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6 A THREAT TO EVERY COMMUNITY:

7 ASSESSING THE SAFETY, HEALTH, AND ECONOMIC

8 CONSEQUENCES OF PRESIDENT BIDEN'S BORDER POLICIES

9 WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 17, 2024

10 House of Representatives,

11 Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations,

12 Committee on Energy and Commerce,

13 Washington, D.C.

14

15 The subcommittee met, pursuant to call, at 2:31 p.m.,

16 in Room 2322 Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Morgan

17 Griffith [chairman of the subcommittee] presiding.

18

19 Present: Representatives Griffith, Burgess, Guthrie,

20 Duncan, Palmer, Lesko, Crenshaw, Armstrong, Cammack, Rodgers

21 (ex officio); Castor, DeGette, Schakowsky, Tonko, Ruiz,

22 Peters, and Pallone (ex officio).

23

24           Also present: Representatives Allen, Bilirakis,  
25 Carter, Curtis, Joyce, Miller-Meeks, Weber; Barragan and  
26 Cardenas.

27

28           Staff present: Kate Arey, Digital Director; Sean  
29 Brebbia, Chief Counsel; Lauren Kennedy, Clerk; Peter Kielty,  
30 General Counsel; Emily King, Member Services Director; Chris  
31 Krepich, Press Secretary; Peter Maris, Research Assistant;  
32 Karli Plucker, Director of Operations (shared staff); Gavin  
33 Proffitt, Professional Staff Member; Austin Flack, Minority  
34 Junior Professional Staff Member; Waverly Gordon, Minority  
35 Deputy Staff Director and General Counsel; Tiffany  
36 Guarascio, Minority Staff Director; Mary Koenen, Minority  
37 GAO Detailee; Will McAuliffe, Minority Chief Counsel;  
38 Constance O'Connor, Minority Senior Counsel; Christina  
39 Parisi, Minority Professional Staff Member; Harry Samuels,  
40 Minority Oversight Counsel; Andrew Souvall, Minority  
41 Director of Communications, Outreach and Member Services;  
42 and Caroline Wood, Minority Research Analyst.

43

44           \*Mr. Griffith. The Subcommittee on Oversight and  
45 Investigations will now come to order. I now recognize  
46 himself for a five-minute opening statement.

47           Today's hearing comes nearly one year after this  
48 subcommittee held a joint field hearing in McAllen, Texas  
49 with the Subcommittee on Health. It presents a chance to  
50 reevaluate the conditions at our southern border, and the  
51 conditions have only further deteriorated since that time.  
52 The implications of the border crisis extend far beyond the  
53 border communities, impacting every aspect of our Nation.  
54 This crisis is not a political talking point, it's a real,  
55 widespread crisis with extensive repercussions.

56           In McAllen, Texas, I highlighted the unprecedented way  
57 this administration operates our borders. We have reached  
58 all-time highs with the number of migrants crossing the  
59 southern border. I further expressed concerns over  
60 President Biden's handling of the bordering, describing it  
61 as brutal and unsustainable.

62           Since then, the Customs and Border Patrol \_ excuse me,  
63 Border Protection, CP \_ CBP have reported for fiscal year  
64 2023 an outstanding 2.47 million encounters at the southwest  
65 border. This is a significant escalation from approximately  
66 450,000 encounters in fiscal year 2020. In December 2023  
67 alone, there was an estimated 302,000 migrant encounters at  
68 the southern border, the highest monthly total ever

69 recorded.

70           This flood of migrants was seen during a visit by  
71 congressional members to the southern border. During this  
72 visit, some members visited a hospital in Eagle Pass, Texas  
73 along the border that is currently providing care for  
74 illegal immigrants. According to one of my colleagues, this  
75 hospital has a total of five ambulances and one is  
76 permanently dedicated to solely transporting illegal  
77 immigrants. That doesn't mean that the others aren't used  
78 for that purpose, but one is dedicated solely to that  
79 purpose.

80           Once in the hospital, these illegal migrants are  
81 prioritized over American citizens due to acuity concerns.  
82 In the end, this is unfair to citizens of this country and  
83 is directly due to the failure of the Biden administration  
84 to secure our southern border. Sadly, this administration  
85 seems to prioritize the health and interest of illegal  
86 migrants over those of its own citizens.

87           Even mayors of cities like New York and Chicago are now  
88 confronting the implications and costs associated with the  
89 influx of illegal migrants that border communities have long  
90 had to deal with. These large cities are struggling to find  
91 resources to address the problem. New York has even started  
92 to force their children to sign up for online classes so  
93 they can house the illegal migrants in the schools.

94           Additionally, the absence of effective border control  
95 has led to a significant influx of drugs, especially  
96 fentanyl and fentanyl analogues into our communities. A  
97 loophole cartels used prior to temporary listing of  
98 analogues to traffic fentanyl into our country was by  
99 creating fentanyl analogues to evade our criminal laws.  
100 Right now, fentanyl analogues are considered Schedule 1  
101 substances but only because of temporary scheduling orders  
102 which expire on December 31, 2024.

103           Representative Latta and my bill, the HALT Fentanyl  
104 Act, passed the House with bipartisan support in May of  
105 2023. It would permanently schedule fentanyl analogues  
106 while allowing research into them to see if there is any  
107 efficacy.

108           Beyond fentanyl, the administration's border policies  
109 have facilitated the abuse and exploitation of migrants,  
110 particularly children. The New York Times has uncovered a  
111 rise in child labor trafficking. Children as young as 13  
112 are being forced into dangerous jobs, often in violation of  
113 federal labor laws. This is done by the sponsors our  
114 government has placed these children with. We have seen  
115 reports of severe injuries and in some cases even  
116 fatalities.

117           The Times reported that over 85,000 children entrusted  
118 to HHS's care have seemingly vanished, lost in a system that

119 fails to protect the most vulnerable. This is due to the  
120 complete and utter failure of HHS to implement proper  
121 vetting processes that include detailed background checks  
122 consisting of FBI background checks and fingerprinting.

123 In September of 2023, HHS proposed a rule regarding  
124 unaccompanied minors. This rule does little to bolster the  
125 vetting process used to place these minors. This rule makes  
126 the vetting process optional to examine living conditions,  
127 conduct background checks, and interview the sponsors before  
128 a minor is placed with them. Optional. Optional. Further,  
129 this rule does nothing to address the collaboration between  
130 state and local law enforcement, local schools, or local \_  
131 state and local child welfare services when a child is  
132 placed with a sponsor.

133 In short, open borders not only endanger American lives  
134 but perpetuate criminal enterprises that exploit these  
135 vulnerable individuals. The Biden administration wants to  
136 ignore the crisis being caused by its border policies. We  
137 had a hearing in July with the Secretary of HHS discussing  
138 the Office of Refugee Resettlement. The committee sent  
139 additional questions for the record to the Secretary and he  
140 still hasn't responded to our questions. It is yet another  
141 example of how this administration tries to ignore this  
142 crisis.

143 The situation at our southern border is simply

144 unsustainable. It is affecting public safety, public  
145 health, and public education. This should not be a  
146 Republican versus Democrat issue. This is an American  
147 issue.

148 [The prepared statement of Mr. Griffith follows:]

149

150 \*\*\*\*\*COMMITTEE INSERT\*\*\*\*\*

151

152           \*Mr. Griffith. I yield back.

153           The chair now recognizes subcommittee ranking member,  
154 Ms. Castor, for her five minutes for on opening statement.

155           \*Ms. Castor. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. America is not  
156 alone in grappling with the challenges of immigration,  
157 people fleeing violence and oppression, fleeing overseas  
158 wars, or the impacts of the climate crisis. These drivers  
159 are forcing millions of people to search for greater safety  
160 and stability for their families.

161           Here in the U.S. Congress, we have a responsibility to  
162 update our laws but have failed to do so for 30 years. We  
163 are spending billions of dollars at the border, but unless  
164 we can come together with bipartisan solutions, we will  
165 continue to grapple with these challenges.

166           Do you know on his first day in office, President Biden  
167 proposed a comprehensive immigration reform package, and the  
168 administration has repeatedly asked for more resources to  
169 secure the border. However, House Republicans have refused  
170 to fund border security at needed levels. In August of  
171 2023, the Biden administration requested an additional four  
172 billion dollars for the border and migration issues,  
173 including 800 million to reduce the influx of fentanyl  
174 across the southern border. House Republicans took a pass  
175 on that request.

176           In October of 2023, the Biden administration requested



177 13.6 billion for border enforcement and migration  
178 management, which included funding to hire 1,000 CBP  
179 officers for fentanyl-related investigations and equipping  
180 southern border ports of entry with detection technologies,  
181 but House Republicans have repeatedly failed to respond to  
182 that request.

183         Meanwhile, across America I think there is a lot of  
184 bipartisan agreement on creating tough but fair pathways to  
185 citizenship which will discourage migrant families from  
186 making the dangerous journey through the Darien Gap. There  
187 is bipartisan agreement out there in the world on the need  
188 to better target human traffickers who lure innocent  
189 migrants with misinformation and false hope.

190         This past weekend, Mexican authorities recovered the  
191 bodies of a woman and two children who had drowned in the  
192 Rio Grande while trying to enter the United States. Federal  
193 agents learned that there were migrants in distress and  
194 asked Texas officials for access to provide aid, but they  
195 were refused. These tragic and inhumane deaths are not  
196 isolated incidents as the International Organization for  
197 Migration documented 686 deaths and disappearances across  
198 the U.S./Mexico border in 2022.

199         Reforming our outdated immigration system would  
200 decrease the number of deaths of people coming to the  
201 southern border and bolster our national security by

202 allowing Border Patrol agents to focus on true threats. One  
203 of the Biden administration's initiatives that is working  
204 that I have seen back home in Florida is the new parole  
205 initiative that allows migrants from Cuba, Venezuela,  
206 Nicaragua, and Haiti to apply outside of the United States,  
207 per strict requirements, to come to our country with  
208 vetting, with a sponsor that is responsible -- financially  
209 responsible.

210         This is an example of using the limited tools the  
211 administration has at its disposal to humanely and justly  
212 address the crisis, but codifying these kind of pathways to  
213 citizenship, pathways to work don't seem to interest my GOP  
214 colleagues. They have refused to give the administration  
215 the resources it needs. They have held funding of the  
216 Federal Government hostage and demanded support for their  
217 cruel and costly immigration package at the cost of getting  
218 real work done.

219         Now this subcommittee held a hearing with Secretary  
220 Becerra after reports emerged about widespread exploitation  
221 of undocumented children in factories across the United  
222 States. But instead of addressing these appalling episodes  
223 of child exploitation, Republicans are pushing budgets that  
224 would slash resources for the very offices tasked with  
225 protecting children from abuse.

226         Similarly, we need bipartisan support for prevention

227 and treatment to cut demand and help Americans struggling  
228 with addiction to combat deadly illicit fentanyl. But  
229 Republicans continue to ignore the facts by incorrectly  
230 linking illicit fentanyl trafficking with undocumented  
231 immigration. Less than one-tenth of one percent of people  
232 who cross the border illegally possess any fentanyl  
233 whatsoever.

234 We also have a labor shortage across the entire  
235 workforce, and it is apparent that America needs immigrants  
236 to reach our economic potential. Republicans should  
237 recognize and celebrate immigrants' countless contributions  
238 to our workforce rather than demean immigrants as burdens.  
239 For example, 25 percent of recent U.S. startups are created  
240 by immigrants.

241 We have important work to do on this Energy and  
242 Commerce Committee: strengthening our pandemic preparedness,  
243 addressing drug shortages, eliminating climate pollution,  
244 protecting our privacy, to name a few. So let's get back to  
245 the real work of effective governing rather than engaging in  
246 political theater in this committee.

247 [The prepared statement of Ms. Castor follows:]

248

249 \*\*\*\*\*COMMITTEE INSERT\*\*\*\*\*

250

251           \*Ms. Castor. So thank you, and I yield back my time.

252           \*Mr. Griffith. The gentlelady yields back. I now  
253 recognize the chair of the full committee, Ms. Rodgers, for  
254 her five minutes for an opening statement.

255           \*The Chair. Thank you, Chair Griffith. America is  
256 less secure today because of President Biden's border  
257 crisis. The administration's failure to enforce the law is  
258 harming the American people. Our open borders have far-  
259 reaching consequences on our Nation's economy, our health  
260 care system, and our education system.

261           The Biden administration's refusal to act is a failure  
262 of leadership to protect and defend our Nation. Americans  
263 faith and trust in their government suffers as a result.  
264 Last December, the Pew Research poll showed that 67 percent  
265 of Americans are not confident in the President's ability to  
266 make wise decisions about immigration policies.

267           Last year, this subcommittee traveled to McAllen,  
268 Texas, where we saw the consequences of unprotected borders  
269 up close. And after witnessing what I saw there, I was  
270 deeply troubled. I had trouble sleeping.

271           We talked with everyday Americans who were struggling  
272 to deal with their new reality of overwhelmed hospitals and  
273 schools. We toured a path by the cartels to smuggle  
274 migrants and illegal drugs into the United States. And we  
275 met with Border Patrol personnel who shared how frustrated

276 they are with this administration's policies which are  
277 making their jobs nearly impossible.

278 In the year since our hearing, the crisis has only  
279 worsened. The Biden border crisis is allowing records  
280 amount of fentanyl to pour into our communities. More  
281 people than ever are dying from fentanyl poisoning. It  
282 remains the leading cause of death for Americans between  
283 ages of 18 and 45. A record 74 and a half million fentanyl  
284 pills were seized just last year.

285 While some may celebrate this, the sad truth is, for  
286 every batch seized, more slips through undetected and more  
287 lives are lost. That is the message Molly Cain shared with  
288 our committee last year after her son, Carson, took a pill  
289 he thought would help his anxiety. It turned out to be  
290 laced with a lethal dose of fentanyl. No one should feel  
291 the pain Molly felt. More can and must be done.

292 President Biden's border crisis is not only harming  
293 border communities, it is harming every community across the  
294 country. America's largest cities, often run by  
295 politicians, who once proudly declared their cities to be  
296 so-called sanctuary cities, are now begging migrants not to  
297 come and pleading with the administration to do something.

298 New York City's homeless population is at an all-time  
299 high, fueled by the constant arrival of more migrants. The  
300 migrant influx is projected to cost New York City alone 12

301 billion dollars over three years. And the governor of New  
302 York announced just yesterday that she wants to spend  
303 another 2.4 billion dollars from the state to care for  
304 massive increase in migrants, and that is on top of the  
305 nearly two billion the state already allocated in emergency  
306 funds. Just this past week, students in New York City were  
307 sent home and told to return to remote learning, all because  
308 their school had to be converted into a temporary shelter  
309 for nearly 2,000 migrants.

310 President Biden's open border agenda is unsustainable,  
311 irresponsible, and inhumane. The problems at our southern  
312 border could be mitigated in part by enforcing existing  
313 immigration laws this administration is choosing to ignore.  
314 House Republicans have made securing our border a top  
315 priority and passed sweeping border protection legislation  
316 at the start of this Congress. H.R. 2 would go a long way  
317 to solving the Biden border crisis, but unfortunately,  
318 President Biden and the Senate Democrats continue to show  
319 little interest in a solution.

320 House Republicans also passed the HALT Fentanyl Act,  
321 led by Chairs Griffith and Latta, to permanently give our  
322 law enforcement the tools they need to keep deadly fentanyl  
323 off our streets. The Senate must take action. Every day  
324 they do not means another day that communities across the  
325 country struggle with the toll of the Biden border crisis.

326 The American people deserve better.

327 [The prepared statement of The Chair follows:]

328

329 \*\*\*\*\*COMMITTEE INSERT\*\*\*\*\*

330

331           \*The Chair. I yield back.

332           \*Mr. Griffith. The gentlelady yields back. Thank you  
333 so much. The chair now recognizes the ranking member of the  
334 full committee, Mr. Pallone, for his five-minute opening  
335 statement.

336           \*Mr. Pallone. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It is clear  
337 that an election year has begun. We all know that  
338 immigration reform is long overdue, but this hearing  
339 demonstrates that my Republican colleagues are in full-blown  
340 election mode, turning to scare tactics and fearmongering.

341           They entitled this hearing, "A Threat to Every  
342 Community," a suggestion that those who are crossing our  
343 border are somehow all violent criminals. And, yes, we need  
344 to improve our immigration system, but the best way to  
345 tackle illegal immigration is to create a wider path to  
346 legal immigration. Suggesting that immigrants are some kind  
347 of threat to our society is nonsense. It only serves to  
348 further harmful and dangerous stereotypes, and Republicans  
349 are once again putting politics over people, refusing once  
350 again to work with Democrats to fix our broken system.

351           Immigration reform is essential. Our economy relies on  
352 the innovation and hard work that immigrants bring to this  
353 country. We need more legal pathways to citizenship and a  
354 more efficient process that reduces the strain that we see  
355 at the border. And while I reject the notion that all



356 immigrants at the border present a threat to our  
357 communities, we do need to make sure that our Border Patrol  
358 is adequately resourced so they can focus on the actual  
359 security threats that they may encounter at the border.

360 But because House Republicans have failed to put  
361 forward anything resembling realistic immigration reform  
362 that could become law and really make a difference, they are  
363 now focused on impeaching the Secretary of Homeland  
364 Security. And this is nothing but a waste of time and is  
365 being done purely for political revenge.

366 This committee has broad jurisdiction that is essential  
367 to our economy and lowering costs for consumers, and  
368 ensuring the health and wellbeing of Americans. We tackle  
369 some of the most complicated matters: healthcare, energy,  
370 and the environment, telecommunications, and the internet,  
371 and consumer protection. But what this committee does not  
372 have is jurisdiction over border policy. Using this  
373 committee to smear President Biden's response to issues at  
374 the border I think is a blatant attempt to distract from the  
375 work that this Congress has failed to get done under  
376 Republican leadership.

377 The Republican leadership so far has refused to  
378 reauthorize the Pandemic and All Hazards Preparedness Act,  
379 failed to act on pipeline safety reauthorization, and failed  
380 to provide our public health institutions with the

381 authorities they need to help alleviate harmful drug  
382 shortages. I know that the committee has worked on this, I  
383 am not suggesting that our committee leadership hasn't  
384 worked on it, but the bills get -- come out of here and then  
385 they don't pass the House, they don't get put on the floor,  
386 even when the bills are bipartisan and everybody on the  
387 committee has voted for them.

388         These are some of the issues that we should be focused  
389 on, addressing together, but instead the Republican  
390 leadership continues to cave to the extreme elements of  
391 their party who have absolutely no interest in governing.  
392 And House Republicans' extreme approach to fixing the issues  
393 on the border I think are cruel, inhumane, and ineffective.

394         They have also shown no interest in working with the  
395 Biden administration to solve the problem. Time and time  
396 again, Republicans have ignored the Biden administration's  
397 request for resources to secure the border in a serious and  
398 responsible way. President Biden has asked for funding for  
399 1300 more border agents, a thousand more Customs and Border  
400 Protection Officers to focus on countering fentanyl, 1600  
401 more asylum officers, and numerous more support staff and  
402 resources to humanely and effectively address migration  
403 along the southern border.

404         So if my Republican colleagues are really interested in  
405 keeping Americans safe, and our communities strong, and our

406 constituents healthy, and our economy growing, they would  
407 stop trying to slash the very federal agencies and programs  
408 that keep our country safe, healthy, and prosperous. So  
409 again, the House Republican leadership is not interested in  
410 bipartisan solutions to this issue, they prefer scare  
411 tactics to deflect from their failure to govern.

412 [The prepared statement of Mr. Pallone follows:]

413

414 \*\*\*\*\*COMMITTEE INSERT\*\*\*\*\*

415

416           \*Mr. Pallone. And with that, Mr. Chairman, I yield  
417 back the balance of my time.

418           \*Mr. Griffith. Thank you. That concludes member  
419 opening statements. The chair would like to remind members  
420 that pursuant to the committee rules, all members' written  
421 opening statements will be made a part of the record.  
422 Please provide those to the clerk promptly.

423           Well, we want to thank our witnesses for being here  
424 today and taking the time to testify before the  
425 subcommittee. I would also thank you all for working with  
426 us on the delayed start time on this. I know some of you,  
427 that probably had to inconvenience and we do apologize, but  
428 we are trying to get as many members here as possible.

429           You will have the opportunity to give an opening  
430 statement, five minutes, followed by a round of questions  
431 from the members. Our witnesses today are Robert Rector,  
432 Senior Research Fellow at the Heritage Foundation. Welcome  
433 back. Ammon Blair, a former Border Patrol agent and Senior  
434 Fellow at the Texas Public Policy Foundation. Councilwoman  
435 Inna Vernikov, New York City Council. And Alex Nowrasteh,  
436 Vice President for Economic and Social Policy Studies at the  
437 Cato Institute. We appreciate you being here today and I  
438 look forward to hearing from each of you.

439           You are aware this subcommittee is holding an oversight  
440 hearing, and when doing so, we have the practice of taking

441 the testimony under oath. Do any of you have an objection  
442 to testifying under oath today?

443 [No response.]

444 \*Mr. Griffith. Seeing no objection from the witnesses,  
445 we will proceed.

446 The chair further advises you you are entitled to be  
447 advised by counsel, pursuant to House rules. Do any of you  
448 desire to be advised by counsel during your testimony today?

449 [No response.]

450 \*Mr. Griffith. All right. And seeing that none have  
451 indicated the desire for counsel, we will move forward. If  
452 each of you would rise and raise your right hand, please.

