



HOMELAND SECURITY COMMITTEE

Statement of Chairman Michael McCaul (R-TX) Homeland Security Committee

Full Committee Markup

October 4, 2017

Remarks as Prepared

This morning our Committee has gathered to markup the *Border Security for America Act*.

Before we begin however, I would like to extend my thoughts and prayers to all of the victims and the family members who lost a loved one in the horrifying tragedy in Las Vegas Sunday night. This kind of hatred deserves no place in our society. Now is the time to come together and heal as one nation. Going forward, we must stand united and reject this kind of senseless violence.

I'd also like to take a brief moment to recognize the courageous first responders, Coast Guard, National Guard, FEMA, and countless volunteers who continue to work and rebuild communities in Texas, Florida, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands in the wake of recent hurricanes. We are extremely thankful for their dedication to their fellow citizens and we pray that everyone affected can make a full recovery.

Today, we will be reviewing legislation that will protect our homeland by strengthening the security of our borders.

The American people are threatened by international terrorists, human traffickers, drug smugglers, and transnational gangs like MS-13 who try to sneak into our country, bring harm to our communities, and disrupt our way of life. Allowing this to continue is completely unacceptable.

Our southern border is roughly 2,000 miles long. We must do more to keep it secure and this markup will allow us to begin that process.

The legislation before us is a 21st Century, multi-layered approach that authorizes \$10 billion for tactical infrastructure, including the construction of a wall where practical and effective, provides new cutting-edge technology, and empowers the DHS Secretary to take other necessary actions to secure the border.

While physical barriers and advanced technology are important parts of achieving our goal, this bill goes even further. It also provides an additional \$5 billion to improve and modernize ports of entry to better target illegal immigration while facilitating trade, deploys the National Guard on the ground to assist with intelligence operations and aviation support, and ensures the identification of visa overstays with the full implementation of an entry-exit system.

This bill also adds 5,000 CBP Officers and 5,000 Border Patrol Agents. These brave men and women are our strongest assets as they serve on the front lines in the fight to control our border. The additional resources provided in this bill will allow us to defeat drug cartels, stop lethal gang members from infecting our neighborhoods, and help put human traffickers out of business once and for all.

Under the leadership of President Trump, we have already begun to make progress in these areas by cracking down on illegal immigration. And I would like to commend the White House for implementing a stricter vetting process for people traveling to the United States from conflict zones and nations unwilling to meet basic information sharing requirements for the purposes of minimizing the terrorist threat.

In written testimony provided to the Senate just last week, Acting Secretary Elaine Duke highlighted the dangers posed by transnational criminal organizations (TCOs), stating that they “provide a potential means of transferring weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) to terrorists or for facilitating terrorists’ entry into the United States.”

As we have learned in the past, the world’s most dangerous terrorists are only one plane ride away, and they are always testing new ways to penetrate our borders. We will never successfully secure our homeland until we are capable of controlling who can lawfully enter our country.

The issue of immigration brings out a lot of emotion and presents many challenges. Going forward, the best way to prevent these challenges from re-occurring is by securing our border. While we debate and discuss these topics, we must not forget that the United States is the most welcoming country in the world.

However, we cannot allow our adversaries to exploit our generosity. In a time where national security threats grow each and every day, we only endanger the people we are sworn to protect by ignoring the problems along our border.

As a Representative from Texas, I’ve seen these problems firsthand. And as Members of Congress we all have a solemn obligation under Article 1 of the Constitution to protect our homeland and keep the American people safe from anyone who wishes to bring us harm.

Today, we have an opportunity to work together and pass this common-sense bill out of our Committee and move it to the Floor of the House.

We have been talking about border security for many years. Now that we finally have a partner in the White House who has prioritized this issue, it’s time for Congress to do its part and get the job done.

I am proud to acknowledge that this legislation is already co-sponsored by 70 of our colleagues and we have momentum in both Chambers of Congress. Several outside groups have submitted letters of support for this legislation as well. They include the Federal Law Enforcement Association, Border Patrol Union, Border Trade Alliance, and the National Fraternal Order of Police, among others. I ask unanimous consent to enter those letters into the record. Without objection.

Let's work together and get this bill to the President's desk so we can provide the American people with the security they have long demanded and deserve.

I now recognize the Ranking Member, Mr. Thompson.

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