

NBC's *Today*

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7:01:24 a.m. [TEASE]

15 seconds

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Border Bind]

PETER ALEXANDER: Border bind. The wait grows for thousands of migrants after the Supreme Court ruled to keep Title 42 in place.

TIMOTHY PEREA: These people are afraid.

ALEXANDER: The Trump-era pandemic policy remaining in effect as officials scramble to prepare for a huge new wave.

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7:12:25 a.m.

3 minutes and 54 seconds

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Supreme Court Keeps Trump-Immigration Policy]

KRISTEN WELEKR: Now we want to head to our southern border and the Supreme Court handing down a ruling that would keep the controversial Title 42 policy in place by a tight 5-4 vote until they can take up the case and make a permanent decision next June. It comes as the immigration crisis at many border towns around the country has reached a breaking point. Sam Brock is in El Paso, Texas for us with the reaction. Sam, good morning to you.

SAM BROCK: Yeah, Kristen, good morning. That is certainly true here in El Paso where city officials say their chief concern right now is food and shelter for the population that is here, no matter how it fluctuates. And, Kristen, this decision means it's going to be another six months before we have resolution. Now, this is a shelter I'm standing next to right now. The line so long last night they couldn't accommodate everyone. Look at what you're seeing on the streets right now. People once again bundled up, shoulder to shoulder up, all up and down the block. And, Kristen, it is going to be at least another six months before these folks know whether or not they can even apply for asylum and yet, still, they tell me they would rather be in this position here than back in their home country. As swarms of people gathered for food and collected supplies in this overburdened section of El Paso, news of a Supreme Court decision keeping Title 42 intact for six more months ricocheted through this community, sparking mostly disappointment. "We're sad — very sad — they told us they were going to give us an opportunity, we feel betrayed," Stephen tells me. His friend, Kind Rojas (sp?), an electrician, jumps in. "I don't think this is fair because at the end of the day we are all human beings," he says. Yet, moments later when I ask if they'd rather be here or back in their home country of Venezuela — [SPEAKING SPANISH] — widespread agreement, yes. They say at least here we eat bread with ham and cheese. In Venezuela, you might only afford the bread. The Biden administration quickly

announcing it will “comply with” this ruling as the legal curveball comes as El Paso officials expect another lengthy stretch of uncertainty.

DEPUTY EL PASO, TEXAS CITY MANAGER MARIO D’AGOSTINO: If they continue to get in without being undetected, we’re going to continue to have this population grow within our community and so that is concerning.

BROCK: El Paso is coordinating with local churches and non-profits to provide three meals a day to hundreds of people. Timothy Perea is part chef, part pastor, part translator, explaining why so many don't have a place to sleep.

PEREA: These people are afraid. You know, there’s plenty of shelter. El Paso has done a great job in providing the shelter. But the majority of these people don't have the proper documentation.

BROCK [TO PEREA]: If you’re one of the countries that is blocked from seeing asylum by Title 42, does that mean you cannot get into a shelter?

PEREA: Correct.

BROCK: And that won't change anytime soon for the hundreds of people sleeping on the streets here from Venezuela. Though one man puts it all in perspective. “Everything in the name of love. The past is history. Tomorrow is a mystery and we’re in the present. With the present, you make the best out of the future.”

WELKER: And those images of people sleeping behind you, Sam, really underscore the urgency of the situation. So, as we await the Supreme Court's final decision, what does the Biden administration plan to do in the meantime to deal with this crisis?

BROCK: Yeah, Kristen, the Biden administration says they are advancing preparations right now to secure the border in a humane and orderly way in their words, assuming that Title 42 eventually is going to be lifted. They say it’s health policy, not immigration policy and there were no expectations it would stay in place indefinitely. But that said, they believe Congress needs to step in right now, Kristen, with this situation — this broken immigration system, whether it’s on the enforcement side or the immigration side, cannot be fixed if Congress does not intervene and so far, they have shown no signs of being able to accomplish that theme. Kristen.

WELKER: That's for sure. Challenge looming over Washington for decades. Sam. Thank you so much.

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8:04:57 a.m.

1 minute and 59 seconds

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Supreme Court Keeps Trump-Immigration Policy]

JACOB SOBOROFF: Meantime, the Supreme Court's granted an emergency request to keep the Trump-era pandemic policy Trump-era immigration restrictions in place until it can take up the case next June. This leaves migrants at the southern border and communities dealing with the influx in limbo. NBC's Sam Brock is in El Paso with more on the fallout. Hey, Sam, good morning.

BROCK: Hey, Jacob, good morning. Yeah, clearly communities like El Paso are reeling and this just means it's now going to be six more months before there is any resolution on this topic as the high court is taking up the idea whether 19 Republican-led states intervene in Title 42 policy. And it comes, Jacob, as there is abject human distress playing out on the streets behind. You'll see all of these folks who are sleeping in blankets, some of them are pretty small. Jacob, we're talking about families, children, loved ones, all of them shoulder to shoulder out here. I'm standing next to a shelter. The line was so long last night they couldn't accommodate everyone. But as we look at the scope of this, there is an important point to make. Most of these people are from Venezuela. And the reason that's relevant is because, under Title 42, Venezuela is one of those countries where the asylum seekers are blocked automatically. So, these folks even if they wanted to go to a shelter, cannot right now. But almost to a person they tell me they would rather been in a situation like this, sleeping on the streets in temperatures that have dipped in the 20s and 30s than go back to their home country. Now, as far as talking to folks yesterday, trying to understand their reaction to this, many of them told me that they feel a sense of disappointment, certainly fear for their families and they were hoping to get an opportunity now to apply for asylum in this country, not to wait another six months. So, as far as the Biden administration's response to this, they're going to comply with the order. They say they're getting preparations underway right now to secure the border in a humane and orderly way, assuming, Jacob, that Title 42 ultimately is lifted. They say this is a health policy, not an immigration policy, couldn't stay in effect indefinitely. But the plea right now from the administration to Congress is to step in and act because this situation right now cannot continue to fall on the backyard and doorsteps of cities like El Paso. They has to be, they say, comprehensive immigration reform, Jacob.

SOBOROFF: A tough scene to see as always. Sam Brock in El Paso, thanks.