453 [Oath administered.]

454 \*Mr. Griffith. Seeing the witnesses answered in the  
455 affirmative, you are now sworn in and are under oath. You  
456 may seat \_ be seated. You are sworn in and under oath and  
457 subject to the penalties set forth in Title 18, Section 1001  
458 of the United States Code.

459 With that, we will now recognize Mr. Rector for his  
460 five minutes to give an opening statement.

461

462 TESTIMONY OF ROBERT RECTOR, SENIOR RESEARCH FELLOW, THE  
463 HERITAGE FOUNDATION; AMMMON BLAIR, FORMER BORDER PATROL  
464 AGENT AND SENIOR FELLOW, TEXAS PUBLIC POLICY FOUNDATION;  
465 INNA VERNIKOV, NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL; AND ALEX NOWRASTEH,  
466 VICE PRESIDENT FOR ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL POLICY STUDIES, THE  
467 CATO INSTITUTE

468

469 TESTIMONY OF ROBERT RECTOR

470

471 \*Mr. Rector. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It is on. How  
472 is that? It says it is on. Okay, I will shout.

473 In the three years since taking office, the Biden  
474 administration has encouraged and facilitated the entry of  
475 6.7 million illegal immigrants to enter and take up  
476 residency in the United States. This number is not some  
477 fanciful press release. I calculated these directly from  
478 the government's own statistics released by the Office of  
479 Homeland Security Statistics.

480 The impact of Biden's policy can be seen by comparing  
481 the current situation with prior presidencies. In fiscal  
482 year 2023, there were 30 \_ 3.2 million encounters between  
483 illegal aliens and \_ okay \_ between illegal aliens nation \_  
484 with \_ and the government nationwide. In 2016, the last  
485 year of the Obama administration, there were only 700,000  
486 such encounters. So this is a 460 percent increase.

487           In fact, if you look at the last month, September of  
488           fiscal year 2023, the Obama (sic) administration admitted  
489           201,000 illegal immigrants, released them into the United  
490           States. In the entire year of fiscal year 2016, Obama  
491           released 57,000. So we released four times as many people  
492           in a single month under Biden as Obama released in an entire  
493           year. In fact, this is very close to saying in a typical  
494           week Obama (sic) is releasing more people \_ more illegal  
495           immigrants to reside in the United Staes than Obama did in  
496           an entire fiscal year.

497           As a statistician, as a social scientist, it is  
498           absolutely unprecedented. These numbers, as I look at them  
499           as they come out of the government, not out of press  
500           releases and public statements, but out of the government  
501           itself, they are simply astonishing. And this is \_ this  
502           huge surge in the number of encounters and releases is they  
503           are a direct result of Biden policies which deliberately  
504           encourage, facilitate, and reward illegal immigration.

505           Homeland Security Secretary Mayorkas recently admitted  
506           to his agents that some 85 percent of current encounters  
507           with illegals result in the individual being released into  
508           the interior. The government's own data shows, as I said,  
509           of the hundreds and thousands of millions of inadmissible  
510           aliens encountered by the border on the southwest, 83  
511           percent are currently being released. 83 percent. That is

512 not for the whole period, but it is what is happening now.

513         This policy that we have today is not so much what we  
514 call \_ used to call catch and release, this is greet and  
515 release. And what is being demanded here of the  
516 conservatives is that you fund more government money for  
517 greet and release. That will increase the inflow of illegal  
518 immigrants, not bring it down.

519         If current policies con \_ are continued, at least 10  
520 million additional illegal aliens will enter and take up  
521 residents in the United States over the next five years.  
522 The only response from the Biden administration is to  
523 pretend that this is \_ reality doesn't \_ isn't even  
524 happening.

525         In general, illegal immigrants in the United States  
526 have low levels of education. For example, at least 40  
527 percent of illegal immigrants lack a high school degree,  
528 compared to six percent of U.S. citizens. This means that  
529 they receive very high \_ have low wages, high levels of  
530 government benefits, receiving about \$2.40 in benefits for  
531 every dollar of taxes paid.

532         As a group, illegal immigrants currently impose a net  
533 fiscal cost, government benefits received minus taxes paid,  
534 of 110 billion dollars on the U.S. taxpayer every year. How  
535 much is 110 billion dollars? Well, it is equivalent of an  
536 82 cent tax on every gallon of gasoline sold in the United



537 States.

538         The left not only supports this massive ongoing influx  
539 of over two million illegal immigrants a year, they want to  
540 grant them amnesty. And if you granted them amnesty,  
541 according to the National Economy of Sciences, the net cost  
542 of that would be five trillion dollars over a lifetime.  
543 That is roughly the equivalent of \$50,000 for every tax  
544 paying household in the United States. It is simply  
545 extraordinary.

546         And what we have to realize is according to polls,  
547 there are a billion people that would like to come and live  
548 in the United States. You cannot have open borders. You  
549 cannot have a border policy that simply greets over and over  
550 again and releases into the interior people that will never  
551 leave.

552         In addition, the current policy that we have of  
553 widespread, low-skill immigration, according to the National  
554 Academy of Sciences, deliberately and strongly presses down  
555 the wages and employment of the least-skilled American  
556 workers, particularly black male workers. According to  
557 research reported by the National Academy of Sciences,  
558 currently low-skill immigration, both legal and illegal, has  
559 probably cut the wages and earnings of our lowest skill  
560 workers by 30 percent. Okay, this in terms has all kinds of  
561 widespread impact in terms of poverty, family breakup,

562 welfare dependence, and so forth and so on.

563           Our policy needs to set American workers first, not  
564 people who come here illegally from abroad. And we cannot  
565 have a policy of open borders when a billion people want to  
566 come and enter this country. Thank you.

567           [The prepared testimony of Mr. Rector follows:]

568

569           \*\*\*\*\*COMMITTEE INSERT\*\*\*\*\*

570

571           \*Mr. Griffith. I thank the gentleman for yielding  
572 back. I will now recognize Mr. Ammon Blair. I will take a  
573 point of personal privilege before we start your five  
574 minutes and just say that I like the name probably because  
575 Ammon Tharp was a member of Bill Deal and the Rhondels  
576 before he had his own band, and two of the biggest bands in  
577 the Mid-Atlantic during the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. Mr.  
578 Blair, if you can sing, we will hear that, too, but first  
579 let's get your testimony.

580           [Laughter.]

581           \*Mr. Blair. I cannot sing.

582           \*Mr. Griffith. All right.

583

584 TESTIMONY OF AMMON BLAIR

585

586           \*Mr. Blair. All right, Chairman Griffith, Ranking  
587 Member Castor, Chairwoman Rodgers, Ranking Member Pallone,  
588 and distinguished members of the committee, good afternoon,  
589 and thank you for inviting me to testify today.

590           As a senior fellow at the Texas Public Policy  
591 Foundation, I bring 22 years of military experience and a  
592 deep understanding of border security from my time in the  
593 Army and U.S. Border Patrol. My roles have ranged from  
594 infantry officer in Operation Lonestar to collateral  
595 intelligence agent and Marine border control agent. I have  
596 been on the frontiers of combatting drug trafficking and  
597 illegal immigration, and I have also coordinated efforts to  
598 border wall construction.

599           In recent years, I have personally witnessed noteworthy  
600 evolution in the security and stability of our border  
601 region. The nature of the challenges confronting us has  
602 transformed, necessitating proactive engagement in a  
603 comprehensive reevaluation of our strategies. Is the border  
604 secure? Who has operational control? Is there a crisis?  
605 Is every border town \_ is every town a border town? How do  
606 we know?

607           On the surface these categorizations might appear mere  
608 semantic distinctions, but they are not. Despite

609 advancements in Homeland Security efforts, the border  
610 remains shrouded in ambiguity with pervasive uncertainty. A  
611 significant challenge also arises from the absence of  
612 standardized definitions for Mexican cartel border crimes  
613 and the spillover of violence. We need to recognize the  
614 multifaceted and interconnected nature of the threats we  
615 face and devise a comprehensive and coordinated strategy to  
616 counter them.

617         The fiscal year 2017 NDAA was the first legislation to  
618 codify border security metrics. Under this legislation, DHS  
619 is mandated to annually report on 43 distinct measures, yet  
620 these measures predominantly capture immigration statistics.  
621 By prioritizing immigration metrics, the Federal Government  
622 shifted public perception. The border environment is viewed  
623 almost exclusively through the lens of immigration and  
624 migration. This limited perspective overshadows and thus  
625 undermines more extensive national security threats.

626         The United States is facing an unprecedented crisis at  
627 its southern border. Under the current administration,  
628 there have been over 6.2 million illegal crossings of our  
629 southern border and 7.5 million enforcement encounters  
630 nationwide. Many are lured by false promises and incentives  
631 from the Biden administration.

632         The Biden administration created the conditions for  
633 this weaponization of mass migration by reversing the

634 policies of the previous administration that deterred and  
635 prevented illegal immigration, such as the Remain in Mexico  
636 Program, the Asylum Cooperation Agreements with Central  
637 American countries, and border wall construction. Instead,  
638 the current administration has offered illegal aliens  
639 various incentives such as benefits of parole, flights,  
640 transportation, or other monetary benefits to induce them to  
641 leave their countries and head to the U.S. border.

642         The current vetting process and screening process for  
643 illegal aliens at the border is not only illegal but also  
644 dangerous. It creates loopholes and incentives for migrants  
645 to enter the country illegally without proper documentation  
646 or verification. It also allows criminals and terrorists to  
647 exploit the system and evade detection.

648         According to the Department of Homeland Security, some  
649 of the illegal aliens who have been apprehended at the  
650 border have been found to have ties to transnational  
651 criminal organizations, such as drug cartels, human  
652 traffickers, and gangs. Some of them have also been found  
653 to have links to terrorist groups such as ISIS, Hezbollah,  
654 and Al Qaeda. DHS relies heavily on various technologies  
655 and infrastructure to enhance its border security efforts  
656 such as ground sensors, fences, and camera towers.

657         My experience with the border fence has led to several  
658 conclusions. The first is that left unprotected, any

659 physical barrier will be defeated. For a physical barrier  
660 to be effective, quick detection of attempted breaches and  
661 rapid law enforcement response before significant damage can  
662 be done are necessary. Application of technology can allow  
663 for real time detections with minimal manpower requirements.

664 The border wall has proven to be an effective deterrent  
665 in areas where it is up-to-date and properly maintained.  
666 But in order for the wall to reach its maximum  
667 effectiveness, it must be finished. In areas where the wall  
668 is incomplete or lacking proper technology, people can  
669 simply walk around it.

670 While a wall cannot be the only tool in the border  
671 security toolbox, it provides a significant benefit to  
672 border enforcement personnel and the security of not only  
673 border states but America as a whole. The U.S./Mexico  
674 border is not only a physical barrier but also a  
675 battleground for a covert war between the Mexican cartels  
676 and the U.S. authorities. The cartels have devised a  
677 cunning strategy to evade detection and prosecution by  
678 creating a sanitary zone inside the Texas border where they  
679 can operate with impunity and use the local population as  
680 their pawns.

681 The cartels exploit the legal loopholes and the social  
682 vulnerabilities of the border communities, especially minors  
683 and gangs, to smuggle drugs, weapons, money, and people

684 across the border. The cartels also employ sophisticated  
685 technology, such as drones, to monitor and evade law  
686 enforcement agencies. The DEA identifies several U.S.  
687 cities where the Mexican cartels have a significant presence  
688 or influence such as L.A., Chicago, New York, Atlanta, and  
689 Houston. The Mexican cartels pose a serious threat to U.S.  
690 national security and American communities.

691 The U.S. opioid crisis is not only a public health  
692 emergency but also a national security threat. Behind the  
693 scenes, the Chinese Communist Party is weaponizing the  
694 Mexican cartels in the U.S. by supplying them with precursor  
695 chemicals and synthetic drugs, such as fentanyl, that are  
696 used to produce and traffic deadly opioids across the  
697 border.

698 Conclusion. To solve this border crisis, we need a  
699 joint effort from federal and state agencies. They must  
700 work together to create consistent definitions, improve data  
701 collection methods, and increase transparency. Only by  
702 defining and understanding the problem can we devise a  
703 solution. We, the American people, have the right and the  
704 duty to defend our Nation and our values. We cannot let our  
705 border crisis become our national downfall. We must act now  
706 before it is too late.

707 Thank you. I look forward to your questions.

708



709 [The prepared testimony of Mr. Blair follows:]

710

711 \*\*\*\*\*COMMITTEE INSERT\*\*\*\*\*

712

713           \*Mr. Griffith. I appreciate that and now recognize  
714 Councilwoman Inna Vernikov for her five minutes.  
715

716 TESTIMONY OF INNA VERNIKOV

717

718           \*Ms. Vernikov. Thank you, Chairman Griffith, Ranking  
719 Member Castor, and distinguished members of this  
720 subcommittee for inviting me to testify here today.

721           As we sit here today to explore the impacts of  
722 President Biden's border policies, I appear before you not  
723 just as an elected official but also as a Ukrainian-born  
724 American Jew whose family immigrated to the United States as  
725 Jewish refugees 28 years ago. Before I entered public  
726 office, I was a proud owner of a matrimonial and immigration  
727 law practice in which thousands of immigration clients  
728 walked through my doors.

729           Those immigrants came to the United States using  
730 different channels. Some entered through legal means and  
731 some did not. Regardless of their status, I zealously  
732 represented each and every one of them.

733           America was built by freedom loving immigrants from all  
734 corners of the world who escaped genocide, dictatorships,  
735 political and religious persecutions in search of a brighter  
736 future and who endlessly worked to achieve their American  
737 dream. I do not take for granted that I am only privileged  
738 to sit here before you because this great country gave me  
739 and families like mine opportunities we would have never had  
740 anywhere else Earth.

741           But it is because of my love for this country that I  
742 have never been more concerned for her future like I am  
743 today. What once was a point of bipartisan agreement has  
744 become a political battlefield of contention. We once  
745 believed that the privilege of being an American citizen  
746 should be achieved by lawful means, but that is not the case  
747 today.

748           Because of the massive influx of migrants from the  
749 southern border, New York City is at a breaking point. In  
750 fact, our mayor, Eric Adams, said, and I quote, "This issue  
751 will destroy New York City.'" The current migrant crisis  
752 has already place a significant strain on every area of life  
753 for New Yorkers, including our schools, the economy, our  
754 healthcare system, and public safety.

755           The influx of migrants into New York City has added  
756 nearly 34,000 new students to our public school system over  
757 the past two years. Districts across the city have been  
758 scrambling to meet their learning, health, and emotional  
759 needs of these students, most of whom require specialized  
760 instruction. This is happening as our students are still  
761 trying to recover from the significant learning losses  
762 caused by pandemic school closures.

763           To add to the strain in our system, school facilities  
764 have also been utilized for housing as the city scrambles to  
765 accommodate the massive numbers of new arrivals. Last week

766 we witnessed a perfect example of how President Biden's  
767 border policies are impacting our communities when a local  
768 high school of close to 4,000 children became an overnight  
769 migrant shelter.

770         A Siena poll found that 70 percent of New York City  
771 residents are concerned about becoming a victim of a serious  
772 crime. Those entering our country through the border are  
773 not properly vetted as their criminal records from their  
774 home countries are mostly unknown. Since Hamas has launched  
775 a brutal massacre on innocent civilians in Israel on October  
776 7th, the world has been paying more attention to terrorist  
777 organizations and their activity.

778         This past October, a Department of Homeland Security  
779 memo was circulated to staff warning that individuals  
780 inspired by terror groups like Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and  
781 Hezbollah may be attempting to travel through the southern  
782 border to the United States. 169 individuals on the FBI  
783 watch list were encountered at the southern border in the  
784 year 2023 alone. That is more than the last six fiscal  
785 years combined.

786         As someone who represents one of the largest  
787 constituencies of Jewish New Yorkers, this is particularly  
788 frightening, especially amidst the despicable rise in  
789 antisemitism in our city and country. However, make no  
790 mistake, Hamas sympathizers are a threat to every New Yorker

791 and every American. Local communities surrounding migrant  
792 shelters are also justifiably concerned by an uptick in  
793 crime. Just last week, several men were charged with  
794 stabbing another man to death in Randalls Island, one of  
795 several tent cities constructed to house migrants across the  
796 city. The violent incidents prompted the city to impose a  
797 curfew and consider adding metal detectors at these  
798 shelters.

799         The migrant crisis has also placed an enormous strain  
800 on the city's public hospital system with New York City  
801 hospitals receiving over 30,000 undocumented migrant visits  
802 in the past year alone. As of April of last year, 50  
803 percent of migrants coming into New York City were not  
804 vaccinated against the contagious polio virus, a virus that  
805 we have more or less eradicated in the United States.  
806 According to New York City Health Commissioner Vasan, the  
807 migrants come in from and pass through countries with high  
808 rates of infectious tuberculosis.

809         With no end in sight, our city is projected to spend  
810 10.6 billion dollars of taxpayer money on the migrant crisis  
811 through fiscal year 2025, and we face projected 2.5 budget  
812 cuts across all city agencies. More than 170,000  
813 undocumented aliens have come through the city's intake  
814 system since spring of 2023, with nearly 70,000 of them  
815 currently in our care, according to the last data provided

816 by the administration. Our mayor called this an  
817 unprecedented humanitarian crisis. It is far more than  
818 that. It is a national crisis.

819       The current situation is unsustainable, unmanageable,  
820 and unaffordable. We cannot allow this administration to  
821 pursue its path of inaction and destructive policies as they  
822 continue prioritizing undocumented foreigners who circumvent  
823 our legal system. Thank you.

824       [The prepared testimony of Ms. Vernikov follows:]

825

826 \*\*\*\*\*COMMITTEE INSERT\*\*\*\*\*

827

828           \*Mr. Griffith. Thank you very much. I now recognize  
829 Alex Nowrasteh for his five-minute opening statement.  
830



831 TESTIMONY OF ALEX NOWRASTEH

832

833 \*Mr. Nowrasteh. Chairman Griffith, Ranking Member  
834 Castor, and distinguished members of the subcommittee, thank  
835 you for the opportunity to testify.

836 My name is Alex Nowrasteh, and I am the Vice President  
837 for Economic and Social Policy Studies at the Cato  
838 Institute, a nonpartisan public policy research organization  
839 in Washington, D.C. It is an honor to be invited to speak  
840 with you today about the safety, health, and economic  
841 consequences of President Biden's border policies.

842 Chaos along the southwest border is a serious problem  
843 caused by two factors. The first factor is the strength of  
844 the U.S. economy. U.S. employers demand foreign labor.  
845 Employers are willing to pay high wages and foreign workers  
846 want to come.

847 The second factor is that it is impossible for the vast  
848 majority of would-be migrants to come here illegally. As a  
849 result, many migrants break American immigration laws to  
850 earn an average of about 300 percent higher wages than they  
851 would in their home countries. These two factors combine to  
852 produce the border chaos that we are witnessing today.

853 The first factor is high demand for foreign workers and  
854 their willingness to come, which will not change anytime  
855 soon. But the second factor, our severely restrictive legal

856 immigration system is an artificial creation by past  
857 Congresses created contrary to free market principles and  
858 implemented in a way that causes maximum chaos.

859         The simplified chart of the legal immigration system  
860 included in my submitted testimony is so complex and  
861 restrictive that even the most sober minded, Soviet central  
862 planner would blush upon seeing it. Legal permanent  
863 immigration to the United States was equal to about 0.27  
864 percent of the U.S. population in 2021 and 2022. Of the 26  
865 OECD countries with complete available data, the United  
866 States is in 23rd place between South Korea and France.

867         This is a scandal for a country that rightly prides  
868 itself as a nation of immigrants. Our immigration  
869 restrictions are a scandal for our country where practically  
870 everyone, including everyone in this room, can point back to  
871 ancestors who arrived on these shores at some point in the  
872 past or immigrated here themselves. Congress and the Biden  
873 administration can remedy this scandal and thereby reduce  
874 chaos along the border to a small fraction of what it  
875 currently is.

876         The simplest, cheapest, and quickest way to reduce  
877 illegal immigration is to vastly expand legal immigration to  
878 the United States. The Biden administration actually shows  
879 us that this can be done and that it would reduce the chaos.  
880 In January of 2023, the Biden administration expanded parole

881 to some U.S. sponsored migrants from Cuba, Venezuela,  
882 Nicaragua, and Haiti, the so-called CVNH Program. The  
883 results was a massive decline in the number of border  
884 crossers from those countries as many of them instead  
885 entered the U.S. on parole lawfully.

886         There was a 62.4 percent decline in Border Patrol  
887 encounters of migrants from the CVNH countries in the entire  
888 post-CVNH period for which we have data. At the same time,  
889 the number of Border Patrol encounters of migrants from  
890 other countries stayed the same. The lesson is clear, the  
891 border could be under control tomorrow if Congress and the  
892 Biden administration were willing to substantially increase  
893 legal immigration.

894         Expanding immigration would reduce border chaos and  
895 economically benefits Americans. Immigration \_ immigrants  
896 increase economic growth without negatively affecting  
897 American wages. Immigrants paid about \$1.43 in taxes for  
898 every dollar they consumed in government benefits at the  
899 state, local, and the federal levels combined in 2018.  
900 Local problems, such as the cost of sheltering migrants in  
901 New York City, are caused by frankly insane right to shelter  
902 laws enacted by state and local governments or forced upon  
903 them through old legal compromises and court decisions that  
904 can and should be overturned now.

