and not to Riley's family.

"He should be apologizing to the family as opposed to apologizing for the word that he used which is an accurate description," he told reporters before Trump took the stage, blasting the response as "tone deaf" and highlighting the candidates' "two very distinct differences in approach on the border invasion."

Biden's expression of regret marked a shift from a day earlier, when Biden had hesitated when asked by reporters if he regretted using the term, saying, "well I probably," before pausing and saying "I don't" and appearing to start saying the word "regret."

Price reported from Rome, Georgia. Colvin reported from New York. AP White House Correspondent Zeke Miller in Wilmington, Delaware, contributed to this report.

