

G.O.P. Congressman: We Need to Wake Up After Minneapolis

By Mike Lawler, The New York Times, Jan. 27, 2026

Mr. Lawler, a Republican, represents New York's 17th Congressional District.

The deaths of Renee Good and Alex Pretti in Minneapolis this month were tragic and preventable. No matter where you stand on immigration enforcement, the shootings show that what the country has been doing is not working.

The loudest voices on each extreme have retreated to their usual corners. They have an interest in keeping our immigration problems unsolved and politically divisive. Everyone else must see that Congress and the president need to embrace a new comprehensive national immigration policy that acknowledges Americans' many legitimate concerns about how the government has conducted immigration policy.

That starts with reviewing how we got here. During President Joe Biden's term, lenient border policies and foolish state and local laws offering shelter and benefits to illegal immigrants resulted in millions of migrants entering the United States, overwhelming our cities, our legal and public education systems, and our social safety net.

Americans demanded action, electing Donald Trump in 2024. Now, just months from the November midterm elections, polls suggest that Americans are increasingly concerned about the Department of Homeland Security's enforcement operations, including in Minneapolis. Americans do not want chaos. They want a common-sense bipartisan solution.

During the Biden and Trump administrations I have helped write bills with anyone from any party who would collaborate with me on finding that solution. A workable plan requires a secure border. Thankfully, the Trump administration has effectively stopped illegal border crossings and deported, by its own count, over 675,000 illegal immigrants. Any balanced immigration policy would preserve and expand on this progress — but humanely.

Agents from Immigration and Customs Enforcement and Customs and Border Protection are conducting forceful operations in American communities. They should reassess their current tactics.[...]

Collaboration should start now. The F.B.I. and state and local departments should together investigate the deaths of Renee Good and Alex Pretti. A transparent and accountable process that protects the rights of everyone involved, including the deceased and their families, would ensure all relevant evidence is collected and bolster the public's confidence in immigration enforcement and our justice system.

Congressional scrutiny would help, too. Lawmakers should immediately convene hearings with the leadership of Homeland Security, ICE, the Border Patrol and Citizenship and Immigration Services — not to provide a platform for partisan grandstanding, but to promote an honest national conversation about immigration enforcement.

After tensions have calmed, Congress can then piece together the rest of an immigration plan that settles the issue. Along with building on Mr. Trump's border policies, a realistic plan would provide a path to legal status — not citizenship — for long-term illegal immigrants without criminal records. This path would be rigorous and fair, and it would aim to keep families together. Fair means those who benefit would face mandatory work requirements, forgo public assistance and pay fines and any back taxes they might owe.

Congress would have to change the legal immigration system, too. Lawmakers should create a system in which applicants' merit matters more than it does now, better accounting for the country's economic needs. I am the husband of a naturalized citizen. My wife came to the United States in pursuit of a better life. I will always fight to provide opportunity to others who have the potential and desire to contribute to America's success.

We must be a nation of laws but also one that offers dignity and compassion to those seeking to pursue their American dream. The events of the past several years show that there will be no Democratic or Republican solution on immigration, only an American one.

After 40 years of failure — and, now, two more deaths that did not need to occur — my colleagues and I should feel only more profoundly the responsibility to rebuild trust and act in America's common interest.