905         Border chaos is a policy choice. Border chaos is an

906 unintentional and predictable consequence of a strong  
907 economy and a severely restrictive legal immigration policy.  
908 Border chaos was chosen long ago by past Congresses when  
909 they heavily restricted legal immigration and chaos is  
910 chosen every second the Biden administration delays in  
911 expanding parole. Please do not keep choosing border chaos  
912 over expanding legal immigration. Thank you.

913 [The prepared testimony of Mr. Nowrasteh follows:]

914

915 \*\*\*\*\*COMMITTEE INSERT\*\*\*\*\*

916

917           \*Mr. Griffith. Thank you for your testimony. I will  
918 now move into the question and answer portion of the  
919 hearing, and I will begin the questioning, recognize myself  
920 for five minutes.

921           Mr. Nowrasteh, wasn't that policy the one that was  
922 crafted back in the 1960s by Ted Kennedy, isn't that the one  
923 you are referring to that needs to be changed? I agree with  
924 you that it needs to be changed, but isn't that the policy?

925           \*Mr. Nowrasteh. The last major update was in 1990.  
926 There was a major reform in 1965, which is I believe the one  
927 you are referring to.

928           \*Mr. Griffith. One \_ that is the one I am referring  
929 to. That set the bones of what we have now.

930           Mr. Rector, let me ask you a couple questions. In  
931 regard to legal immigration, if we just had legal  
932 immigration and we expand that a little bit, we would still  
933 have a southern border, would we \_ problem, would we not?

934           \*Mr. Rector. We absolutely would. As I indicated,  
935 polls show a billion people would like to come and live  
936 here, okay. And Cato basically is an open-border  
937 institution. They never \_ they never answer what happens  
938 when the billion people want to come here to \_ under open  
939 borders. And, yes, you would continue to have this exact  
940 same problem.

941           \*Mr. Griffith. And didn't this problem

942           \*Mr. Rector. We already have very high levels of  
943 legal \_

944           \*Mr. Griffith. And didn't this problem exist during  
945 the Reagan administration, and they tried to make a deal,  
946 and part of the deal was they would build a wall, and they  
947 got the immigration but they didn't get the wall? Isn't  
948 that \_

949           \*Mr. Rector. They were supposed to get all kinds of  
950 security things, in particular E-Verify, which we have never  
951 had, was the key. But Ed Meese told me that that was the  
952 worst decision the Reagan administration ever made, to make  
953 a deal and say, oh, we are going to give you amnesty, we are  
954 going to get all these security things, and they got  
955 nothing.

956           \*Mr. Griffith. And \_

957           \*Mr. Rector. We are still waiting for E-Verify \_

958           \*Mr. Griffith. Yeah.

959           \*Mr. Rector. \_ since 1996.

960           \*Mr. Griffith. And, Mr. Blair, you have talked \_ you  
961 talked a little bit in your testimony about the wall. While  
962 it wouldn't solve all the problems, wouldn't the wall be  
963 extremely helpful along the southern border to help reduce  
964 the number of illegal immigrants who are coming into this  
965 country?

966           \*Mr. Blair. Yes, sir.

967           \*Mr. Griffith. And do you agree with Mr. Rector that  
968 what we have instead of the catch and release we really  
969 have, you know, greet and release?

970           \*Mr. Blair. Yes, sir.

971           \*Mr. Griffith. All right. Ms. Vernikov, related to  
972 the school children, because I have school \_ I know I don't  
973 look like I could, but I do. I have some school-age  
974 children still. Was there any input from the parents of the  
975 students from the school where New York placed the illegal  
976 immigrants in to house them before saying you are going to  
977 go to virtual learning?

978           \*Ms. Vernikov. Yeah, there was a lot of outrage from  
979 the parents of the school. There are 4,000 students that go  
980 to James Madison. We warned about what is going to happen  
981 in Floyd Bennett. If they were to keep migrants at Floyd  
982 Bennett Center, there was going to be inclement weather and  
983 they would have to move the children.

984           It was a last-minute decision to move them into the  
985 school. We had to dismiss kids early. They had to go  
986 remote the next day. They cancelled sports practice. And  
987 it is just not a good practice to have our schools become  
988 migrant shelters, even if it is for one night. The parents  
989 had no other choice, no other options as to what to do with  
990 their children the next day.

991           \*Mr. Griffith. And so it disrupted not only the sports

992 practice but did it also disrupt the athletic adventures?

993 \*Ms. Vernikov. Absolutely.

994 \*Mr. Griffith. So the swimming team didn't get to go  
995 swim \_ get to do their meets and \_

996 \*Ms. Vernikov. I don't know about the specifics.

997 \*Mr. Griffith. All right.

998 \*Ms. Vernikov. But definitely practice was cancelled.

999 \*Mr. Griffith. And where that becomes significant is  
1000 if some of those kids are trying to get a scholarship, isn't  
1001 that true?

1002 \*Ms. Vernikov. Absolutely.

1003 \*Mr. Griffith. And then you were a \_ an immigration  
1004 lawyer. Isn't it true that with this flood of illegal  
1005 immigrants coming in that we are actually putting those who  
1006 are trying to do it legally at the back of the line instead  
1007 of processing them in a timely fashion?

1008 \*Ms. Vernikov. We are absolutely prioritizing illegal  
1009 immigration over law-abiding citizens. We had to wait \_ my  
1010 family and I had to wait three years just to see our  
1011 grandparents. We did everything by the law. We followed  
1012 the legal system and that is how it should be done in the  
1013 United States of America.

1014 \*Mr. Griffith. I appreciate that.

1015 Mr. Blair, I have been particularly interested in  
1016 unaccompanied minors. Can you explain to the American



1017 people what happens and what your experience was at the U.S.  
1018 border when an unaccompanied minor crosses the border and  
1019 how Border Patrol hands the child off to HHS or the Office  
1020 of Refugee Resettlement?

1021       \*Mr. Blair. Yes, sir. Unfortunately, it is an  
1022 everyday occurrence and it happens all the time all across  
1023 the border. Typically, the child automatically has either  
1024 an address of where they are going to, a name, and that name  
1025 may be associated with them as a familial, someone from  
1026 their family, but it could also be someone that is also a  
1027 trafficker or someone else. We really don't know.

1028       So at that time period, we have to take the knowledge  
1029 that that child has, that limited knowledge, process them,  
1030 and then hand them off.

1031       \*Mr. Griffith. And are you aware that when OR gets  
1032 them they don't do an actual background check with  
1033 fingerprints on the sponsors, they don't do a home check?  
1034 They have now made it optional that you can do a virtual  
1035 check, but that there is no requirement that they check or  
1036 that they notify the local school division or the local  
1037 Department of Social Services that this child is being  
1038 placed in the area. Are you aware of that?

1039       \*Mr. Blair. Correct. Just to \_ not on firsthand  
1040 accounts, just on other accounts, yes.

1041       \*Mr. Griffith. Yeah, well, it has been widely

1042 reported. My time is up. I could go on for hours on these  
1043 issues, they are extremely important to America long-term,  
1044 and I appreciate you all being here today, and I yield back.

1045 I now recognize Ms. Castor for her five minutes of  
1046 questioning.

1047 \*Ms. Castor. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

1048 America's immigration laws are outdated. Decades since  
1049 we have been able to modernize and do something in a  
1050 bipartisan way. So really I hope this would be an impetus  
1051 for Congress to come together to fix it.

1052 Mr. Nowrasteh -- excuse me -- Mr. Nowrasteh, you have  
1053 said ultimately that the best way to reduce illegal  
1054 immigration is to address our laws, and especially to fix  
1055 legal immigration. How is Congress's failure to create  
1056 updated legal pathways to citizenship, to work, exacerbated  
1057 the issues of our broken immigration system?

1058 \*Mr. Nowrasteh. By failing to expand legal  
1059 opportunities for migrants to come to the United States to  
1060 work lawfully, you are giving a tremendous incentive to  
1061 migrants to instead come unlawfully to work. The U.S. labor  
1062 market is in a tremendous historical situation in terms of  
1063 how well it is doing. The number of job openings for the  
1064 last period of time we have data is over eight million.  
1065 During the Biden administration, it has hovered around an  
1066 average of about 9.9 million, which is historically high.

1067 Unemployment is low, below four percent. Wages are rising.

1068         This is the labor market that demands and craves  
1069 workers. And as a result, that is a magnet for migrants to  
1070 come to the U.S. And because they \_ the vast majority of  
1071 them, there is no legal pathway for them to come lawfully,  
1072 they \_ a lot of them have decided to come unlawfully. And  
1073 all of the Border Patrol agents in the world, all of the  
1074 walls in the world are not going to stop that flow.

1075         To be fair, enforcement makes a difference, but  
1076 standing to thwart market forces and trying to yell stop is  
1077 not an effective strategy. The effective strategy, just  
1078 like it was to end prohibition to legalize \_ by legalizing  
1079 alcohol, is to legalize immigration.

1080         \*Ms. Castor. This is what I hear from businesses back  
1081 home and across the State of Florida. They are hungry for  
1082 workers, and it has even led to the -- to where the Florida  
1083 legislature is considering a bill to loosen child labor laws  
1084 this legislative session.

1085         But the Biden administration has tried to use some new  
1086 initiatives like parole, as we talked about, for Cubans,  
1087 Venezuelans, Nicaragua, Haiti. Have you seen -- you  
1088 detailed a few statistics in your remarks. Are these ways  
1089 to create legal pathways, have they truly had an impact on  
1090 deterring illegal immigration?

1091         \*Mr. Nowrasteh. Oh, absolutely. It is actually a very

1092 clear \_ it is one of the most clear things I have seen are  
1093 examples, quasi-natural experiments, which is a term I used  
1094 as an economist, ever is taking a look at the parole  
1095 programs announced for Cuba, Venezuela, Nicaragua \_  
1096 Nicaraguans and Haitians. I mean, we have seen a dramatic  
1097 decline in the number of illegal immigrants from those  
1098 countries coming to the border by 62 percent in the 11  
1099 months that we have data for since the enactment of those  
1100 programs, you know, compared to the previous 11-month  
1101 period.

1102         And what is remarkable to this is you can draw a graph  
1103 and like it doesn't get any clearer than this in social  
1104 science. The number of apprehensions of people from other  
1105 countries, the encounters on the border is flat on average  
1106 over that period. But for these people from CVNH countries,  
1107 it has cratered, it has collapsed. If you are interested in  
1108 getting control of the border, reducing the chaos, this is  
1109 the path forward, this is the way to do it.

1110         \*Ms. Castor. And then under that initiative, you have  
1111 to have a sponsor in the U.S. who is financially responsible  
1112 for you and you get a pathway to work, is that right?

1113         \*Mr. Nowrasteh. That is correct.

1114         \*Ms. Castor. Okay. So what do you recommend? What is  
1115 the most effective step or steps that Congress can work on  
1116 in a bipartisan way right now to deter illegal immigration?

1117           \*Mr. Nowrasteh. So for Congress, I think the way for  
1118 them to work going forward is to expand legal immigration  
1119 opportunities and temporary migration opportunities. For  
1120 example, expanding the H-2 visa programs, H-2A and H-2B for  
1121 temporary migrant workers by allowing American states to  
1122 work in conjunction with the Federal Government to sponsor  
1123 migrants for their own state needs. There was actually a  
1124 bill introduced by Representative Curtis some years ago to  
1125 create a state-based migrant visa pilot program to allow  
1126 that kind of flexibility.

1127           Also to reduce the regulations, to reduce the amount of  
1128 labor market compliance that employers have to use in order  
1129 to sponsor migrants. And then generally expand the numbers  
1130 across the board for every existing visa that is out there  
1131 as well as I think \_ and for the administration I would say  
1132 the answer in the short-term is to expand parole both by  
1133 expanding the numbers available every month for the CVNH  
1134 countries but also to expand parole opportunities to folks  
1135 from other countries in Central America, South America, and  
1136 the Caribbean to reduce the strain and reduce the numbers of  
1137 people heading to the border so that Border Patrol can get  
1138 control over the border.

1139           \*Ms. Castor. Thank you.

1140           \*Mr. Griffith. The gentlelady yields back. I now  
1141 recognize Dr. Burgess of Texas for his five minutes of

1142 questioning.

1143 \*Mr. Burgess. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

1144 Mr. Rector, can I ask you what is the number of people  
1145 that immigrate to this country legally every year?

1146 \*Mr. Rector. I think it is over a million a year.

1147 \*Mr. Burgess. I think it is 1.1 million is \_

1148 \*Mr. Rector. Okay.

1149 \*Mr. Burgess. \_ what I have been told.

1150 \*Mr. Rector. Right, mm-hmm.

1151 \*Mr. Burgess. So in my tenure in Congress, that is  
1152 almost 30 \_ I've been here 20 years, so \_

1153 \*Mr. Rector. Yes.

1154 \*Mr. Burgess. \_ that is almost 30 million people \_

1155 \*Mr. Rector. Mm-hmm.

1156 \*Mr. Burgess. \_ who have brought in \_ been brought  
1157 into the country legally.

1158 Mr. Blair, we heard some complaints early on in the  
1159 testimony about what Texas has done down on the border and  
1160 specifically in regards to the park that now the Texas  
1161 Medical (sic) Department has taken over from Customs and  
1162 Border Protection and the fact that that might have led to  
1163 several drownings on Friday night. Do you have any  
1164 knowledge of that?

1165 \*Mr. Blair. Yes, sir, I do have knowledge.

1166 \*Mr. Burgess. Can you tell us \_

1167           \*Mr. Blair. Sure. So if you look at the newest  
1168 reports, Texas Military Department wasn't notified until  
1169 after the fact. So unfortunately, when you do protect the  
1170 border, and when illegal aliens try to cross that border,  
1171 and it is protected, the Rio Grande River, it is quite fast,  
1172 and so the \_ I have seen illegal aliens personally drown.  
1173 And us as Border Patrol agents try to do our very best to  
1174 try to mitigate that effort and so would TMD.

1175           But the problem is, regardless of what wall or barrier  
1176 they are going to try to cross, whether there is a wall or  
1177 not, and they have drowned also, whether there was a wall or  
1178 not.

1179           \*Mr. Burgess. But the actions that Texas had taken  
1180 specifically because the Biden administration will not take  
1181 any action, so Governor Abbott felt compelled to protect his  
1182 state, those actions were not the direct cause of the  
1183 tragedy that occurred Friday night were they?

1184           \*Mr. Blair. No, sir. The direct cause were by those  
1185 who wanted to cross and also by the Mexican cartels who also  
1186 dictate where they are going to cross.

1187           \*Mr. Burgess. And that is exactly right. No one steps  
1188 into that river unless they have permission from the cartel,  
1189 is that not correct?

1190           \*Mr. Blair. Correct. All along the border you can  
1191 have plazas. So Mexican cartels, whether that is all the

1192 way down from Brownsville all the way to California, there  
1193 are different cartels and they control the plazas, and they  
1194 control every movement, whether that is going to be illicit  
1195 narcotics, whether that is going to be humans, arms  
1196 trafficking, they can control every aspect of that area.

1197 Now certain cartels, they do things differently, so you  
1198 are going to see more waring in the state of Tamaulipas than  
1199 you are going to see near Eagle Pass, Eagle Pass area. But  
1200 as reports have been brought out, especially by the Center  
1201 for Immigration Studies, they have been able to go down  
1202 there inside of Mexico to also show that it was also local  
1203 law enforcement inside of Mexico that was also aiding and  
1204 abetting and also guiding the illegal aliens coming up into  
1205 the U.S.

1206 \*Mr. Burgess. Well, I am glad you brought that up  
1207 because, like Mr. Griffith, I was down in McAllen a year ago  
1208 when we had a field hearing in McAllen. I was in Eagle Pass  
1209 with the Speaker a week ago. And the phenomenal thing about  
1210 a week ago down in Eagle Pass, I mean, you have seen the  
1211 pictures of the phenomenal number of people that were sort  
1212 of in these queues along the riverbank.

1213 But when we got down there, there was absolutely no one  
1214 to be seen. And I put this in the broad category of the  
1215 cartels are not stupid. You have got the Speaker of the  
1216 House coming down to do a major photo op, let's not flood



1217 the zone with illegal immigrants at that point. Would that  
1218 be a reasonable assumption?

1219 \*Mr. Blair. That and you also need to see \_ in that  
1220 specific area, the NGOs south of that location, as well as  
1221 the government, as I said, there have been reports showing  
1222 exactly that they are metering. They are metering the  
1223 illegal aliens into that area. So at that specific time,  
1224 they did not have anyone come across, other than you guys  
1225 did see one raft.

1226 \*Mr. Burgess. Yeah. And this is what is really  
1227 frustrating. It demonstrates that the problem can be  
1228 controlled, but it is a decision not to control. It is a  
1229 willful neglect on the part of the Biden administration.

1230 Before I run out of time, Councilwoman, I have to ask  
1231 you, I have been very concerned since this subcommittee has  
1232 been working on this problem for a number of years. We were  
1233 the ones that identified that there was a problem with  
1234 unvaccinated children back in 2014, problems with  
1235 tuberculosis in 2014. You have referenced that there may be  
1236 some difficulties in New York because of tuberculosis and  
1237 now polio, as I understand it, is that not correct?

1238 \*Ms. Vernikov. That is correct. And the schools are  
1239 not mandating the migrant children are vaccinated, so the  
1240 health officials are really concerned about a potential  
1241 spread of a disease.

1242           \*Mr. Burgess. So one of the reasons you have a border,  
1243 and there are reasons to have a border, but one of the  
1244 reasons you have a border is to protect your citizens from  
1245 disease, correct? You control the border so that you  
1246 control disease that might spread amongst the population.

1247           Mr. Chairman, I am going to ask unanimous consent to  
1248 insert two articles that I have into the record, one dealing  
1249 with the drownings and the other one dealing with how Mexico  
1250 is metering the response \_ the number of people who are  
1251 coming across, and ask unanimous consent to have those part  
1252 of the record.

1253           \*Mr. Griffith. All right.

1254           \*Ms. DeGette. Reserving the right to object.

1255           \*Mr. Griffith. Right to object is reserved, and we  
1256 will take that up at the end of the hearing.

1257           The gentleman yields back.

1258           \*Mr. Burgess. Yeah, it is a CNN article for crying out  
1259 loud.

1260           \*Mr. Griffith. Now \_

1261           [Laughter.]

1262           \*Mr. Griffith. Yeah, but they just want to look at it.

1263           \*Ms. DeGette. But the gentleman didn't say that.

1264           \*Mr. Griffith. Yeah, they just want to look at it.

1265           \*Ms. Castor. Yeah.

1266           \*Mr. Griffith. I now recognize the gentelady from

1267 Colorado, Ms. DeGette.

1268 \*Ms. DeGette. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

1269 So the chairman said in his opening statement, the  
1270 first thing he said, a little defensively I thought, was  
1271 that the border isn't just a talking point. But my question  
1272 is, if the border is not just a talking point, why won't the  
1273 Republicans work with us to actually fix this problem? And  
1274 let me explain what I am talking about.

1275 In October last year, October 20th, President Biden  
1276 submitted to Congress a 106 billion dollar emergency  
1277 national security funding package with 14.45 billion dollars  
1278 for the southern border plus aid for Ukraine, Israel, the  
1279 Indo-Pacific, and humanitarian aid. Now here is what the  
1280 requested funding for the southern border would do. It  
1281 would have critical border enforcement activities.

1282 And let me take a moment to say, every single person in  
1283 this room thinks, except for -- except for a few, think we  
1284 need to have a secure border. We all can agree with that.  
1285 And the Democrats at least would like to have a bipartisan  
1286 solution to this and we would like to have that solution  
1287 sooner rather than later. We have a divided government. I  
1288 don't think the House Republicans have quite realized that,  
1289 not just with respect to immigration but everything, because  
1290 you have to compromise if you are going to get something  
1291 done.

1292           So here is what President Biden wanted as part of the  
1293 supplemental package. An additional 1300 Border Patrol  
1294 agents to work along with existing budget agents. An  
1295 additional 1600 asylum officers and associated support staff  
1296 so that we could have -- facilitate timely immigration  
1297 dispositions so we wouldn't have people who came in under an  
1298 asylum provision and then have to wait for years before they  
1299 could get their cases heard.

1300           Additional detention beds to sustain our currently  
1301 significant increased use of expedited removal and provide  
1302 necessary surge capacity. Requesting funding for  
1303 transportation to send these people who don't qualify back  
1304 to their home countries. New non-custodial housing options  
1305 for non-citizens and expediated removal so we don't have to  
1306 send people to high schools in New York to sleep when it is  
1307 freezing cold and their alternative would be to have the  
1308 children sleeping on the street. Additional attorneys and  
1309 support staff to match the 375 new immigration judge teams  
1310 to adjudicate these people quickly and send them back, and  
1311 on and on.

1312           No, the Republicans will not agree to that. They will  
1313 not even agree to negotiate to that. Speaker Johnson said  
1314 this morning that the deal that the Republicans and  
1315 Democrats and the White House are working on over in the  
1316 Senate is a non-starter, and he said the only thing he will

1317 accept is H.R. 2. Now I have to say, if we really want to  
1318 solve immigration issues, I agree we need to do it.

1319         And, Ms. Vernikov, you are an immigration lawyer, so  
1320 you know that if somebody is legitimately claiming asylum,  
1321 they have a right to do that. But we have to be able to --  
1322 don't worry, I am not going to ask you to comment on this, I  
1323 am just saying when they come in and they claim asylum, they  
1324 have a right to that, and we need to expedite that case.

