



**HOMELAND SECURITY  
COMMITTEE**

**Statement of Subcommittee Chairwoman Rep. Martha McSally (R-AZ)  
Border and Maritime Security Subcommittee**

*“Stopping the Daily Border Caravan: Time to Build a Policy Wall”*

May 22, 2018

Remarks as Prepared

Last month a caravan of nearly 1,500 migrants was organized by Pueblo Sin Fronteras, also known as People Without Borders, an extremist advocacy group with the stated purpose of “abolishing borders.”

Under the guise of humanitarian action, this group facilitated the movement of a migrant caravan travelling more than 2,000 miles through Mexico toward the Southwest Border of the United States.

The caravan began in Tapachula on the Mexico-Guatemala border, with the express purpose of traveling to the United States and entering our country – be it by illegal entry or utilizing loopholes in our immigration laws.

Our asylum process is broken, rife with fraudulent claims. Individuals who arrive at our border have no need to dodge our border security efforts because our policies make it all too easy. Aliens can simply come to a port of entry or look for a border patrol agent and simply say they have a “credible fear.” Saying these simple words permits aliens to be released into the country around 90% of the time regardless of the merit of such claims.

Once released, aliens are given a notice to appear for a court date years into the future and a work permit after 180 days.

In 2008, DHS asylum officers referred 5,100 cases meeting this credible fear threshold to immigration courts but in 2016 almost 92,000 cases.

The reason for the increase is simple, individuals have learned how to exploit the system.

It should surprise no one that many of those who claim asylum do not even show up to their court date – most likely because their claim was unfounded in the first place.

In order to ensure we maximize our ability to accommodate those seeking to flee persecution we must combat this fraud in order to help those who actually have a legitimate asylum claim who are getting lost in the sea of fraudulent ones.

Another loophole stems from the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act was a well-meaning law, and as the name suggests, was designed to prevent human trafficking.

However, the disparate treatment of children from Mexico and the children from non-contiguous countries like Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador creates a perverse incentive to put young children at risk.

We must end that loophole that puts children in the hands of smugglers who abuse them along the way to the border.

Once these young people arrive, they are vulnerable to gang recruitment, especially the notorious MS-13 given the weakness of the vetting done on those who sponsor these children.

Dangerous gangs such as MS-13 are not the only ones benefitting from these loopholes. Drug cartels control the illicit movement of people and narcotics that cross our borders.

Every single migrant, whether an Unaccompanied Alien Child, Family Unit, or single adult, that illegally crosses the Southwest Border enriches the cartel and assists their growth and lethality.

The number of illegal border crossings during the month of March and April shows an urgent need to address these glaring loopholes in an urgent manner. We witnessed a 300 percent increase from April 2017 compared to April 2018 and a 37 percent increase from last month to this month – the largest increase from month to month since 2011.

The traffickers, smugglers, and extremist advocacy groups are exploiting these weaknesses and putting individuals making the journey at risks as well as Americans who are falling victim to crimes perpetrated by bad actors who are making their way in.

In addition, if we do not address this situation we will be confronted by another generation of DACA-like people in the near future.

When I was in the Air Force, I traveled all over the world, and I saw the desperation and poverty that most Americans cannot even fathom. Countries around the world are dealing with extreme violence, war and gangs.

As human beings, we may be moved to help them through the work of charitable organization and ministry efforts.

But the truth of the matter is that we cannot bring everyone who is suffering here. The very definition of a country is one that controls who and who does not enter.

We are a nation of immigrants and we welcome, with open arms, approximately one million legal immigrants into our country each year. However, we are a nation of laws, and we cannot sit idly by as our borders are overrun by lawlessness.

The time has come to build a policy wall alongside a physical wall to force those seeking to immigrate in the United States to do it the right way, the legal way.

Congress must act to change our immigration policy to end these loopholes.

Last September, the Speaker appointed me and seven other members a working group tasked with addressing this issue. We spent countless hours diving into our broken immigration policies. For the last 9 months we have been working and refining the bill that became the Goodlatte, McCaul, McSally and Labrador bill.

This bill is strong on border security, closes these legal loopholes and ends the insanity on the border. I have received assurance from leadership that this bill will be brought before the House for a vote in June. I look forward to its consideration on the floor

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