



Chairman John Carter

*Subcommittee on Homeland Security
House Committee on Appropriations*

FY 2016 Budget Hearing - U.S. Customs and Border Protection April 23, 2015 Opening Statement As Prepared

Today we welcome Gil Kerlikowske, in his second appearance before our Subcommittee. Commissioner Kerlikowske, welcome...we appreciate you being here and thank you for your willingness to serve DHS and our Nation.

The fiscal year 2016 budget for Customs and Border Protection is \$13.4 billion, an increase of \$803 million above fiscal year 2015. This is the most substantial component increase in the DHS budget, which funds vital national security missions. It is a good budget, however we are under tight budget constraints and must discuss prioritizing CBP's request.

Your budget request also assumes the addition of 2,000 additional CBP Officers from fiscal year 2014. However, CBP is having a difficult time on-boarding the majority of these officers. Currently, only 700 have been hired, leaving over 1,200 to be brought on within this fiscal year. You understand the important national security role these CBP Officer will fill. We can't afford to delay their hiring nor can we afford to let the funds expire.

Similarly, the Border Patrol is 852 agents below the mandated 21,370 agents. This leaves the Subcommittee concerned that CBP isn't able to sustain the existing work force, let alone the mandated floor level of agents. These are urgent problems which must be fixed.

The request also includes a contingency of \$79 million for a potential surge in unaccompanied children. While we understand the numbers are lower than last year, we look forward to hearing your update on the current estimate of UACs.

The request also includes numerous other increases including \$85 million for non-intrusive detection equipment, \$44 million for new fencing in Arizona, \$79 million for facilities sustainment, and \$29 million of electronic visa information system updates. As many of you are aware, our top line numbers were announced yesterday which will make funding these, and many of the other requested increases, difficult. I look forward to working with you over the next several weeks to prioritize funding to the most needed programs.

Lastly, Commissioner, sovereign nations control and manage their borders and sustain the integrity of their immigration systems. These objectives are your duty and I expect nothing less from you, and from the men and women of CBP.

Now, let me turn to our Distinguished Ranking Member for any remarks she wishes to make.

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