1325         And the other thing I will say, I have heard a whole  
1326 bunch of tropes from this panel today that I think we need  
1327 to dispose of. Number one, when people come into this  
1328 country, they don't get immediately federal aid. They don't  
1329 get -- they don't get healthcare aid, they don't get  
1330 transportation. The transportation is being paid for by  
1331 people like Governor Abbott who are sending migrants to  
1332 Denver, Colorado, and New York City, and all of these other  
1333 places with apparently Texas state money.

1334         We need to get a grip on this. We need to have  
1335 comprehensive immigration policy or, at the very least, we  
1336 need to put the resources down there on the border so that  
1337 we can enforce our laws. Nobody disagrees with that. But  
1338 instead, the Republican majority has decided to take this  
1339 week to -- and maybe there's polling been done, I don't know  
1340 what it is, but they have decided to take this week to  
1341 somehow say that President Biden and the Democrats don't

1342 want to work on immigration reform. That is simply untrue.

1343         And I think we need to work together, Mr. Chairman. I  
1344 think we need to work together to find an immigration policy  
1345 that we can all agree on. And what I tell my constituents  
1346 all the time when they ask me about this, everybody needs to  
1347 take a deep breath, we need to figure out what our -- what  
1348 our needs are in this country for employment, we need to  
1349 have short-term visas, long-term visas, and we need to  
1350 enforce our border.

1351         And with that, Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

1352         \*Mr. Griffith. I thank the gentlelady, and since you  
1353 referenced me, I will just say that when we stop greet and  
1354 release, we might be able to start working on something.  
1355 But I would also remind her that we have had numerous  
1356 hearings in this committee particularly related to OR.

1357         I now recognize the gentlelady, the chair of the full  
1358 committee, Ms. Rodgers, for her five minutes of questioning.

1359         \*The Chair. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The fact of the  
1360 matter is there is record numbers coming across the border.  
1361 Millions. And as simple as President Biden saying he would  
1362 put Remain in Mexico in place, that would stop 70 percent of  
1363 those that are coming across the border, it is estimated.  
1364 So this is a very important hearing. This is not new.

1365         The Republicans have been asking for the administration  
1366 to get serious about securing the border for several years

1367 now, and the fact of the matter is we are having huge  
1368 impacts on our country because of an unprecedented border  
1369 crisis. The number of individuals who are coming across the  
1370 border now, it is the size of major cities, like Pittsburgh,  
1371 Cincinnati, and it is the decisions that have been made by  
1372 this administration that has brought us to this point.

1373 So, Mr. Rector, I wanted to start with you. Can you  
1374 describe for us the size of this wave that is coming versus  
1375 previous administrations?

1376 \*Mr. Rector. Yes, it is absolutely unprecedented. You  
1377 have got a minimum of two million people coming in and being  
1378 released. Of all the people appearing on the border,  
1379 Mayorkas has said that 85 percent of them are directly  
1380 released into the country, and it is \_ that is not just a  
1381 statement, that is verified by the actual statistics that  
1382 they release, and it is absolutely unprecedented.

1383 And as I said, basically if you look at the last month  
1384 of the \_ of reported data, on the southwest border alone, we  
1385 let in 200,000 and released them in a month. In 2016, Obama  
1386 in the entire year let in and released 57,000. So he \_ we  
1387 are releasing on a weekly basis almost as much as Obama  
1388 released in an entire year, and there is no stopping this.  
1389 And these policies to facilitate and spend even more money  
1390 on greet and release will what, they are going to motivate  
1391 more and more people to show up. You are paying for people

1392 to come in and migrate.

1393 And I just noticed this, they don't get healthcare? Of  
1394 course they get free healthcare. They get free healthcare  
1395 from the minute they enter this country, okay. And they get  
1396 tons of other things as well. It is outrageous to say  
1397 something like that.

1398 There are 10,000 federally-funded national health  
1399 centers that \_ across the country that provide free primary  
1400 care to every single illegal immigrant.

1401 \*The Chair. Thank you, thank you.

1402 Councilwoman Vernikov, your district is 2,000 miles  
1403 from the southern border. Despite this distance, the  
1404 migrant crisis recently disrupted a high school in New York  
1405 City. Can you tell us what happened?

1406 \*Ms. Vernikov. Sure. Floyd Bennett Field has been  
1407 used as a tent for migrants. There are about 2,000 migrants  
1408 currently living at Floyd Bennett Field. It is not in my  
1409 district, but it is in a neighboring district.

1410 Because of inclement weather, they had to move the  
1411 migrants to a safer location, and they decided to use a  
1412 school, James Madison High School, in my district to move  
1413 them there. As I said earlier, students had to be dismissed  
1414 early. They went remote. Practice had to be cancelled.  
1415 And it was a \_ it caused a huge inconvenience for the  
1416 parents; they were very outraged. Also it caused a lot of



1417 commotion to the local residents; they felt unsafe, they  
1418 weren't sure what the plan was. All of this happened last  
1419 minute. This was extremely disruptive to the learning  
1420 environment.

1421           And parents are really concerned, quite frankly, that  
1422 this is going to happen again. Is it going to happen at  
1423 this school, is it going to happen at other schools? What  
1424 is the plan? There is no plan. It is very, very  
1425 disturbing \_

1426           \*The Chair. Yes. Thank you. I can only imagine how  
1427 disruptive that is on the students and on the parents.  
1428 Councilwoman, New York City Mayor, Eric Adams, recently said  
1429 in a town hall, "I am going to tell you something, New  
1430 Yorkers. Never in my life have I had a problem I didn't see  
1431 an ending to. I don't see an ending to this. This issue  
1432 will destroy New York City. Destroy New York City.'" Mayor  
1433 Adams also said, "We have no more room."

1434           Do you agree with Mayor Adams's assessment that  
1435 President Biden's border policy is destroying New York City?

1436           \*Ms. Vernikov. Absolutely. It is touching on every  
1437 area of life: hospitals, health, crime has risen, and the  
1438 economy. Our budget, we are cutting almost every \_ we are  
1439 cutting money from almost every agency across the board,  
1440 besides for NYPD and FDNY, as announced yesterday,  
1441 Department of Education, the sanitation, health and

1442 hospitals, libraries, the Department of Corrections. And  
1443 there is still a hiring freeze across the board in all  
1444 agencies. And, of course, it is impacting our schools, our  
1445 hospitals. We have seen over 30,000 migrant \_ provided  
1446 service to over a thousand \_ 30,000 migrants.

1447 \*The Chair. Thank you.

1448 \*Ms. Vernikov. Thank you.

1449 \*The Chair. Thank you for being here.

1450 Mr. Blair, you also have real world experience about  
1451 what is going on in the border security. Would you address  
1452 \_ well, I am out of time. But just \_ we have a lot more  
1453 questions, and I appreciate you all being here.

1454 I yield back.

1455 \*Mr. Griffith. I thank the gentlelady. I now  
1456 recognize the ranking member of the full committee, Mr.  
1457 Pallone, for his five minutes of questions.

1458 \*Mr. Pallone. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

1459 As I said in my opening statement, not only is border  
1460 policy beyond our committee's legislative jurisdiction, but  
1461 it is also far afield from the bipartisan approach that our  
1462 committee has historically taken towards hard issues. I  
1463 think we can all agree that we need to reform our  
1464 immigration system. We need to better equip federal and  
1465 state agencies with tools to deal with immigrants arriving  
1466 at the southern border. But there is also a bipartisan

1467 agreement that the Nation faces a deadly drug overdose  
1468 crisis. Just last month, the House acted to reauthorize the  
1469 Support Act on an overwhelmingly bipartisan basis to provide  
1470 vital resources to families struggling with addiction.

1471 The fact that we can agree on the urgency of these  
1472 problems would suggest that we could come together to fix  
1473 them, but that is not what we are doing here. Instead, the  
1474 Republican majority continues to push a narrative of blame  
1475 that deflects from the responsibility to effectively govern.  
1476 And I would suggest that today's hearing is taking us  
1477 further away from constructively addressing these problems,  
1478 but it is an election year, so we are having an immigration  
1479 hearing here in the Energy and Commerce Committee.

1480 Let's -- let me go to Mr. Nowrasteh. Your organization  
1481 has done extensive research on the baseless link between  
1482 fentanyl and illegal boarding (sic) crossings. Based on  
1483 this research, do you think that shutting down our southern  
1484 border would really, as Republicans are claiming, solve the  
1485 fentanyl crisis?

1486 \*Mr. Nowrasteh. There is no evidence for that. The  
1487 increase in drug overdose deaths is ultimately not a border  
1488 security issue. Over 86 percent of convicted fentanyl drug  
1489 traffickers were U.S. citizens in 2021. Over 90 percent of  
1490 fentanyl seizures near or along the border were at legal  
1491 crossing points or interior vehicle checkpoints. And just a

1492 0.02 percent of migrants arrested by Border Patrol for  
1493 crossing illegally possessed any fentanyl whatsoever.

1494 \*Mr. Pallone. Well, thank you for clearing up this  
1495 what I consider baseless and unproductive talking point  
1496 about this link between fentanyl and illegal boarding (sic)  
1497 crossings.

1498 Let me ask a second question. Energy and Commerce's  
1499 primary legislative responsibility, in my opinion, is to  
1500 pass policies that will grow the economy, and the economy  
1501 needs immigrants to grow. But Republicans, instead of  
1502 joining us to achieve an expanded legal immigration process,  
1503 keep proposing or, you know, proposing what I call a harsh  
1504 and inhumane approach to the border.

1505 So, Mr. Nowrasteh, what are the types of restrictive  
1506 immigration policies that Republicans are proposing and why  
1507 are they so damaging to our efforts to grow the economy?

1508 \*Mr. Nowrasteh. So the last major piece of legislation  
1509 introduced in Congress that was a Trump-led plan, the Raise  
1510 Act in 2017, would have cut legal immigration in half. That  
1511 was the last major legislative proposal that was endorsed by  
1512 the former Republican president. That would be insanely  
1513 counterproductive. The United States population is already  
1514 growing at the slowest rate in history. The CBO projects  
1515 that in about 20 years, 100 percent of U.S. population  
1516 growth will come from immigration entirely.

1517           What we know from experience and from our understanding  
1518 of economic theory is that countries with shrinking or  
1519 stagnant populations have a lot harder time growing  
1520 economically. It seems obvious to say, but people are good  
1521 for the economy, and it would be great if we had more of  
1522 them.

1523           \*Mr. Pallone. Well, I appreciate that. And again, the  
1524 emphasis should be on effectively reforming the legal  
1525 immigration process, but we need to come together both  
1526 Democrats and Republicans and seriously address the  
1527 challenges of this country, and I don't think having this  
1528 partisan hearing today is helpful in that respect.

1529           Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

1530           \*Mr. Griffith. The gentleman yields back. I now  
1531 recognize the chair of the Health Subcommittee \_

1532           \*Mr. Guthrie. Thank you.

1533           \*Mr. Griffith. \_ for his five minutes.

1534           \*Mr. Guthrie. Thank you, I appreciate the recognition,  
1535 and thank you all for being here today. And we have heard  
1536 that \_ what President Biden has asked for from the beginning  
1537 of his administration about more money for the border. We  
1538 also know on Day 1, and he brags about Day 1, with the  
1539 stroke of pen he stopped the Remain in Mexico policy and  
1540 other things that did open the flow of people coming across  
1541 our southern border.

1542           And we do want to work together. There is negotiations  
1543 going on in the Senate. I know that we are going to have  
1544 our position here in the House and work together to move  
1545 forward, but you have to believe that the Executive Branch  
1546 or the person in the White House wants to solve the problem,  
1547 making an effort to solve the problem, and he could easily  
1548 \_ we could say everything that he has proposed that Congress  
1549 hasn't done, but he certainly hasn't undone the policies  
1550 that he alone put in place at the very beginning, which is  
1551 concerning.

1552           And we hear about the harsh and inhumane treatment of  
1553 the border. When we were down there, I was with Dr.  
1554 Burgess, and the stories of the migrants coming \_ their  
1555 tours and their travels and the things that they go through,  
1556 particularly the young \_ younger women, but all of them is  
1557 harsh and inhumane. And if you are for massive amounts of  
1558 immigration moving forward or the fact that what is  
1559 happening at the border is harsh and inhumane from the  
1560 travel that these people who are going through it move  
1561 forward.

1562           And, Mr. Blair, I know this is \_ in this committee we  
1563 have oversight of fentanyl. We talked about the Support Act  
1564 my friend brought up moving forward that I am the primary  
1565 sponsor for, and I don't think we can delink what is  
1566 happening in the border and fentanyl. I think it is

1567 absolutely related. Some people will say that, well \_ there  
1568 was 26,000 pounds of illicit fentanyl in 2023, 89 percent  
1569 increase from 2022. Some people will say, well, that just  
1570 shows that we are catching a lot of it.

1571 But the question is, Mr. Blair, as your experience or  
1572 as more \_ is that \_ are we just \_ is more \_ we are catching  
1573 not a higher percentage, we are just \_ there is just that  
1574 much more coming across the border in the last year?

1575 \*Mr. Blair. Unfortunately, of course the fentanyl  
1576 increase \_ I mean, the apprehension of fentanyl is  
1577 increasing. However, between the ports of entry, due to our  
1578 lack of good technology in order to understand the situation  
1579 at the border, we don't know what is coming across between  
1580 the ports of entry. We have no idea who, what \_

1581 \*Mr. Guthrie. Well, let me just \_ I guess I want you  
1582 to emphasize this because there is \_ that is the point. So  
1583 90 percent of all fentanyl seized is seized at the port of  
1584 entry. That is \_ so I hear \_ you will hear people use that  
1585 comment and say, well, we are stopping 90 \_ 90 percent of it  
1586 is coming through the port of entry. That is \_ that may not  
1587 be accurate. And I just want to answer that. 90 percent of  
1588 it seized is at the port of entry, but that doesn't mean all  
1589 of the fentanyl \_ that is 90 percent of the fentanyl coming  
1590 into the country. As a matter of fact, there is probably  
1591 far more not coming through the port of entry because it is

1592 easier to get it across because we are not inspecting. That  
1593 is the problem. That is what I want you to talk about.

1594 \*Mr. Blair. Yes, sir, 100 percent. So based off of  
1595 intel reports, when you are a Border Patrol agent, you  
1596 receive intelligence reports from sector intelligence units.  
1597 They have informants down in Mexico dictating where \_ a lot  
1598 of times where the narcotics are in the plazas. But,  
1599 unfortunately, when they come across the border, they \_ the  
1600 massive amounts of illegal immigrants that are swarming  
1601 across the border are used as a diversion for the Mexican  
1602 cartels to send either narcotics, or special interest  
1603 aliens, or those that they want to get away from us and not  
1604 be apprehended.

1605 And unfortunately, the current technology that we have,  
1606 whether that is ground based sensors, hunting cameras, or  
1607 known as drawbridge cameras, RVSS towers, or towers that I  
1608 mentioned in my testimony, it \_ there is massive gaps. And  
1609 so we have no idea what is actually happening between the \_

1610 \*Mr. Guthrie. One of the border agents said \_ that is  
1611 where \_ we were there, we were just on the New Mexico side  
1612 of the El Paso border. We were there. He actually held up  
1613 a water bottle. He said you could put \_ when cocaine comes  
1614 across the ports of entry, you hide it \_ you have seen  
1615 pictures that we have seen where they are hidden in fenders  
1616 of cars and things such as that. But you could put enough



1617 fentanyl to kill a city in a water bottle and put it in a  
1618 migrant's pocket and they come across the border that way.  
1619 And that is what they said they are finding. I mean, we  
1620 can't \_ unless the border agent wasn't being honest with me.  
1621 Is that what you were finding when you were there?

1622 \*Mr. Blair. No, 100 percent. So we saw that in our  
1623 drawbridge activations, the camera activations. We would  
1624 get a large group of illegal aliens, we would start  
1625 apprehending them, since that is our current  
1626 administration's prosecutorial discretion is to prioritize  
1627 processing them, which leaves the rest of the border open.

1628 So when we are doing that, we would see the drawbridge  
1629 images of people with backpacks and everything else. The  
1630 only reason we know that that is happening is because we  
1631 have \_ we have apprehended some of them and they would  
1632 eventually tell us exactly their tactics and techniques of  
1633 coming forward. Specifically like in Roma when the Chinese  
1634 were coming up, the cartel was making them throw away their  
1635 passports so it would make it so that we would have to take  
1636 a lot longer to process them or intake these \_ the Chinese  
1637 illegal aliens. At that same time, up river, that is when  
1638 they would start sending up the narcotics in the upper  
1639 [indiscernible] area.

1640 \*Mr. Guthrie. Okay, thank you.

1641 I only have five seconds. Mr. Rector, I was asking you

1642 about the California Medicaid Program, but in \_ and  
1643 undocumented workers, but my time is expired, and I will  
1644 yield back.

1645 \*Mr. Griffith. The gentleman yields back. I now  
1646 recognize Mr. Tonko of New York for his five minutes of  
1647 questioning.

1648 \*Mr. Tonko. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Congress needs to  
1649 work together on an evidence-based approach to mental health  
1650 security, treatment, and recovery programs to protect our  
1651 Americans struggling with addiction. Unfortunately, this  
1652 Congress we continue to see Republicans dodge that hard work  
1653 of securing care for Americans who are suffering. Instead,  
1654 they are baselessly fearmongering about the relationship  
1655 between immigration and fentanyl to score political points.

1656 Study after study has debunked the relationship between  
1657 immigration and fentanyl that Republicans have been trying  
1658 to sell the American people to whitewash their cruel and  
1659 inhumane approach to the border. Look, here are the facts.  
1660 We have an addiction crisis in our country.

1661 I ask for unanimous consent, Mr. Chair, to introduce  
1662 into the record a 2020 study titled, "Socioeconomic Risk  
1663 Factors for Fatal Opioid Doses in the United States."

1664 \*Mr. Griffith. And it will be taken under advisement  
1665 until we take them all up at the end of the hearing. Thank  
1666 you.

1667           \*Mr. Tonko. Thank you, sir.

1668           The study found that 99.6 percent of opioid overdose  
1669 deaths from 2009 to 2015 were among U.S. citizens. If we  
1670 are serious about disrupting the market for illicit drugs,  
1671 we need to disrupt the demand for illicit fentanyl at its  
1672 source by providing evidence-based treatment for people  
1673 struggling with addiction in our country rather than trying  
1674 to incarcerate and deport our way out of the problem.

1675           Here is another fact. Though Republicans claim that  
1676 shutting down the border is the answer to illicit fentanyl  
1677 trafficking, we found that shutting down -- shutting down  
1678 the border exacerbates rather than mitigates the problem of  
1679 fentanyl trafficking.

1680           I would like also to introduce for the record, Mr.  
1681 Chair, research by the Cato Institute titled, "Fentanyl is  
1682 Smuggled for U.S. Citizens by U.S. Citizens not Asylum  
1683 Seekers," which analyzes a dataset from the U.S. Customs and  
1684 Border Patrol on drug seizure statistics.

1685           \*Mr. Griffith. Likewise, it will be taken under  
1686 advisement. We will take a look at it, but would expect  
1687 that to come up at the end, and generally in this \_ so the  
1688 folks back home will know, generally in this sub we don't \_  
1689 we just let everybody put their stuff in unless there is  
1690 something particularly troublesome.

1691           \*Mr. Tonko. Okay. Well, thank you.

1692           This data shows that during COVID-19 related travel  
1693 restrictions, fentanyl seizures at ports quadrupled,  
1694 increasing from one-third of combined heroin and fentanyl  
1695 seizures to over 90 percent.

1696           Finally, we can't keep ignoring the evidence about how  
1697 fentanyl comes into the United States and who is bringing it  
1698 in. At most, just .0009 percent of the people arrested by  
1699 Border Patrol for crossing illegally possessed any fentanyl  
1700 whatsoever. But in contrast, 90 percent of fentanyl  
1701 seizures from October 20 of 2022 to August of 2023 happened  
1702 at ports of entry.

1703           I will again ask for this -- I know the process, we  
1704 will review them at the end, but I will include this third  
1705 request, the following October 2023 analysis for the record  
1706 titled, "Charting Drug Seizures at the U.S./Mexico Border."

1707           \*Mr. Griffith. And likewise, Mr. Tonko, since we have  
1708 had a couple colloquies on that, we will give you an extra  
1709 15 or 20 seconds to \_ so \_ when you see the clock run out,  
1710 you got another 15 or 20.

1711           \*Mr. Tonko. Thank you.

1712           Documenting fentanyl seizures at the border using CBP  
1713 data. This shows that an overwhelming majority of illicit  
1714 fentanyl, nearly 90 percent, interdicted by Border Patrol  
1715 happens at ports of entry.

1716           Now, Mr. Nowrasteh, Republicans have rejected this

1717 analysis and baselessly claim that fentanyl in -- is coming  
1718 in primarily from immigrants who escaped Border Patrol and  
1719 not ports of entry. So my question is, what does the data  
1720 actually tell us about the number of people crossing the  
1721 southern border who are smuggling fentanyl?

