



COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Hearing Statement of Chairman Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS)

Triggering a Border Shutdown: Impacts of Trump Policies on Border Communities

April 30, 2019

Today's witnesses are experts on life at the border – they live there and their work brings them into constant contact with events there every day. I am eager to hear about what they are witnessing firsthand, their thoughts on the humanitarian challenge at the border, and the impact of the Trump Administration's border policies on their communities. To say I am concerned with President Trump's and the Department of Homeland Security's misguided, counterproductive actions would be an understatement. No other administration has carried out a policy to deliberately and systematically separate all migrant children from the adults that care for them.

The Trump Administration's family separation policy has irreparably damaged children. The Administration is claiming that reuniting families it separated in 2017 would be "onerous" and could take up to two years. This is outrageous. Equally outrageous is the White House's agenda to cut off avenues of humanitarian relief to people seeking asylum and refuge. The Administration has tried – and failed – multiple times to change our asylum laws on its own, only to be blocked by the courts. To consider levying fees on individuals fleeing dire conditions in their home countries is cruel and completely blind to the reality these individuals are facing. Another example of the Trump Administration's blindness to reality is the President's continued obsession with the wall.

Building it will not stop the majority of dangerous drugs that are coming through our legal ports of entry. Moreover, the President never talks about the American families who will be thrown off the land their family has had for generations. To make matters worse, the President continues to threaten to shut down the border, which would be devastating not just for border communities, but for our Nation's economy. Indeed, the economic consequences for this country would be catastrophic. The Chamber of Commerce in San Diego estimated the five-hour shutdown last November at San Ysidro port of entry cost its 700 businesses at least \$5.3 million. I shudder to think what the fallout would be of ending \$1.7 billion in trade each day. Our border communities have thousands of people who cross the border all the time to go to work, go to school, and see family. There are an estimated 500,000 legal border crossings each day. All of that would grind to a halt if President Trump has his way.

So, I am especially pleased to hear from these witnesses today. They will be able to give us their personal and professional views of the border as people who live there and deal with the impacts of policies set in Washington D.C. on a daily basis. The proposals and actions carried out by the Department to date are inadequate, and sometimes harmful, for actually trying to address the root problems at our southern border. What we discuss today will help the Committee address the issues at the border in a productive manner. Committee Democrats intend to advocate for smart, effective, and humane alternatives to handling this humanitarian challenge occurring at the border.

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