



Texas Border Security & Immigration Reform Statement

We, the undersigned, call upon our Texas Congressional delegation to vigorously exert its leadership in promoting the principles listed below in order for the federal government to most cost-effectively meet its obligation of securing the U.S. - Mexico border. These principles have been developed solely through the input of those who are the most knowledgeable on the subject - the men and women who live, work, do business, and enforce the laws in the border region of Texas:

Personnel

The Border Patrol is understaffed to perform its current mission. All 20 Border Patrol sectors, especially the nine southern sectors along the U.S. - Mexico border, are understaffed, not just with agents, but also with support personnel. The Border Patrol's total currently authorized staffing level is slightly over 20,000. As a very conservative effort, provided they get the technology and infrastructure they need, a significant increase in that number is still needed to better secure the border. Even with the best, most sophisticated technology and infrastructure, many more agents are necessary to adequately respond to the traffic that the infrastructure and technology is slowing and detecting, which is called "the last 50 feet" to apprehension by the Border Patrol.

There also needs to be a process to relocate agents from one sector to another in response to shifts in traffic. If one sector, for example, Tucson, sees a significant reduction in traffic and another sector, for example, the Rio Grande Valley, sees a significant increase in traffic, there needs to be a mechanism to quickly realign staffing to address the busier area.

The Border Patrol also needs a very large increase in their mission support personnel. Just as in the military, where it takes a large support contingent to put troops on the battlefield, the Border Patrol needs a significant increase in support personnel (administrative personnel, mechanics, etc.) to assist field agents.

At the ports of entry, 5000 additional Customs agents are needed to ensure that illegal activities are adequately prevented and separated from legitimate trade and travel.

Securing the border also requires hiring enough judges to process the thousands of families and unaccompanied minors who surrender to Border Patrol and Customs officials seeking asylum. The current backlog of more than half-a-million cases requires at least double the number of immigration

judges. As an end to the “catch and release” policy is fully implemented, an increased number of personnel must also be hired to staff expanded detention facilities.

Technology and Equipment

Today's Border Patrol needs technology and equipment to address today's significantly evolved and networked criminal enterprise. They need communications equipment and technology to monitor criminal networks and to provide persistent surveillance along the border and in border transit zones. They need both permanent remote video surveillance systems (RVSS) and portable high altitude “look-down” technology, including many more aerostats like the ones currently being used. Not only does the Border Patrol need significant increases in air support/flight hours, it also needs to maintain tactical control over Air and Marine Operations (AMO) resources. AMO personnel assigned to the border region need to have the resources to respond to each sector’s support requirements. Currently, no sector has sufficient flight hours of air support.

The Border Patrol needs cutting-edge lethal and non-lethal weapons and vehicles. They need the right type of vehicle to operate in very rugged and remote areas and they need an overall increase in their vehicle fleet. The Border Patrol also needs more boats and maritime equipment to intercept illegal crossings on the river and along the coastlines.

Tactical Infrastructure

To function properly, the Border Patrol needs sufficient tactical infrastructure which includes the right type and amount of border fencing/terrain management to discourage or, at a minimum, to slow down illegal entry into the US.

The Rio Grande River must be better utilized as a natural barrier by moving Border Patrol up to and onto the water. The Border Patrol maritime force is highly successful at preventing illegal river crossings when they have boats on the river. More boats and agents should be deployed for that purpose. On the riverbanks, Salt Cedar and Carrizo Cane obscure sightlines and hide criminal activity and should be eradicated. In addition, all-weather roads are needed to provide Border Patrol agents access to the river.

Tactical infrastructure also includes facilities. Many Border Patrol facilities cannot accommodate the current agent levels (which, as mentioned, are not sufficient) and many checkpoints are not equipped to handle the traffic. Many buildings were built decades ago and need to be replaced immediately. At the ports of entry, we need improved infrastructure to stop human and drug trafficking while facilitating

legitimate trade and travel. More and expanded detention centers are needed to house detainees who previously would have been part of the “catch and release” system.

Management of Labor and Drug Demands

No effort to secure the border can be fully successful without SIMULTANEOUSLY addressing the huge demand for labor and drugs in this country. Until the realities of those market magnets are mitigated, no amount of security measures will adequately protect our 6,000 miles of borders and 5,000 miles of coastlines. The demand for labor must be managed by first maintaining the status quo policy of no new paths to citizenship, while instituting an E-Verify system that implements bio-metric IDs for all non-citizen workers and providing market-based temporary work visas that meet the demands of our economy that cannot be fulfilled by U.S. citizens. Electronic verification must be used in hiring and to monitor the entry and exit of guest workers. Tough sanctions must be imposed upon employers who hire outside of this new system. Cartel transactions must be further diminished by implementing effective drug abuse prevention and treatment programs and better interdicting money laundering and movement back to the cartels.