1722 \*Mr. Nowrasteh. So the data suggests that it is a very  
1723 small percentage of illegal immigrants who are crossing the  
1724 border are the ones who are smuggling fentanyl themselves.  
1725 Of course, it is a black market. We don't know what we  
1726 can't surveil what is going on because it is illegal, which  
1727 is great evidence and argument by the way for expanding  
1728 legal immigration because the government can't regulate a  
1729 black market, it can only regulate a legal market. But if  
1730 the data we have are suggestive of that, it is far smaller  
1731 than one percent.

1732 \*Mr. Tonko. All right, thank you. And what does this  
1733 data suggest about whether completely shutting down the  
1734 border can significantly reduce the amount of fentanyl  
1735 coming into the United States?

1736 \*Mr. Nowrasteh. Well, as we saw earlier, when there  
1737 were border shutdowns during the COVID emergency when  
1738 President Trump was in office, what we saw was a vast  
1739 increase in the amount of fentanyl being smuggled through  
1740 ports of entry into the United States. I mean, one of the  
1741 devastating facts of folks dying from fentanyl in the United

1742 States is that it doesn't take very much, the quantity is  
1743 very, very small both to get high but also to overdose, and  
1744 it is going to be very \_ I would say impossible for the  
1745 government to enforce its way out of this problem by trying  
1746 to interdict supply.

1747 \*Mr. Tonko. All right, thank you very much. I hope  
1748 the fearmongering stops and we come to the table to really  
1749 get serious about resolving some of these crises and  
1750 offering hope to people and benefit to our Nation.

1751 Thank you. I yield back.

1752 \*Mr. Griffith. The gentleman yields back. I now  
1753 recognize Mr. Duncan, chair of the Energy Subcommittee, for  
1754 his five minutes of questioning. And will publicly state my  
1755 regret of your decision not to seek reelection this year.

1756 \*Mr. Duncan. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

1757 Mr. Nowrasteh, if I said that right, what is Article  
1758 IV, Section 4 of the Constitution say?

1759 \*Mr. Nowrasteh. I am sorry, I didn't hear you for a  
1760 second.

1761 \*Mr. Duncan. What does Article IV, Section 4 of the  
1762 United States Constitution say?

1763 \*Mr. Nowrasteh. Is that the invasion section?

1764 \*Mr. Duncan. Yes, sir. It says that every state that  
1765 joins the union will be protected against invasion period.  
1766 What we are seeing across the southern border is an

1767 invasion. Look up the Webster Dictionary or any other  
1768 dictionary and you will see that we have a large movement of  
1769 people from one area to another constitutes an invasion.  
1770 That is what we are seeing.

1771 \*Mr. Nowrasteh. It is not conquest, though.

1772 \*Mr. Duncan. I am not asking you any questions. I  
1773 only have a certain amount of time.

1774 Mr. Chairman, I have a suite of legislation I brought  
1775 forward last January to address our border and national  
1776 security mess. In light of this hearing, I want to focus on  
1777 some of these this afternoon.

1778 The first is H.R. 776, the Build the Wall Act, which  
1779 would direct 50 percent of assets seized from Mexican  
1780 trafficking cartels toward building the southern border  
1781 wall. These cartels have been trafficking in day laborers,  
1782 children, sex workers, deadly Chinese fentanyl, and other  
1783 narcotics, illegal cigarettes. These are huge money-makers  
1784 for the cartel. No wonder they are working against us  
1785 securing the border, and it is time we cracked down hard on  
1786 their financing and then use that crackdown fund to generate  
1787 greater security for our southern border.

1788 I am proud to be the lead House sponsor of this  
1789 legislation along with Senator Ted Cruz of Texas who named  
1790 his version the El Chapo Act as a nod toward which cartel he  
1791 is specifically concerned about. Mr. Blair, I want to thank

1792 you for that written testimony you provided today on the  
1793 Mexican cartels and how they operate.

1794         The second is Terrorist Deportation Act, H.R. 778.  
1795 This bill would make automatic deportation proceedings of  
1796 any non-citizen in the terrorist screening database from  
1797 which we derive the no-fly list. That is why the bill's  
1798 nickname has been the No-Fly Bye-Bye bill.

1799         Mr. Chairman, CBP confirms that 294 illegal aliens on  
1800 the terror watch list have been apprehended at the southwest  
1801 border in fiscal year 2023 out of 35,433 illegal aliens  
1802 apprehended at the border with criminal connections. But  
1803 those are only the ones we caught. We have no idea how many  
1804 people are in our country, how many terrorists are coming  
1805 across that are got-aways, never had any touch with law  
1806 enforcement, they just are in the country.

1807         The numbers that you hear that are reported by the  
1808 government or by the media are apprehension rates, the  
1809 people who had contact with law enforcement in some way.  
1810 What about the ones that just came across the border and we  
1811 know that? They come across the border without any contact  
1812 with law enforcement.

1813         Thirdly, I want to discuss H.R. 779, the No Social  
1814 Security for Illegal Aliens. Mr. Rector, in your testimony  
1815 you go into depth into the fiscal cost of illegal  
1816 immigration and especially the strain illegal immigrants put



1817 on the social safety net, the magnet that government welfare  
1818 programs provide for illegal immigration into the United  
1819 States. Not only the strain on the Federal Government but  
1820 also the state services like schools and healthcare in the  
1821 \_ at the state level. So thank you for that. My bill  
1822 addresses those two magnets.

1823 Finally, I would like to \_ I would be remiss if I  
1824 didn't mention the recent regrettable Twitter remarks from a  
1825 member of this committee talking about her need for more  
1826 illegal immigrants in her district to boost her  
1827 redistricting efforts. She said the quiet part out loud.  
1828 Democrats want more illegal immigrants in their districts to  
1829 help them win elections. That is wrong.

1830 I am proud to have sponsored H.R. 149, Protecting Our  
1831 Democracy by Preventing Foreign Citizens from Voting, which  
1832 would deny federal funds to any jurisdiction that allows  
1833 non-citizens to vote in their elections. I am glad that  
1834 Senator Marco Rubio of Florida is sponsoring the Senate  
1835 companion bill. I have also cosponsored numerous bills with  
1836 my Republican counterparts to ensure that schemes like those  
1837 from Mr. Clarke are foiled by ensuring that only citizens be  
1838 counted in the census for purposes of making district  
1839 proportional.

1840 I ask my colleagues to join my effort on these efforts  
1841 of important pieces of legislation as well as H.R. 777, the

1842 Visa Overstay Enforcement Act, H.R. 780, the Mobilizing  
1843 Against Sanctuary Cities Act.

1844           At the end of the day, the American citizens know that  
1845 open border policies don't work. I don't disagree we ought  
1846 to address an expansion of legal immigration. I worked with  
1847 President Trump and House Republicans back when we had  
1848 Goodlatte 1 and Goodlatte 2, and actually a third bill that  
1849 was being worked on under Paul Ryan's speakership with all  
1850 the leadership and every group within the Republican  
1851 conference to actually address the issues of expanding legal  
1852 categories, legal immigration categories to allow more folks  
1853 to come in legally.

1854           But we are talking about illegal immigration. It is  
1855 illegal to cross our border \_ it is against federal law to  
1856 come across into our country without a visa, without a  
1857 permission slip to come into this country, and that is what  
1858 is happening, by the millions now under this administration  
1859 have entered our country, and they have been released into  
1860 this country. Every state is a border state now because you  
1861 have illegal immigrants not just walking across the southern  
1862 border into Texas, Arizona, California, New Mexico, but they  
1863 are actually being transported into states all over the  
1864 country, and that is wrong, and the American people know it  
1865 is wrong.

1866           This is the biggest issue we need to face. It is time

1867 for Congress and the Biden administration to get serious  
1868 about our southern border. The lack of seriousness from  
1869 this administration and the failure to execute the laws and  
1870 the Constitution I mentioned earlier are why I support and  
1871 have cosponsored articles of impeachment against Secretary  
1872 Mayorkas and President Biden for failing our country and  
1873 their constitutional duties to protect every state against  
1874 invasion, and why I look forward to the return of President  
1875 Donald Trump, who will once again help make America safe and  
1876 secure by securing our southern border.

1877 And with that, I yield back.

1878 \*Mr. Griffith. The gentleman yields back. I now  
1879 recognize Ms. Schakowsky of Illinois for her five minutes.  
1880 If you are ready. If not, we will give you a minute and we  
1881 will move to somebody else. Ms. Schakowsky, you are  
1882 recognized.

1883 \*Ms. Schakowsky. Okay. Woops. Thank you, Mr.  
1884 Chairman. Let me get myself together here a little.

1885 So before I ask a question, I wanted to ask the --  
1886 let's see, the Councilwoman, is it -- let me -- let me get  
1887 it. Let me try and get it --

1888 \*Ms. Vernikov. It's Vernikov.

1889 \*Ms. Schakowsky. Vernikov. So I have Ukrainian blood  
1890 running through my body, too. My family -- my mother's  
1891 family was from Ukraine. Jewish family. But I have to tell

1892 you that I was disturbed by the implication that somehow you  
1893 found in your testimony that the migrants could somehow be  
1894 guilty of being -- somehow promoting antisemitism, and I  
1895 think that is wrong and that is what I took from what you  
1896 said. And that is not a question, but I just want to tell  
1897 you that that is how it felt to me, that you were saying  
1898 that antisemitism was being promoted by them.

1899 So I did have a question, however, again from -- I am  
1900 bad with names. Now --

1901 \*Mr. Nowrasteh. Nowrasteh.

1902 \*Ms. Schakowsky. Okay, I appreciate that.

1903 \*Mr. Nowrasteh. Sorry, it is a poorly spelled last  
1904 name.

1905 \*Ms. Schakowsky. I -- okay, I am sorry. So what I  
1906 wanted to ask you, the question I wanted to ask you was that  
1907 -- what does the data say when it comes to that there -- if  
1908 there is any real evidence that terrorists and terrorism is  
1909 coming from south of the -- of the border?

1910 \*Mr. Nowrasteh. So from 1975 through 2022, in terms of  
1911 foreign-born terrorists who have entered as illegal  
1912 immigrants, they have murdered a grand total of zero  
1913 Americans and zero people on U.S. soil in attacks, and  
1914 injured zero people, and successfully carried out zero  
1915 attacks.

1916 \*Ms. Schakowsky. So I think that is really, really

1917 important for us to look at. Hold on a second.

1918 What is the other question?

1919 Okay. One of the other -- one of the things that has  
1920 been happening, and let me look at the time, I am running  
1921 out of time. In the city of Chicago we had a roundtable  
1922 talking about what are some of the efforts that we could do  
1923 to actually help the migrants and to help us all, and one of  
1924 them was about work permits. And in the city of Chicago, we  
1925 have actually been successful in speeding along some of the  
1926 work permits.

1927 But I am just wondering what you think as a strategy,  
1928 because we met with employers who said they are hungry for  
1929 workers and then employees, migrants -- to a person who said  
1930 when I said, what do you want from the United States of  
1931 America, they said a job, we want to work, we want to take  
1932 care of our own families. So the idea of really focusing on  
1933 work permits, can you comment on that?

1934 \*Mr. Nowrasteh. So I could not agree more with what  
1935 you just said. I believe that if you were lawfully present  
1936 in the United States on parole status, or waiting for your  
1937 asylum hearing, or otherwise president \_ present, your  
1938 employee \_ your employment authorization document which  
1939 allows you to work should just be incident to your status,  
1940 it should be attached to your status. You shouldn't have to  
1941 go and fill out additional paperwork and ask more people in

1942 other government agencies permission. It should be there  
1943 from Day 1 that you were here.

1944 Furthermore, you know, as a Libertarian, I do think  
1945 that you should not have to ask \_ if you are lawfully  
1946 present in the United States, have to ask people for  
1947 permission to work in the United States. That should be  
1948 something that we want people to do from Day 1, that  
1949 government should not make it harder for these migrants who  
1950 are here in the United States to work lawfully.

1951 \*Ms. Schakowsky. That is what they want to do, that is  
1952 what employers want. This would be good for our economy,  
1953 and it would be I think a good solution for the problem that  
1954 we have.

1955 And I yield back. Thank you.

1956 \*Mr. Griffith. I thank the gentlelady. And I now  
1957 recognize the gentleman from Alabama, Mr. Palmer, for his  
1958 five minutes of questioning.

1959 \*Mr. Palmer. I would just like to point out that I was  
1960 one of the ones down at the border a couple of weeks ago,  
1961 and what we are being told is that there is somewhere in the  
1962 range of 1.7 million known got-aways. We don't know how  
1963 many have come into the country that we didn't \_ we couldn't  
1964 interdict.

1965 I also found out that the cartels charge more for  
1966 people who don't want to be interdicted by Border Parole

1967 (sic) than those who just simply wade across the river and  
1968 then turn themselves in. I can understand that those who  
1969 are willing to turn themselves in, that they are here  
1970 looking for a job or seeking asylum. What possible motive  
1971 could those who don't want to be interdicted by the Border  
1972 Patrol have for getting into the country? Could it possibly  
1973 be drug trafficking, could it possibly be sex slavery, sex  
1974 trafficking? Could they be working for the cartel and  
1975 other?

1976 And then, Councilwoman Vernikov, my colleague from  
1977 Illinois made this comment about that you may have implied  
1978 something in terms of antisemitism. I think what you were  
1979 talking about was the very point I am trying to make right  
1980 now, that there are people crossing our border, we have no  
1981 idea what their intentions are.

1982 And I don't know if you were in the country on 911, as  
1983 Mr. Rector was here in Washington and Mr. Blair was here, I  
1984 was in Alabama. It only took 19 to carry out that attack,  
1985 and we know today that over 300 people have been  
1986 interdicted, have been arrested who are on the list of known  
1987 suspected terrorist. Do you want to respond to that?

1988 \*Ms. Vernikov. I would love to \_ for the Congresswoman  
1989 to be here when I respond, but first of all, I would just  
1990 like to respond that I have never said that migrants somehow  
1991 cause antisemitism. All I said was simply that the

1992 Department of Homeland Security issued a memo warning that  
1993 Hamas, Jihadist, Islamic Jihad, and Hezbollah may come  
1994 through because of the process that is virtually non-  
1995 process. We don't vet the people who come through the  
1996 border properly, so we don't know who \_

1997 \*Mr. Palmer. Okay, I just wanted to give you a chance  
1998 to get it on the record because I have been in classified  
1999 briefings \_ I was in a classified briefing right before  
2000 Christmas about some of the threats again \_ that we face in  
2001 this country. And I think this is a serious, serious issue,  
2002 and to imply that everybody who is coming across the border  
2003 is trying to get a job or to seek amnesty or \_ is \_ that is  
2004 just not going to fly.

2005 And this idea that 90 percent \_ the implication is that  
2006 90 percent of the fentanyl has been interdicted at our  
2007 points of entry. That would imply that the cartels are  
2008 unbelievably stupid. They know \_ they are crossing our  
2009 border at other places to bring their drugs in. We had  
2010 almost 110,000 people die from drug overdose deaths in 2022.  
2011 Over half of it is fentanyl. They are now mixing it with  
2012 other drugs like tranq that Narcan won't work on.

2013 So I am not sure that this is strictly a business  
2014 proposition for them. It is at a point where I think maybe  
2015 we have gone from a war on drugs to a war with drugs. And  
2016 my colleague from South Carolina was talking about the



2017 states' ability to defend themselves. They are under  
2018 attack. It is a drug attack that has taken the lives of  
2019 tens of thousands of Americans, hundreds every day.

2020 I also want to ask something else, Mr. Rector. In your  
2021 work on \_ over the years, we talk about how low our  
2022 unemployment rate is. That is a fake number. They changed  
2023 how we calculate unemployment back in 2012, 2014, somewhere  
2024 in there, and we stopped counting people who no longer look  
2025 for a job. We have got the lowest labor participation rate  
2026 in decades.

2027 So is this an issue that we are desperate for people to  
2028 come in our country to work or is it a problem that we got  
2029 people who the government is paying not to work?

2030 \*Mr. Rector. I think that we have an issue and have  
2031 had an issue with the decline of labor force participation  
2032 among low-skill \_ particularly low-skill males and low-skill  
2033 black males, going back decades now, and it clearly is  
2034 related to them being driven out of the labor force by  
2035 competition with largely illegal, low-skill labor. As I  
2036 said, I have \_ I wrote in my testimony, I have 89 studies  
2037 that show that compared \_

2038 \*Mr. Palmer. So \_

2039 \*Mr. Rector. \_ out of those 89 \_

2040 \*Mr. Palmer. I am down to just a few seconds. So what  
2041 you are saying is is that we have created a competitive

2042 disadvantage for the citizen workforce.

2043           \*Mr. Rector. That is right, and when you drive the  
2044 males out of the workforce then the marriage rate goes down  
2045 and out of wedlock births go up, welfare goes up. It is a  
2046 huge, huge, negative cycle, and we shouldn't be doing it.

2047           \*Mr. Palmer. Madam Chair, I am out of time. I yield  
2048 back.

2049           \*Mrs. Lesko. [Presiding] Thank you. Now I recognize  
2050 Dr. Ruiz for five minutes of questioning.

2051           \*Mr. Ruiz. Thank you. Today I want to talk through  
2052 each of the subjects brought up in the hearing and address  
2053 some of the deeply misleading and disturbing fearmongering  
2054 that we have heard about immigrants and the impact of  
2055 immigration on crime, public benefits, and economic growth.

2056           First and foremost, as an emergency physician, I have  
2057 seen time and time again the devastating and often fatal  
2058 effects of drug overdose. Fentanyl, in particular,  
2059 continues to wreak havoc on our communities and we have and  
2060 we should still continue to address this crisis in our  
2061 country. You know, when it is misinformation, it is not  
2062 intentional. When it is disinformation, despite the facts,  
2063 it is intentional. And there is a fine line between  
2064 disinformation and straight out lying.

2065           So this is the disinformation that is being propagated,  
2066 which is that drug cartels are using migrants to mule in

2067 fentanyl across the border. The fact is while we are seeing  
2068 fentanyl crossing the southern border, immigration  
2069 authorities say nearly all of that is smuggled by people who  
2070 are legally authorized to cross the border, and the majority  
2071 are by U.S. citizens. Virtually none is seized from  
2072 migrants seeking asylum. So let me say that again.  
2073 Virtually none is seized from migrants seeking asylum.

2074 In regards to healthcare workers, you know, we have  
2075 heard the disinformation that immigrants are putting an  
2076 intolerable high strain on our healthcare system. Fact is  
2077 immigrants are actually crucial to bolstering our healthcare  
2078 workforce. In reality, Mr. Nowrasteh, in a 2020 paper you  
2079 found that nearly 30 percent of all surgeons and physicians  
2080 in the U.S. are immigrants, which is about 72 percent  
2081 greater than their 16 percent share of the population.

2082 So, Mr. Nowrasteh, what does this say about immigrants'  
2083 positive impact on our healthcare system?

2084 \*Mr. Nowrasteh. I think it says quite a lot. It shows  
2085 that immigrants both increase the demand for healthcare  
2086 services in the United States because they are people who  
2087 are here who consume medical care. It also shows that they  
2088 increase the supply of healthcare that is created in the  
2089 United States and available to everyone.

2090 And I think one of the things we know from our study of  
2091 economics is that people are good for the economy. In terms

2092 of the other aspects of the healthcare sector, immigrants  
2093 are overrepresented in researchers for vaccines and medical  
2094 technology and other types of innovations that has saved  
2095 millions of lives in the United States. So across the board  
2096 in terms of expanding the supply of healthcare, immigrants  
2097 have been an important component of that.

2098 \*Mr. Ruiz. And in that same paper, you also found that  
2099 207,076 healthcare workers in the United States in 2020  
2100 during the pandemic were undocumented. You also wrote that  
2101 unnecessary restrictions on undocumented immigrants entering  
2102 the healthcare workforce may very well have attributed to  
2103 the medical worker shortage we saw during the pandemic.

2104 Mr. Nowrasteh, how would providing opportunities for  
2105 undocumented immigrants to regularize their status for the  
2106 strength in our healthcare system, including our medical  
2107 workforce?

2108 \*Mr. Nowrasteh. Well, one of the main reasons is  
2109 removing a lot \_ by being lawfully present, that would  
2110 reduce the burden of many of the other medical licenses that  
2111 different medical professionals have to get for various  
2112 occupations. Different states have different requirements  
2113 so this is not like by any mean a uniform \_ means a uniform  
2114 statement, but many states do restrict licenses to people  
2115 who are either citizens or lawfully present. So by removing  
2116 that basically burden by legalizing folks who are

2117 unauthorized immigrants, it will allow more of them to go  
2118 into licensed occupations where there are those  
2119 restrictions.

2120       \*Mr. Ruiz. Thank you. And the last disinformation we  
2121 have heard repeatedly, false claims that undocumented  
2122 immigrants are straining our public benefit system. Fact:  
2123 undocumented immigrants put more into our public resources  
2124 than they take from them. For example, undocumented  
2125 immigrants pay an estimated 11.7 billion dollars in state  
2126 and local taxes every year but are also ineligible for a  
2127 large swath of government services like Social Security and  
2128 Medicare.

2129       So are immigrants really straining our public benefit  
2130 system, and what is the real impact?

2131       \*Mr. Nowrasteh. So immigrants in total are not  
2132 straining the public services or the \_ increasing net fiscal  
2133 costs in the United States. Studies that rely on dynamic  
2134 economic models, the generational accounting models  
2135 generally find that immigrants in the United States have a  
2136 positive net fiscal contribution and meaning that they pay  
2137 more in taxes than they consume in benefits. And one of the  
2138 major reasons why that is is because most of them come after  
2139 \_ without having consumed public school for themselves, so  
2140 they come in their 20s or 30s, they weren't put through  
2141 public school. As a result, they start paying taxes

2142 immediately and start to contribute more.

2143           Whereas, somebody like myself who is a native born  
2144 American and went to school in California in a public  
2145 school, incurred somewhere around \$200,000 of costs by the  
2146 time I was 18. If I had immigrated from abroad at that age,  
2147 it wouldn't have \_ I wouldn't have \_

2148           \*Mr. Ruiz. Thank you.

2149           \*Mr. Nowrasteh. \_ incurred that.

2150           \*Mr. Ruiz. And, you know, I am going to yield back,  
2151 but it is a shame we are not -- that we are wasting time --

2152           \*Mr. Griffith. [Presiding] The gentleman yields back.

2153           \*Mr. Ruiz. -- airing that partisan political  
2154 showmanship grievances when we should be working together at  
2155 the table.

2156           \*Mr. Griffith. I now recognize the gentleman from  
2157 Texas, Mr. Crenshaw, for his five minutes.

2158           \*Mr. Crenshaw. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Hard to know  
2159 where to start because there is so many good places to  
2160 counterargue.

2161           First I want to address just the common refrain from my  
2162 colleagues of the Democrat party. It is always a story  
2163 without end, right. It is always a story where we are about  
2164 to tell you the plotline and a conclusion but we never  
2165 actually get there. And they are always talking about  
2166 working together and comprehensive immigration reform.

2167 These are meaningless terms. Completely meaningless. If  
2168 they ever put pen to paper, it is usually something about  
2169 mass amnesty or just something so far out there that it is  
2170 not comprehensive at all, it is not working together at all.

2171 So let's just dismiss this idea that there is even a  
2172 common goal. I would appreciate an honest debate. An  
2173 honest debate about whether you want more illegal  
2174 immigration or not, whether you want open borders or not.  
2175 And that is a policy position to take. Nobody ever wants to  
2176 say it, they always say they want closed bor \_ they want  
2177 secure borders. Of course we want secure borders, they say.  
2178 But all of the actions dictate otherwise. So let's have an  
2179 honest debate about whether we should have borders or not.  
2180 At least that would be honest.

2181 Mr. Nowrasteh, some of the points you make about the  
2182 costs, you say it is so unlikely that anyone would ever be a  
2183 victim of an illegal immigrant, an illegal immigrant  
2184 terrorist attack. What is your point there? How are the \_  
2185 how is that data relevant? If we all assume you are correct  
2186 and that it is extremely unlikely that any American is going  
2187 to be threatened by an illegal immigrant, what is your point  
2188 exactly?

2189 \*Mr. Nowrasteh. Well, I have several points in that.  
2190 One is to put out evidence and research because the  
2191 statement gets made by lots of people on both sides about

2192 how dangerous terrorism is along the border, and it is  
2193 important to have facts out there about that.

2194         Secondly, the Federal Government has limited resources,  
2195 thankfully. It has limited resources and so it must choose  
2196 where to allocate its limited security resources most  
2197 efficiently to protect the lives of American \_

2198         \*Mr. Crenshaw. All right, but you agree, there is more  
2199 to policy than numbers, right? I mean, there is  
2200 preferences, there is values, there is \_ you know, if we are  
2201 talking about the border, the reason I want an honest debate  
2202 on that is because I want an honest debate on whether there  
2203 is value in sovereignty, whether there is value in our  
2204 ability to absorb mass immigration, whether there is value  
2205 in following the rule of law, even if you disagree with it.  
2206 Then we would have an honest debate.

2207         And also, you know, speaking of dangers here, I am just  
2208 going to read you Texas DPS data. This is between \_ and  
2209 over the last \_ basically over a decade. 300,000 illegal  
2210 aliens were charged with more than 500,000 criminal  
2211 offenses, arrests for almost a thousand homicide charges,  
2212 64,000 assault charges. It is not nothing, right? It is  
2213 very unlikely that I am going to be in a car accident. It  
2214 doesn't mean I don't wear a seatbelt.

2215         So when I ask like what the point of the data is, I  
2216 mean that in all honesty. I don't understand the point. I



2217 think one of your points might also be that most of the  
2218 people coming across the border are looking for a job,  
2219 right?

2220 \*Mr. Nowrasteh. Yes.

2221 \*Mr. Crenshaw. And I know you are not making this  
2222 point, but my colleagues often do, which is if that is the  
2223 case, then why aren't we talking about reforms to asylum \_  
2224 the process \_ the asylum process? Why aren't we talking  
2225 about reforms to the asylum process?

2226 We know just from the data that the vast, vast majority  
2227 of people coming from Central American countries are coming  
2228 here for work. They are coming here as economic migrants.  
2229 They don't have an asylum case. We all know it. And yet  
2230 that is what is claimed. You look at countries that have,  
2231 you know, brutal dictatorships, Iran, Russia, China, they  
2232 have much higher rates of asylum acceptance.

2233 So why aren't we talking about asylum reform? Why  
2234 aren't we talking about following the processes that we have  
2235 in place to keep us safe, to keep our rule of law in tact?  
2236 I mean, Mr. Nowrasteh, you know, you make another argument  
2237 about economic benefits, like basically if there is job  
2238 openings, then we have to just accept immigration in order  
2239 to fill those job openings.

2240 What is the upper limit there? Is there a limiting  
2241 principle to that?

2242           \*Mr. Nowrasteh. I think the limiting principle is the  
2243 desire of the free market and how much we want the U.S.  
2244 economy to grow.

2245           \*Mr. Crenshaw. Okay. So would unemployment rates be  
2246 the limiting principle? Like if we have very high  
2247 unemployment, would you stop immigrate \_ legal immigration?

2248           \*Mr. Nowrasteh. Well, the way that markets work, sir,  
2249 is that it would stop on its own because there would be no  
2250 labor demand for it. So if there is no jobs \_ I mean, these  
2251 people come because Americans want to employ them,  
2252 primarily, and if there is nobody here who wants to hire  
2253 them in the United States, then they are not going to come.  
2254 In the same way that it determines like the flow of American  
2255 citizens between states, between cities is a lot of times  
2256 due to the difference in \_

2257           \*Mr. Crenshaw. I mean, I am sure \_ that is very much  
2258 in line with single variable analysis, you know. It is like  
2259 if \_ hey, if it saves one life, let's lock down the country,  
2260 and if it saves one life from COVID deaths. It is the same  
2261 line of thinking, it is single variable analysis, it is  
2262 number \_

2263           \*Mr. Nowrasteh. It is not the same at all.

2264           \*Mr. Crenshaw. It is numbers only. And policy isn't  
2265 made just by numbers, that is why I don't associate with  
2266 Libertarianism because Libertarianism is \_

2267           \*Mr. Nowrasteh. You don't like numbers?

2268           \*Mr. Crenshaw. No. I like values as well. I like  
2269 holistic policymaking with values, and preferences, and  
2270 limiting principles. And the unfortunate reality is with  
2271 immigration there is no limiting principles on the other  
2272 side. Thank you.

2273           \*Mr. Griffith. The gentleman yields back. I now  
2274 recognize Mr. Peters of California for his five minutes of  
2275 questioning.

2276           \*Mr. Peters. Mr. Nowrasteh, I will just give you a  
2277 quick 15 seconds to respond to that if you wanted.

2278           \*Mr. Nowrasteh. When we have security threats to the  
2279 United States and the U.S. government has scarce resources,  
2280 knowing how to allocate those resources efficiently to save  
2281 American lives I think is important. We can talk about  
2282 words and meanings and things like values and sovereignty,  
2283 and all those things do matter. Individual liberty also  
2284 matters. Free market economics also matters.

2285           But if we are so hung up on words like sovereignty,  
2286 instead of figuring out how to allocate scarce resources to  
2287 save lives, frankly, I am more interested in saving lives  
2288 than whatever magic buzzwords people want to us.

2289           \*Mr. Peters. All right, great. Thank you.

2290           The 2003 (sic) fiscal year appropriations bill passed  
2291 last Congress included increased resources for border

2292 security and personnel, and now there are talks in the  
2293 Senate for a new border funding deal, and the House will  
2294 evaluate whatever the Senate sends over. But I have to say,  
2295 it is a shame that even, you know, before we started this  
2296 week, Speaker Johnson was on Twitter saying that he has no  
2297 interest in working with us on a bipartisan solution to get  
2298 serious about what we need to create, a just and humane  
2299 solution to what is happening at the border, and an  
2300 effective one, by the way.

2301         The Biden administration has asked for supplemental  
2302 funding to add more personnel needed at the border to  
2303 properly process immigrants and asylum seekers. And it is  
2304 true that most people are denied asylum, I think it is 90  
2305 percent, but because we don't have the processing here, they  
2306 would have to wait a year or two to get that denial. If we  
2307 had more people there, we could get them their denial that  
2308 they are going to get ultimately and send them back right  
2309 away. It would alleviate the backlogs in the system that  
2310 are causing overcrowding in detention facilities and leaving  
2311 migrants in a state of prolonged uncertainty, which isn't  
2312 good for anybody.

2313         So these seem like immediate steps Congress can take to  
2314 address challenges arising from an increase in border  
2315 crossing, which no one denies. And unfortunately, some  
2316 folks would rather have a conversation about shutting down

2317 the border than making the smart investments that we need in  
2318 staff to process immigrants safely and humanely.

2319         Mr. Nowrasteh, how can we make smarter, more effective  
2320 investments in border personnel in a way that keeps our  
2321 country safe and prevents chaos at the border?

2322         \*Mr. Nowrasteh. So I think it is important to view  
2323 this systemically. A lot of folks who are asking for asylum  
2324 are \_ absolutely do not have legitimate asylum claims. We  
2325 can't really figure that out until they go through the  
2326 process, but that is absolutely true. But the reason why  
2327 they are going through that route is because there is not  
2328 another visa or way available for them to come lawfully.

2329         So when you think about it systemically like this, by  
2330 expanding H-2 visas for temporary guest workers, for  
2331 instance, for lower and mid-skilled workers, you will divert  
2332 a lot of these folks who are trying to go through the asylum  
2333 system into these lawful pathways and then reduce the  
2334 pressure on the overburdened border personnel, on Border  
2335 Patrol, and a lot of these other folks who are running the  
2336 asylum system. So you got to think about it systemically  
2337 like that.

2338         \*Mr. Peters. What is the relationship that you have  
2339 seen between immigration and innovation? I see like over 35  
2340 percent of businesses have at least one immigrant founder,  
2341 45 percent of Fortune 500 companies were founded by

2342 immigrants or their children. How would - what is the  
2343 relationship that you see in more legal pathways, would it  
2344 boost our ability for innovation and to lead the world in  
2345 technological change?

2346       \*Mr. Nowrasteh. Liberalized immigration would vastly  
2347 increase productivity growth and the technological  
2348 development in the United States. Immigrants to the United  
2349 States are disproportionately likely to patent,  
2350 disproportionately likely to start firms at every single  
2351 firm size. So you are talking about small businesses,  
2352 medium, large. And those companies that end up being  
2353 unicorns, like those that dominate Silicon Valley.

2354       Immigrants are overrepresented at every stage of that,  
2355 they have been throughout American history. It is currently  
2356 not an aberration. And one of the other facts we know from  
2357 Charles I. Jones, who is a professor at Stanford who is an  
2358 economist who studies economic growth, is one of the best  
2359 predictors of supply of scientist and innovators who are  
2360 working in the United States. And immigrants are overly  
2361 represented in all of these, both in the graduate school  
2362 level as well as practicing scientists.

2363       So if you want to really expand the productive  
2364 potential of the United States, push out that productive  
2365 possibilities frontier, which I want, then we do need to  
2366 expand legal immigration opportunities.

2367           The other way is by lower-skilled immigrants actually  
2368 by providing a lot of goods and services to other Americans  
2369 through childcare, through food prep. For all the other  
2370 very viable goods and services supply, it allows higher-  
2371 skilled Americans, particularly women, to work longer hours,  
2372 to even work in the first place in the labor force and to  
2373 fulfill their dreams and aspirations, which in turn of  
2374 course expands the U.S. economy.

2375           \*Mr. Peters. Thank you, I appreciate -- I appreciate  
2376 your testimony, and thanks to all the witnesses for being  
2377 here.

2378           I yield back.

2379           \*Mr. Griffith. The gentleman yields back. And let me  
2380 make an announcement real quick. What we are going to try  
2381 to do is get this in before votes. It is going to be tough.  
2382 I will recognize the regular members for their \_ of the  
2383 subcommittee for their five minutes. All waive-ons will be  
2384 three minutes from the full committee.

2385           That being said, I recognize the gentleman from North  
2386 Dakota \_ did I get it wrong again?

2387           \*Mr. Armstrong. No, you got it right.

2388           \*Mr. Griffith. Got it right, okay.

2389           \*Mr. Armstrong. South Dakota has Mount Rushmore, we  
2390 have oil.

2391           \*Mr. Griffith. There you go. For his five minutes of

2392 questioning.

2393           \*Mr. Armstrong. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We know that  
2394 frequent deployments to the southern border are affecting  
2395 staffing levels at the northern border. In northern \_ in  
2396 North Dakota, several ports of entry close early at 4:00 or  
2397 5:00 p.m. while their Canadian counterparts are open until  
2398 9:00 or 10:00 p.m. Families farm on both sides of the  
2399 border, businesses rely on customers from both sides of the  
2400 border. Commerce doesn't just stop at 4:00 p.m. when CBP  
2401 closes the port of entry.

2402           Ms. Diana Dixon from Northgate, North Dakota would like  
2403 to know what the justification for keeping our ports of  
2404 entry closed is. Mrs. Dixon's bar, Donna's Den, closed  
2405 because the business primarily drew Canadian customers who  
2406 are no longer able to get back across the border at 4:00  
2407 p.m.

2408           Ms. Mary Holmquist, whose hometown is Neche, North  
2409 Dakota, has contacted our office about how she can no longer  
2410 have dinner celebrations with her Canadian relatives who  
2411 live just across the border. That means no Christmas  
2412 dinners, no birthday dinners with their family without  
2413 spending the night, all because ports of entries are closed.

2414           Mr. Allan Engh from Sherwood, North Dakota, just two  
2415 miles south of the Canadian border, he has been a mayor  
2416 there for 36 years, used to own a hardware store and one-



2417 third of his customers were Canadian. He said that the  
2418 small business town rely on Canadian customers and that the  
2419 current hours are killing their economy. Mr. Engh equated  
2420 keeping the northern border open for business to a small  
2421 town possessing an ambulance and a fire truck. They only  
2422 get used a few times a year, but you want them available  
2423 when you need them, and it is the government's  
2424 responsibility to maintain them.

2425 I have introduced bipartisan, bicameral H.R. 4961  
2426 requiring U.S. Custom and Border Protection hours to operate  
2427 the northern border to match or exceed pandemic hours. Do  
2428 you know how frustrating it is for my constituents as far  
2429 away from the southern border as possible to not be able to  
2430 conduct legal commerce at a time when we have illegal  
2431 commerce, illegal entry, resources being deployed down at  
2432 the southern border. To be quite frank, it is absolutely  
2433 mind-numbing and I share their frustration, I share their  
2434 concern.

2435 But I \_ in a different life, I \_ so my wife legally  
2436 immigrated when we got married. 15 of my first 20 cases in  
2437 federal court were illegal reentry cases. The vast majority  
2438 of my office time in district has spent on H-2A, H-2B, and  
2439 H-1B. And recognizing that we need reforms to our legal  
2440 immigration system and have needed them for a very long is  
2441 true.

2442           But I want to use the next two-and-a-half minutes, Mr.  
2443 Blair, in a different life you would have been sitting at a  
2444 desk like that, I would have been at counsel's table, we  
2445 might have had \_ been having a little more confrontational  
2446 conversation in a cross-examination at some point in time.  
2447 But I think one thing you and I can talk about maybe a  
2448 little better, because I have seen some looks and  
2449 frustration.

2450           A lot of this stuff sounds really good in a hearing  
2451 room. I don't think people really know how crime occurs,  
2452 and I don't think we really talk about it, and I don't think  
2453 we deal with it, particularly in a place where there is mass  
2454 chaos and lack of operational capacity. If you are claiming  
2455 \_ seeking asylum at the southern border, you are turning  
2456 yourself in to the authorities, particularly under this  
2457 current administration's guidance regarding asylum, is that  
2458 correct?

2459           \*Mr. Blair. That is correct.

2460           \*Mr. Armstrong. So why in the heck would you carry  
2461 fentanyl when you are turning yourself in for an asylum  
2462 claim?

2463           \*Mr. Blair. Uh \_

2464           \*Mr. Armstrong. Would that help or hurt your asylum  
2465 claim?

2466           \*Mr. Blair. That would hurt your asylum claim.

2467           \*Mr. Armstrong. So people who are being legally  
2468 apprehended, legal port of entry between ports of entry that  
2469 are there specifically to turn themselves in to a U.S. \_ to  
2470 somebody with a U. \_ with a U.S. uniform on probably aren't  
2471 carrying fentanyl.

2472           \*Mr. Blair. No, sir.

2473           \*Mr. Armstrong. So how is the fentanyl getting across  
2474 the border?

2475           \*Mr. Blair. By those who are trying to evade us.

2476           \*Mr. Armstrong. Okay. So when 400 migrants get to a  
2477 border, Eagle Pass, pick whichever one you want, what  
2478 happens to our interdiction officers in that area?

2479           \*Mr. Blair. All of us have to go to those that gave  
2480 themselves up.

2481           \*Mr. Armstrong. So you are helping process the people  
2482 who are claiming asylum coming in and turning themselves in?

2483           \*Mr. Blair. Yes, sir.

2484           \*Mr. Armstrong. Does the cartel know that?

2485           \*Mr. Blair. Yes, sir.

2486           \*Mr. Armstrong. What are they doing 20 miles away?

2487           \*Mr. Blair. They are sending narcotics north.

2488           \*Mr. Armstrong. Are \_

2489           \*Mr. Blair. With special interest aliens or \_

2490           \*Mr. Armstrong. So \_ and this is one of the things I  
2491 have said. We often refer to the cartels as drug cartels,

2492 and there is a reason for that because they do that, but  
2493 they are not, they are in the business of money making. It  
2494 could be anybody in a human trafficking situation, I mean,  
2495 whatever they can make money on, they are going to make  
2496 money on. It doesn't have to be fentanyl.

2497 \*Mr. Blair. Correct.

2498 \*Mr. Armstrong. And when we get a handle on the  
2499 fentanyl crisis, it will be a different drug crisis. We  
2500 shut down methamphetamine, clandestine methamphetamine labs  
2501 in North Dakota, Minnesota. We \_ our attorney generals  
2502 worked \_ guess who got into it right after it? Cartels.  
2503 And we talk about legal citizens, ports of entry, who is  
2504 bringing it across, who is not bringing it across, who is  
2505 using, and we are dealing with all that. Who makes the  
2506 fentanyl?

2507 \*Mr. Blair. The cartels make the fentanyl with China  
2508 precursors.

2509 \*Mr. Armstrong. Like almost all of it.

2510 \*Mr. Blair. Almost all of it.

2511 \*Mr. Armstrong. So the fentanyl that somebody is  
2512 overdosing on in Grand Forks, North Dakota is made by who?

2513 \*Mr. Blair. The Mexican cartels.

2514 \*Mr. Armstrong. And it is made where?

2515 \*Mr. Blair. In Mexico.

2516 \*Mr. Armstrong. And it is getting across the border.

2517           \*Mr. Blair. Correct.

2518           \*Mr. Armstrong. And our lack of operational security  
2519 at the southern border is helping effectuate that whether  
2520 you are in New York, Grand Forks, Minnesota, Chicago,  
2521 anywhere?

2522           \*Mr. Blair. Yes, sir.

2523           \*Mr. Armstrong. So I don't particularly care if it is  
2524 a U.S. citizen going across, picking it up from the cartels,  
2525 and bringing it across, and poisoning teenagers in Grand  
2526 Forks, North Dakota.

2527           I yield back.

2528           \*Mr. Griffith. The gentleman yields back. I now  
2529 recognize Mrs. Lesko, the vice chair of this subcommittee,  
2530 and thank her for chairing for me a few minutes ago, for her  
2531 five minutes of questioning.

2532           \*Mrs. Lesko. Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to  
2533 all of you for coming here and testifying today.

2534           Earlier today my colleague, Ms. DeGette, said today and  
2535 then Biden said recently that border security could be  
2536 solved if only Congress acted. If only Republicans would  
2537 work with the Democrats. Well, I would like to remind my  
2538 friend and colleague that Democrats had total control of the  
2539 Presidency, the Senate, and the House for two years and did  
2540 absolutely nothing to secure the border or any immigration  
2541 issue. And, in fact, I think there wouldn't even be a

2542 hearing today if they still had control of the House. The  
2543 only reason we are having a hearing on border security is  
2544 because Republicans have a majority in the House and we care  
2545 about it because we actually believe that it is a national  
2546 security crisis and a humanitarian crisis and we want to try  
2547 to solve it.

2548         So it is not just, as Ms. Castor and Mr. Pallone said,  
2549 a political issue, an election year issue, this is a real  
2550 issue, and it is a national security issue, it is a  
2551 humanitarian crisis for the illegal immigrants themselves.  
2552 Women are getting raped, they are being sold. Kids are  
2553 being sold into sex slavery. This is a fact.

2554         In December of 2023, 302,000 border crossings occurred.  
2555 That is great than any time in history. That is greater  
2556 than the entire population of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania in  
2557 just one month. You compare that to just three years ago  
2558 under President Trump in December of 2020, 74,000 crossings.  
2559 In fiscal year 2023, 169 people were caught that we know of  
2560 that are on the terrorist watch list.

2561         In Lukeville, Arizona, the port of entry was just  
2562 recently closed because all of the people crossing in the  
2563 Oregon Pipe National Monument across the border and they had  
2564 to divert the Border Patrol officers over there to control  
2565 it, and many of them were military-age men from Africa.  
2566 This is a concern.

2567           So, Mr. Blair, on December 13th, an internal officer  
2568 safety alert warned CBP agents to be vigilant after the  
2569 Mexican military seized 10 IEDs near the Tucson, Arizona  
2570 border sector. Does that concern you?

2571           \*Mr. Blair. Yes, ma'am.

2572           \*Mrs. Lesko. Does it concern you that there were 169  
2573 illegal immigrants that were caught that were on the  
2574 terrorist watch list in fiscal year 2023?

2575           \*Mr. Blair. Yes, ma'am.

2576           \*Mrs. Lesko. Does it concern you that there are  
2577 thousands of illegal migrants that are coming from countries  
2578 of interest where people from those countries may want to  
2579 harm Americans?

2580           \*Mr. Blair. Yes, ma'am.

2581           \*Mrs. Lesko. Mr. Rector, on Saturday while speaking to  
2582 reporters on the White House south lawn, President Biden  
2583 once again said he doesn't think the situation at the  
2584 southern border is a crisis. Why do you think President  
2585 Biden says this? Why do you think he wants open border  
2586 policies? Do you have any idea?

2587           \*Mr. Rector. Well, his policy is to pretend this isn't  
2588 happening because he doesn't have any answer because he has  
2589 generated this problem by basically telling people all  
2590 across the world that if they come to the southern border  
2591 they will be let in and they will granted residency and

2592 eventually they will be given U.S. citizenship. He is going  
2593 to give them access to the welfare system.

2594         We talk about amnesty in welfare, but his policies, for  
2595 example, in Build Back Better created massive new welfare  
2596 programs for illegal immigrants. You know, they are \_ he is  
2597 saying come on in, we have got \_ we are going to let you in,  
2598 and we are going to give you free stuff, and we are going to  
2599 give you citizenship when you get here. And he \_ the  
2600 American public doesn't agree with that, so he has to  
2601 pretend it is not really happening.

2602         \*Mrs. Lesko. You know, and the gentleman from the Cato  
2603 Institute said something to the effect of, oh, well we need  
2604 to increase legal migration because it worked, it worked,  
2605 you know, there was less people coming from those countries  
2606 when Biden had paroled in the people from the countries, if  
2607 I am not correct. But wasn't \_ didn't that attract other  
2608 people from other countries? Because we had 302,000 people  
2609 coming from all over the world. I think 160 countries.

2610         Mr. Rector, what do you think?

2611         \*Mr. Rector. Absolutely. The solution by Libertarians  
2612 to illegal immigration is to allow unlimited legal inflows,  
2613 everyone can come. And when you do that, when you even talk  
2614 about doing that, what you generate is more and more people  
2615 willing to come, and that basically changes the nature of  
2616 the United States, it alters our sovereignty. But in



2617 particular with the current illegals, they are very low-  
2618 skilled, they absorb huge amounts of government benefits,  
2619 contrary to what people suggest. They do pay some taxes,  
2620 but it is a huge burden on the U.S. taxpayer, and having  
2621 more of it, legal or illegal, isn't going to be the  
2622 solution.

2623 \*Mr. Griffith. And the gentlelady yields back. I  
2624 appreciate the gentlelady. I now recognize the gentlelady  
2625 from Florida, Mrs. Cammack, for her five minutes.

2626 \*Mrs. Cammack. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I don't even  
2627 really know where to start because I have heard so many  
2628 comments in here that really deserve to be questioned,  
2629 refuted, and addressed.

2630 So one thing that really stuck out to me, and I really  
2631 apologize, your last name is very hard to pronounce. How do  
2632 you pronounce your last name?

2633 \*Mr. Nowrasteh. Nowrasteh.

2634 \*Mrs. Cammack. Nowrasteh.

2635 \*Mr. Nowrasteh. Yeah.

2636 \*Mrs. Cammack. Okay. Definitely not how it is  
2637 spelled.

2638 \*Mr. Nowrasteh. It is very poorly spelled. I  
2639 apologize for that. It is Ellis \_ it is an Ellis Island  
2640 problem.

2641 \*Mrs. Cammack. Nowrasteh.

2642 \*Mr. Nowrasteh. Nowrasteh.

2643 \*Mrs. Cammack. Nowrasteh, okay. So earlier you had  
2644 said that there is no financial impact to the communities  
2645 that are absorbing these illegal immigrants.

2646 \*Mr. Nowrasteh. No. So I talked about a nationwide \_

2647 \*Mrs. Cammack. Mm-hmm.

2648 \*Mr. Nowrasteh. \_ federal, state, and local \_

2649 \*Mrs. Cammack. Mm-hmm.

2650 \*Mr. Nowrasteh. \_ the net fiscal impact is positive,  
2651 but I did highlight in some places like New York City \_

2652 \*Mrs. Cammack. Mm-hmm.

2653 \*Mr. Nowrasteh. \_ that have very bad local policies  
2654 like right to shelter, that there is a negative fiscal  
2655 impact, and you see it in states that rely on like a state  
2656 income tax, they have a negative fiscal impact on average,  
2657 but states that do not have a state income tax, like Texas,  
2658 like Florida, for instance, states \_ I approve of that  
2659 policy tremendously by the way, not \_

2660 \*Mrs. Cammack. Mm-hmm.

2661 \*Mr. Nowrasteh. \_ having a state income tax, that \_

2662 \*Mrs. Cammack. Well, taxation is theft so, you know.

2663 [Laughter.]

2664 \*Mr. Nowrasteh. And so those states tend to do a  
2665 little bit better because the forms of taxes that they have,  
2666 like \_

2667 \*Mrs. Cammack. Right.

2668 \*Mr. Nowrasteh. \_ property and \_ are spread \_

2669 \*Mrs. Cammack. But I think we can all agree that there  
2670 is a cost to the illegal invasion that we are experiencing.  
2671 For example, in the last year, 60 billion dollars, which as  
2672 a point of reference, 60 billion dollars is what we are  
2673 arguing over right now as top line numbers for funding the  
2674 Federal Government, of which in three days we could have a  
2675 potential shutdown over. 60 billion dollars is what we  
2676 spend that costs us taxpayers for hiring limited English  
2677 proficiency teachers for the students that are in the  
2678 country illegally. So that 60 billion dollars, that is a  
2679 nationwide impact, and that is just one out of many.

2680 I have records of veterans that have been kicked out of  
2681 housing facilities to make room. The healthcare costs of  
2682 the 700,000 illegals that will receive free healthcare in  
2683 California. I mean, the list can go on and on and on and on  
2684 of the freebies. And, in fact, if you are on social media  
2685 and you check out any one of the Facebook pages that is  
2686 cruzando la frontera, you can find where they are actually  
2687 giving a blueprint of how much you get when you are finally  
2688 processed.

2689 And I don't like the term paroled into the United  
2690 States. I know that is a Biden thing now. It is catch and  
2691 release, you know, because no one shows up for their hearing

2692 in seven years. They actually are receiving benefits at the  
2693 taxpayer's dime. So I just think it is important that we  
2694 dispute that.

2695 And, of course, in New York we have seen where the NYPD  
2696 took a billion dollar cut as a result of the illegal  
2697 immigration. And as the wife of a first responder, we  
2698 should be actually reinforcing our first responders with  
2699 additional resources rather than cutting them.

2700 But I want to direct and take on a completely different  
2701 topic that we haven't talked about yet today, which is  
2702 agriculture. And, of course, we have seen how there have  
2703 been countless shipments of produce that have been caught at  
2704 the legal ports of entry. I have actually been in the back  
2705 of a semi-truck that was filled with tomatoes bound for my  
2706 home state of Florida, and it was found to have marijuana  
2707 and methamphetamine in the truck.

2708 That is a 10 percent issue, right, so that is 10  
2709 percent of the trucks that are carrying illegal narcotics  
2710 are actually apprehended, caught. So that is problem. But  
2711 when you look at the macro of it, one thing that we need to  
2712 consider is the cost to domestic protection of our  
2713 agricultural products as a result of cartel subsidized  
2714 activities.

2715 When you think about avocados, lemons, limes,  
2716 basically the entire agricultural sector in Mexico is

2717 subsidized by the cartels. The impact that that can have on  
2718 our domestic production, it is, one, an unfair competitive  
2719 advantage. I would like everybody on this panel to just  
2720 give some quick commentary because I now am down to the wire  
2721 on this, but this has a massive, massive national security  
2722 implication because food security is national security, and  
2723 disastrous trade policies along with this now cartel-  
2724 subsidized pressure that we are facing, particularly in  
2725 states like mine in Florida, they have real world  
2726 implications.

2727         So I will start going down the line, if you can just  
2728 touch on that very briefly.

2729         \*Mr. Rector. Well, the simplest fact is that low-skill  
2730 immigrants get a whole lot more in benefits than they pay in  
2731 taxes, and high-skill immigrants pay more in taxes than they  
2732 gave in benefits. They are no different than general  
2733 population. But the reality is that as illegals come in, 40  
2734 to 50 percent of them don't have a high school degree, and  
2735 over the course of a lifetime, they are going to absorb huge  
2736 amounts of benefits and they are not going to pay very much  
2737 in taxes.

2738         \*Mrs. Cammack. Mm-hmm.

2739         \*Mr. Rector. We can do that for U.S. born people. We  
2740 cannot do that for 10 million illegals coming across the  
2741 border, but that is what we have got.

2742           \*Mr. Griffith. And if I could get each of the  
2743 witnesses to shorten their answer. Very quickly.

2744           \*Mrs. Cammack. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yeah.

2745           \*Mr. Blair. Mexican cartels subsidize the agriculture  
2746 out of Mexico.

2747           \*Mrs. Cammack. And it is a problem for our domestic  
2748 production, yes.

2749           \*Mr. Griffith. All right, next.

2750           \*Ms. Vernikov. If I could just quickly comment on the  
2751 economic impact in New York, which is 10.6 billion dollars  
2752 that we are about to spend in the migrant crisis, and we are  
2753 actually spending 1.7 million dollars every month in keeping  
2754 Floyd Bennett open, so just to respond to those.

2755           \*Mr. Griffith. Mr. Nowrasteh.

2756           \*Mr. Nowrasteh. Increasing H-2A visas is a great way  
2757 to improve the competitive stature of American agriculture,  
2758 which would expand immigration and reduce border chaos. So  
2759 you get a three for one.

2760           \*Mr. Griffith. All right.

2761           \*Mrs. Cammack. Except for H-2A is \_

2762           \*Mr. Griffith. All right. And \_

2763           \*Mrs. Cammack. \_ seasonal and we are year-round in  
2764 Florida so \_

2765           \*Mr. Griffith. \_ the gentlelady \_

2766           \*Mrs. Cammack. \_ H-2A doesn't \_

2767           \*Mr. Nowrasteh. You can reform it to \_  
2768           \*Mr. Griffith. The gentlelady yields back.  
2769           \*Mrs. Cammack. I \_  
2770           \*Mr. Nowrasteh. \_ year round.  
2771           \*Mr. Griffith. All right. Here is \_  
2772           \*Mrs. Cammack. I reluctantly yield.  
2773           \*Mr. Griffith. I understand. Here is the dilemma that  
2774 I have as the chair. I have got more people that are  
2775 presently here that would like to ask questions. I am out  
2776 time because we have go to the floor and vote. So I will  
2777 ask the witnesses, can you all stick around for 20, 25  
2778 minutes and then we will come back for about another half an  
2779 hour?  
2780           [No response.]  
2781           \*Mr. Griffith. Seeing \_ is everybody okay with that?  
2782 Does somebody got a flight they have to catch? Speak now or  
2783 forever hold your peace.  
2784           [No response.]  
2785           \*Mr. Griffith. All right. Seeing that, I appreciate  
2786 your patience with us. We will be back. At this point, we  
2787 will recess the subcommittee until about five minutes after  
2788 the last vote.  
2789           \*Voice. [Indiscernible.]  
2790           \*Mr. Griffith. How long after the first votes are  
2791 called?

2792           \*Voice. After the last vote's called, five minutes  
2793 after.

2794           \*Voice. Have they called \_

2795           \*Mr. Griffith. Five minutes after the last vote is  
2796 called. All right. We stand in recess.

2797           [Recess.]

2798           \*Mr. Griffith. All right. I now recognize the  
2799 gentleman from Pennsylvania, Mr. Joyce, for his five minutes  
2800 of questioning.

2801           \*Mr. Joyce. Thank you, Chairman Griffith and Ranking  
2802 Member Castor, for allowing me to waive on to today's  
2803 hearing. And thanks to our witnesses for testifying today  
2804 on an issue that impacts every American.

2805           As I have traveled throughout my district, I have heard  
2806 from doctors, from paramedics, from police officers, medical  
2807 examiners, and you know what, they are all telling me the  
2808 same thing, fentanyl is here and it is being distributed  
2809 through a partnership of death. That is words from law  
2810 enforcement.

2811           Last week, the Pennsylvania State Police released data  
2812 on the drugs seized in 2023. The report showed that over  
2813 240 pounds of fentanyl were seized in the past year compared  
2814 to 35 pounds of heroin. Last year, we held a subcommittee  
2815 hearing in my district in Gettysburg to better understand  
2816 the effects of these drugs. We heard from a police officer



2817 who had seen significant rise in the number of overdose  
2818 calls. We heard testimony from a doctor who was on the  
2819 front line of treating patients with opioid use disorder.  
2820 And then we heard from a father, a father who had lost his  
2821 daughter after years-long battle with addiction.

2822         We know where the drugs that fuel this crisis are  
2823 coming from. It has been well documented that these  
2824 fentanyl analogues are produced in China, shipped to Mexico  
2825 where they are pressed and packaged, and then trafficked  
2826 into the United States and sold on our streets. This  
2827 partnership of death between entities working against the  
2828 American people needs to be recognized and it needs to be  
2829 confronted.

2830         During his meeting with President Xi Jinping in San  
2831 Francisco, President Biden left without any firm commitment  
2832 to address the fentanyl crisis. To be blunt, we need more  
2833 from the President. This crisis is affecting every  
2834 community across our Nation. How many more Americans must  
2835 die before we take a stand and secure our southern border?

2836         My first question is for you, Mr. Blair. Mr. Blair,  
2837 given that more fentanyl than ever is being smuggled through  
2838 our open southern border, it is clear that the cartels have  
2839 improved their techniques to overwhelm U.S. Customs and  
2840 Border Patrol. Can you please describe how the Mexican  
2841 cartels have weaponized migrants at our southern border?

2842           \*Mr. Blair. Sure. So first and foremost, the Mexican  
2843 cartels have completely \_ complete operational control of  
2844 the border. That is both in control, meaning governing, and  
2845 also control in the skies. So they \_ due to their \_ the use  
2846 of drones, they are able to dictate \_ or they are able to  
2847 see exactly every one of our locations, whether that is  
2848 going to be DPST, Texas Military Department, or Border  
2849 Patrol. So they are able to circumvent all of our  
2850 locations.

2851           Then when they move a massive amount of migrants to the  
2852 border, all of our resources are then tied to that. And,  
2853 unfortunately, because anyone who comes north of the border,  
2854 they are somewhat indentured servants to the Mexican  
2855 cartels, and they have to pay what is known as a peso, and  
2856 they have to work off that debt. They \_

2857           \*Mr. Joyce. How many years does it take to work off  
2858 that debt for individuals?

2859           \*Mr. Blair. So it all depends. It all depends on the  
2860 job that they do. So they \_

2861           \*Mr. Joyce. What kind of jobs do they do?

2862           \*Mr. Blair. Okay, so first and fore \_ like what you  
2863 just asked, they do mule. Mr. Ruiz stated that that was a  
2864 disinformation, however, that is \_ that was actually  
2865 disinformation.

2866           \*Mr. Joyce. And when you say mule, what do they do,

2867 please?

2868           \*Mr. Blair. So the Mexican cartels, unfortunately,  
2869 force some illegal aliens to mule up narcotics, whether that  
2870 is going to be marijuana, cocaine, fentanyl between the  
2871 ports of entry while all of our resources are tied to  
2872 dealing with the massive amounts of illegal aliens. And  
2873 from that point, then they are guided by guides or \_ and  
2874 then going into either a stash house or into a load vehicle  
2875 where they also go into another stash house or into the  
2876 interior of the United States.

2877           So, unfortunately, we don't have oversight of exactly  
2878 what is actually happening so \_

2879           \*Mr. Joyce. Do you feel that every state is a border  
2880 state?

2881           \*Mr. Blair. To be honest, every state is probably  
2882 worse than a border \_

2883           \*Mr. Joyce. Do you feel that every city is a border  
2884 city?

2885           \*Mr. Blair. It is probably worse, given the fact  
2886 that \_

2887           \*Mr. Joyce. Do you feel that the cartels and China  
2888 have made a serious threat to our southern border even more  
2889 dangerous?

2890           \*Mr. Blair. The Chinese have weaponized Mexican  
2891 cartels.

2892           \*Mr. Joyce. I think that the issues that you have  
2893 discussed, the stash houses, the weaponization of  
2894 individuals through human trafficking, through drug  
2895 trafficking impacts each and every American.

2896           Mr. Chairman, I thank you for allowing me to waive on  
2897 to this important hearing and to allow these individuals,  
2898 these experts to tell America what is going on on our  
2899 southern border. My time has expired, and I yield.

2900           \*Mr. Griffith. The gentleman yields back. I now  
2901 recognize Ms. Barragan for her five minutes of questioning.

2902           \*Ms. Barragan. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

2903           Mr. Nowrasteh, I want to address my commentary -- my  
2904 questions to you and comment a little bit on some of what  
2905 has been discussed. Are you aware of some of what is in the  
2906 President's supplemental bill?

2907           \*Mr. Nowrasteh. Some portions of it.

2908           \*Ms. Barragan. Okay, let me just remind people. The  
2909 President has been asking for actually billions of dollars  
2910 to address the southern border. Somebody had made a comment  
2911 about he is doing nothing, and he has been asking for lots  
2912 of money to add a thousand additional CBP officers to combat  
2913 the smuggling of drugs and people from coming across the  
2914 southern border.

2915           Millions of dollars to expand and making sure there is  
2916 more money for border processing coordinators to address the

2917 flow and the processing of folks down there. Border Patrol  
2918 agents, 1300 additional Border Patrol agents. Money to  
2919 combat fentanyl at the southern border.

2920       There is money for lots of things that would help to  
2921 address issues at the southern border, and yet Republicans  
2922 have said no. They have even threatened to shut down the  
2923 government now and holding our troops' pay hostage to add  
2924 harsh border security changes to policy.

2925       Some of what we are hearing today also is not accurate.  
2926 One of the things that was raised is reinstating the Remain  
2927 in Mexico Program. Are you -- are you familiar with that?

2928       \*Mr. Nowrasteh. Yes.

2929       \*Ms. Barragan. Do you agree that it is bad -- it would  
2930 be a bad policy and that -- maybe you can just share why.

2931       \*Mr. Nowrasteh. So I don't think it would be very  
2932 effective as a permanent way to reduce unlawful border  
2933 crossings. I think what it would do is channel more people  
2934 into the black market, give them more of an incentive to try  
2935 to cross between ports of entry and try to enter as got-  
2936 aways. There would be a subsidy to cartels, there would be  
2937 a subsidy to human traffickers.

2938       One of the huge pieces I have been trying to get across  
2939 in this hearing and in my testimony is that immigration  
2940 restrictions of the type that we have now are a subsidy for  
2941 drug cartels. They are a subsidy for human traffickers. If

2942 these folks had come to the United States lawfully to work  
2943 and to live, then you put \_ you vastly reduce the revenue  
2944 going to drug cartels and human smugglers, in the same way  
2945 that mob lost revenue after the end of prohibition. It  
2946 wasn't because we hire 10,000 Elliott Nesses to go after  
2947 them and really get them that time. No, it is because we  
2948 realize that supply and demand in markets work, and  
2949 legalizing markets is what reduces the size of the black  
2950 market.

2951           The Federal Government or any government cannot  
2952 regulate a black market, it can only regulate a legal  
2953 market, and the immigration restrictions that we have on the  
2954 books now are a subsidy to cartels, they are a subsidy to  
2955 human traffickers, and I think it is about time we cut off  
2956 that subsidy once and for all.

2957           \*Ms. Barragan. Thank you. Would you also say it is  
2958 bad and we shouldn't be supporting kidnappings, and murder,  
2959 and torture, and rape, and other violent attack by the  
2960 cartels?

2961           \*Mr. Nowrasteh. We absolutely should not be supporting  
2962 that and we should not be giving them an entire black market  
2963 industry that allows them to create more revenue and that  
2964 incentivizes migrants to deal with them, to hire them, to  
2965 give them money to travel here. If these folks could enter  
2966 lawfully, if they could by a plane ticket from Venezuela to

2967 come here or from Colombia, or Ecuador, or El Salvador, or  
2968 Honduras, or these other countries to come here, they would  
2969 much rather do that than pay 10 to \$30,000 to a smuggler,  
2970 have the chance of being raped, killed, or murdered along  
2971 the way, and then drowned in a river. They would much  
2972 rather come in lawfully.

2973 So it is just fanciful. People who think that that  
2974 wouldn't destroy or at least substantially reduce the black  
2975 market are fooling themselves. They don't seriously  
2976 understand how humans behave.

2977 \*Ms. Barragan. Thank you. This continued call to  
2978 reinstate the Remain in Mexico Program, nobody talks about  
2979 the kidnappings, and the murder, and the torture, and the  
2980 rape that is resulting from this program. I also want to  
2981 say this is a bilateral program. You need to have the  
2982 country of Mexico agree to do this, and thus far, Mexico has  
2983 refused to allow it for a third time. So this fanciful  
2984 thought of, you know, just let's reinstate this is not  
2985 really how it works.

2986 The other thing we kept hearing today is about this  
2987 term of illegals to come and cross the border. Crossing the  
2988 border and asking for asylum is legal, no matter what people  
2989 say, no matter the rhetoric that is used. Their -- one  
2990 question was asked about whether cities are absorbing the  
2991 cost of illegal immigrants.

2992           The people that are being bussed are all legal  
2993 immigrants. They have been processed, they have been  
2994 brought in either through a program, but these are folks  
2995 that are here legally awaiting a hearing. And so I don't  
2996 know why we continue to spread this disinformation out  
2997 there. And one of the reasons they are coming between ports  
2998 of entry is because ports of entry are closed. There is no  
2999 legal way to come, and so that is what is going to result.

3000           With that, one more thing, undocumented immigrants  
3001 can't vote in federal elections, so to spread that other  
3002 disinformation is really irresponsible.

3003           And with that, I yield back.

3004           \*Mr. Griffith. The gentlelady yields back. Now after  
3005 three-and-a-half hours or three hours plus, Mrs. Miller-  
3006 Meeks, who has been here for the entire hearing, is  
3007 recognized for her five minutes of questioning.

3008           \*Mrs. Miller-Meeks. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the  
3009 opportunity to waive on to this important hearing.  
3010 Additionally, I want to thank the witnesses for taking their  
3011 time day.

3012           I want to thank Mr. Nowrasteh for undermining the  
3013 ranking member's argument that people are coming here  
3014 illegally in order to evade persecution, violence, or other  
3015 things when we all know, and if you have made a trip to the  
3016 border you know, that 90 percent of people who come here,



3017 come for economic reasons, which underscores why are we  
3018 allowing undocumented, unaccompanied minors to come into  
3019 this country, because if you are underage, you are not  
3020 coming here to work economically, and we know that our DHS  
3021 has already lost 85,000 or so unaccompanied minors who come  
3022 here.

3023         Since President Biden took office, there have been over  
3024 6.7 million illegal crossings of our southern border. This  
3025 includes 312 encounters with individuals whose names appear  
3026 on the terrorist watch list, not to mention the 1.7 million  
3027 known got-aways that evaded the U.S. Border Patrol. Yet  
3028 instead of implementing more border security and reinstating  
3029 policies that worked to reduce the flow, the Biden  
3030 administration is housing migrants in our schools and our  
3031 national parks.

3032         Meanwhile, there are thousands of ICE detention beds  
3033 across more than two dozen ICE facilities that are sitting  
3034 empty, like the Adelanto ICE processing facility in my good  
3035 friend from California, Representative Obernolte's district.  
3036 This facility, which is already fully funded, has sat empty  
3037 due to a court injunction from April 2020 for COVID  
3038 restrictions. Last June I was pleased that the House passed  
3039 my resolution, H. Res. 461, condemning the use of elementary  
3040 and secondary school facilities to provide shelter for  
3041 migrants.

3042           Additionally, I was proud to support H.R. 5283, the  
3043   Protecting Our Communities From Failure to Secure Our Border  
3044   Act of 2023, introduced by Representative Nicole Malliotakis  
3045   of New York. This legislation, which passed the House last  
3046   November, prohibits American taxpayer funding from housing  
3047   illegal immigrants on federal lands owned by the National  
3048   Park Service, U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land  
3049   Management, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

3050           I am going to shorten this. Councilwoman Vernikov,  
3051   when there are thousands of beds available across the  
3052   country at ICE detention facilities, can you discuss the  
3053   public health disaster to housing migrants in tent shelters  
3054   on our public lands like the one set up at Floyd Bennett  
3055   Field?

3056           \*Ms. Vernikov. Sure. There have been many reports.  
3057   If you take Floyd Bennett Field as an example of diseases  
3058   going around at the shelter, part of it is I guess, and I am  
3059   not an expert, but I guess because people are just clustered  
3060   together. And I am not sure that they are actually  
3061   reporting to the hospitals as much, but it has definitely  
3062   been a concern for health officials regarding vaccinations,  
3063   like I mentioned earlier, polio, tuberculosis, and any  
3064   diseases that could be potentially contagious.

3065           \*Mrs. Miller-Meeks. Yeah, and I certainly saw that as  
3066   \_ I was Department of Public Health director that \_ in a

3067 facility that had a high concentration, there was an  
3068 increase in tuberculosis that had not been seen in 20 years.  
3069 Was the impact of learning loss and the public health and  
3070 safety of students at James Madison High School taken under  
3071 consideration when the City of New York made the decision to  
3072 kick kids out of school to house these migrants, even if  
3073 supposedly it was only temporary, but we don't know if it  
3074 was temporary or not given the uproar that may have caused  
3075 them to shorten how long they stayed in school?

3076       \*Ms. Vernikov. Well, I think it was a really bad  
3077 decision by our administration. But again, I think it stems  
3078 from the fact that our border is not secure. So, yes, we  
3079 are forced to make these last-minute decisions because we  
3080 don't know what to do in these situations and we have an  
3081 influx of migrants. We don't know where to place them,  
3082 where to shelter them anymore. We just cannot sustain this  
3083 crisis at this point, and spending 10.6 billion dollars is  
3084 just not sustainable.

3085       \*Mrs. Miller-Meeks. And, Mr. Nowrasteh, you said that  
3086 if we just merely, and I have several legal immigration  
3087 bills, small fixes to our immigration problem, but you said  
3088 that in reference to drug overdoses and the fentanyl crisis  
3089 that if we just got rid of the demand and we worked on the  
3090 demand side then that would end the illegal flow of drugs.  
3091 So \_ but yet when it comes to migration, if we just open up

3092 the legal immigration system and allow more people to come  
3093 in, that will slow demand.

3094 I think the Biden administration expected to slow the  
3095 demand when they opened up the floodgates, but the demand  
3096 has not slowed down, the demand has only increased with  
3097 record numbers of border crossings each month as a record  
3098 number. So I am not sure the supply/demand equation that  
3099 you are alluding to works when it comes to illegal  
3100 immigration.

3101 \*Mr. Nowrasteh. So I didn't say that about drugs, but  
3102 in terms of you just take a look at the border numbers  
3103 yourself. From the time that parole was put in place for  
3104 the CVNH countries, the number of migrants coming from those  
3105 countries through the border dropped by 62 percent. The  
3106 numbers compared to the previous 11 months, when you take a  
3107 look at the migrants coming from all the over countries in  
3108 the world, it is even on those two periods. It is a great  
3109 quasi-natural experiment. I am going to write an academic  
3110 paper about it and get published in a top journal because it  
3111 is so clear.

3112 \*Mrs. Miller-Meeks. Well, I don't think any of those  
3113 people coming across the border, the scientists that are  
3114 going to start the next new companies, and we have got  
3115 millions of people on a list that want to come here legally,  
3116 and perhaps addressing the people who want to come here

3117 legally would be the way to start and close the southern  
3118 border now.

3119 Thank you so much. I yield back my time.

3120 \*Mr. Griffith. The gentlelady yields back. I now  
3121 recognize Mr. Cardenas of California for his five minutes of  
3122 questioning.

3123 \*Mr. Cardenas. Okay, thank you, Mr. Chairman, and  
3124 appreciate the chairman and ranking member putting this  
3125 hearing together.

3126 Throughout this hearing we have heard mis -- that link  
3127 undocumented immigrants to some of our country's biggest  
3128 problems: terrorism, crime, drugs, trafficking,  
3129 exploitation, et cetera. It is too bad we do not hear  
3130 enough about what amazing things that immigrants have  
3131 brought to our country. As a matter of fact, when -- as I  
3132 look around this room, I think almost every one of us is  
3133 one, two, three, four, five generations away from being an  
3134 immigrant to this great Nation.

3135 So one of the things that I would like to ask a  
3136 question of is, Mr. Nowrasteh, you mentioned this in your  
3137 research, but for the record, can you remind us how many  
3138 people have been murdered or injured in attacks on U.S. soil  
3139 committed by a foreign-born terrorist who is -- who entered  
3140 illegally across the southwest border?

3141 \*Mr. Nowrasteh. Zero people have been killed in

3142 attacks committed by an illegal immigrant who entered along  
3143 the southwest border.

3144 \*Mr. Cardenas. Specifically with a terrorist act?

3145 \*Mr. Nowrasteh. Yeah, for \_ through a terrorist act,  
3146 yes.

3147 \*Mr. Cardenas. Yes. Thank you very much. Because I  
3148 hear a lot of rhetoric on many news sources and through some  
3149 of the voices of some of my colleagues here in Congress that  
3150 one of the biggest problems with the southern border is that  
3151 terrorists are coming here and they are murdering American  
3152 citizens. So will you say it again, so far there is no  
3153 proof of that?

3154 \*Mr. Nowrasteh. That has not happened so far. There  
3155 are zero foreign-born terrorists who have entered unlawfully  
3156 and committed an attack on U.S. soil. There is zero  
3157 injuries, zero deaths. That doesn't mean it can't happen.  
3158 Of course, there is a chance, right?

3159 \*Mr. Cardenas. Correct. Right. Correct.

3160 \*Mr. Nowrasteh. It can happen. But we have to also  
3161 look at the past to see what has happened to get an  
3162 understanding of what is possible in the future, and this  
3163 has not happened. You know, things could always change, but  
3164 that is where it stands currently.

3165 \*Mr. Cardenas. On 9/11 did some of those people who  
3166 committed terror on the United States soil, did they come

3167 across the norther border?

3168 \*Mr. Nowrasteh. There were some \_ so 18 out of the 19  
3169 hijackers entered the United States on tourist visas. One  
3170 of them entered on an F visa, a student visa. There may  
3171 have been some cross border traffic on a visa at one time or  
3172 another, but \_

3173 \*Mr. Cardenas. And those occurred under the Biden  
3174 administration?

3175 \*Mr. Nowrasteh. No, sir.

3176 \*Mr. Cardenas. Oh.

3177 \*Mr. Nowrasteh. A lot of the traffic occurred under  
3178 the late Clinton and early Bush II administration.

3179 \*Mr. Cardenas. Okay. Both Republican and Democrat  
3180 presidents.

3181 \*Mr. Nowrasteh. Yes, sir.

3182 \*Mr. Cardenas. Okay, okay. Because a lot of focus is  
3183 -- the rhetoric is on this particular presidency that I have  
3184 heard in this committee today and throughout the months and  
3185 years. With that in mind, can you elaborate on why shutting  
3186 down the southern border would be ineffective at deterring  
3187 terrorism in the United States?

3188 \*Mr. Nowrasteh. So when you take a look at the 3,046  
3189 people who have been murdered in foreign-born terrorist  
3190 attacks on U.S. soil since 1975 through the end of 2022,  
3191 what you see is that all of them have entered the United

3192 States lawfully in some way, most of them tourists by the  
3193 way, on tourist visas. They come here to visit on some kind  
3194 of B visa or through the visa waiver program and then they  
3195 commit an attack in the United States.

3196         There are certainly security challenges along the  
3197 southwest border of the United States, but it is not a  
3198 source of terrorism. As I said and I keep saying, there  
3199 have been zero Americans murdered in terrorist attacks  
3200 committed by an illegal immigrant who entered illegally  
3201 across the southwest border or on any other border who  
3202 entered unlawfully in the United States. It is certainly a  
3203 danger above zero, but I think that we just need to compare  
3204 that situation to that in Israel recently where they  
3205 suffered that horrible terrorist attack in October.

3206         When American border security hawks talk about  
3207 terrorism on the border, it is theoretical. They \_ there is  
3208 no comparison to other countries that have actually suffered  
3209 these things. And frankly, it is \_ by comparison, it is  
3210 fantasy land in terms of talking about that.

3211         There are known threats along the border. There are  
3212 things that could happen. A terrorist could cross at some  
3213 point. That is totally possible. But it has not happened,  
3214 it is theoretical, and we need to deal with the facts and  
3215 reality on the ground and not talking points that sound very  
3216 robust.



3217           \*Mr. Cardenas. Thank you. And the data that I see  
3218 says that fentanyl seized at border crossings is most often  
3219 being trafficked by U.S. citizens. In fact, in 2021, the  
3220 number of U.S. citizens convicted for fentanyl trafficking  
3221 was 10 times higher than convictions of undocumented  
3222 immigrants for the same offense.

3223           Mr. Nowrasteh, in your testimony you say that increase  
3224 in drug overdose deaths is ultimately not a border security  
3225 issue. How does such a narrow focus on border security harm  
3226 not just immigrants at the border but United States citizens  
3227 as well who are suffering from the fentanyl crisis?

3228           \*Mr. Nowrasteh. Drug prohibition \_ the United States  
3229 have a long \_ has a long history of drug prohibition and  
3230 other types of prohibition like alcohol prohibition, and  
3231 almost always these prohibitions end in dramatic failure.  
3232 They encourage and subsidize black markets, they make it so  
3233 that it is more difficult for people to seek treatment to \_  
3234 for their addictions who want to get out of it. It causes  
3235 an enormous problem, and by focusing on the supply, which  
3236 doesn't work \_

3237           \*Mr. Cardenas. Mr. Nowrasteh, my time has expired. I  
3238 want to be respectful to the --

3239           \*Mr. Nowrasteh. Okay.

3240           \*Mr. Cardenas. -- the chairman. Thank you so much for  
3241 your generosity, Mr. Chairman.

3242           \*Mr. Griffith. Thank you.

3243           \*Mr. Cardenas. Thank you.

3244           \*Mr. Griffith. Appreciate it very much. I now  
3245 recognize Mr. Bilirakis of Florida for five minutes of  
3246 questioning.

3247           \*Mr. Bilirakis. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you  
3248 very much for holding the hearing and allowing me to waive  
3249 on.

3250           Mr. Cardenas, I just filed the Student Visa Security  
3251 Improvement Act. The bill would strengthen the visa  
3252 background checks with special focus on terror related  
3253 activities and improve monitoring of student \_ foreign  
3254 students should they seek, again, to abuse the system and  
3255 have malicious intent. I welcome you to discuss that with  
3256 me and possibly cosponsor that particular bill because this  
3257 is an issue we must address.

3258           \*Mr. Cardenas. Thank you for your request. I have  
3259 enjoyed working with you on many issues. I look forward to  
3260 reading your bill. Thank you.

3261           \*Mr. Bilirakis. Absolutely. Thank you.

3262           So we are in a crisis situation that has only gotten  
3263 worse with the influx of fentanyl and other illicit drugs  
3264 from China, combined with the ease of purchase through  
3265 social media and other technologies. This has become a  
3266 public health and national security disaster, in my opinion.

3267 Mexican cartels and transnational organizations abuse our  
3268 weak policies, pose a serious threat to law enforcement, and  
3269 contribute to the overdoses and violence nationwide. We  
3270 must come together to put a stop to this now before it is  
3271 too late.

3272         Republicans on this committee are serious about finding  
3273 solutions to this disaster. One aspect I focus on in  
3274 particular is the role of Big Tech and social media  
3275 companies in aiding fentanyl and border crisis. I am the  
3276 subcommittee chairman and have jurisdiction over this issue.

3277         So, Mr. Blair, your testimony mentions how cartels use  
3278 various technology platforms such as social media to  
3279 coordinate, communicate, and ultimately disseminate their  
3280 plans. What role should Big Tech companies play in  
3281 preventing this activity from occurring?

3282         \*Mr. Blair. So right now social media platforms are  
3283 able to spread a lot of their propaganda, whether that is  
3284 the beheadings or a lot of the massacres that are happening  
3285 in Mexico. They are utilizing that to scare their local  
3286 populus and also other cartel rivals. They are also  
3287 utilizing other Big Tech to \_ they use encrypted apps so  
3288 that way federal law enforcement are unable to understand  
3289 their communications platforms.

3290         So really that would be up to I guess the government  
3291 themselves. I personally don't have an answer to how they

3292 can get \_ or how they \_ that censorship should happen, but  
3293 based off of an open platform, whether that is Twitter, now  
3294 X, Facebook, all the human trafficking, child trafficking  
3295 that is done by the cartels, all the beheadings, all of the  
3296 atrocities that are happening on the cartels that are used  
3297 for propaganda or for recruiting purposes. And also used  
3298 for, like on Snapchat, drug trafficking, the fentanyl pills  
3299 are also being used.

3300 So whatever avenue or illicit activity that the cartels  
3301 have, I think members of Congress should come up with a good  
3302 plan to try to mitigate that.

3303 \*Mr. Bilirakis. I appreciate it. So you realize and  
3304 acknowledge that this is a serious issue and it must be  
3305 addressed?

3306 \*Mr. Blair. Yes, sir, it is a serious issue.

3307 \*Mr. Bilirakis. All right, thank you very much. I  
3308 appreciate it.

3309 I am going to yield back. I am going to stick to three  
3310 minutes because I waived on. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

3311 \*Mr. Griffith. I appreciate that. Since we have  
3312 carried over, you could have your five, but we will move on  
3313 because the witnesses are probably getting weary. I now  
3314 recognize Representative Allen of Georgia for his five  
3315 minutes of questioning.

3316 \*Mr. Allen. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thanks for

3317 allowing me to waive on, although we are \_ you all are very  
3318 good hang in there. Thank you.

3319           You know, obviously \_ well, in my district, Mr. North  
3320 (sic), my folks would not buy what you are selling, okay.  
3321 And very concerned about safety and security of the Nation.  
3322 In fact, you know, I don't know how, you know, from an  
3323 intelligence standpoint, but we have intelligent \_ in fact,  
3324 the FBI Director testified before Congress and said we are  
3325 under the greatest threat of terrorism in our country ever  
3326 since the Biden administration took over. Largely  
3327 responsible for the folks that they have caught, known  
3328 terrorists they have caught and not allowed in, but then I  
3329 don't know, Mr. Blair, how many got-aways do we have that we  
3330 don't know who they are?

3331           \*Mr. Blair. Millions.

3332           \*Mr. Allen. Millions. So, you know, God knows I hope  
3333 you are right. I hope it doesn't happen. I didn't \_ I am  
3334 not asking you a question, I am just \_ I am still making a  
3335 statement here.

3336           \*Mr. Nowrasteh. [Inaudible.]

3337           \*Mr. Allen. Yeah. You know, at the beginning of this  
3338 year, I joined Speaker Johnson, we went to the border, and I  
3339 have never seen an operation \_ you know, asylum is I think \_  
3340 well, asylum is an important program, but it is being  
3341 abused. Horribly abused. And the car \_ like the week

3342 before, the cartels had made somebody said 32 million  
3343 dollars off a law that is terribly imperfect.

3344       Because, you know, right now, you know, we are  
3345 processing like almost seven million people down there. Do  
3346 you realize the resources it takes to do that? Only 10  
3347 percent of those folks show up for the court date, and less  
3348 than two percent of those folks actually get asylum. There  
3349 has got to be a better way to do this, like maybe go to your  
3350 embassy in your home country, our embassy in your home  
3351 country and say, hey, I want to plead asylum, we would get  
3352 you a court date, we would get you up here, and we will see  
3353 what is going on.

3354       But the bottom line is we got a major problem and, you  
3355 know, we did our part, we passed H.R. 2. However, the  
3356 Senate has failed to act on H.R. 2, which is our border  
3357 security act.

3358       And, Councilwoman Vernikov, is that correct? Close?  
3359 You note in your testimony the strain this migrant crisis is  
3360 having on our public health system. When migrants cross our  
3361 border illegally, oftentimes they come without any  
3362 vaccinations, can be carrying an illness or uninsured. The  
3363 flood of undocumented migrants entering into hospitals is a  
3364 financial \_ our healthcare right now is the largest driver  
3365 of our debt, by the way. You should know that. So \_ and  
3366 they are participating in driving that debt.

3367           So, Councilwoman, can you speak to your observations in  
3368 your community that the effects of a massive influx of  
3369 uninsured, undocumented migrants can have on our healthcare  
3370 system?

3371           \*Ms. Vernikov. Just to bring up some examples, New  
3372 York City Health and Hospitals, which is the public hospital  
3373 system in New York City, provided medical services to 85,000  
3374 undocumented migrants since 20 \_ since May of 2023.  
3375 Clinicians completed more than 30,000 visits to migrants.  
3376 And if you take as an example one of the hospitals, Bellevue  
3377 Hospital, they saw one-quarter of those 30,000 visits of  
3378 obviously unvetted, undocumented migrants. And actually 300  
3379 of those visits were delivery of babies, which is very  
3380 expensive, and again, these \_ the migrants are not insured.

3381           And there is also a big potential, like I mentioned  
3382 before, a potential for disease outbreak because a lot of  
3383 them are not vaccinated.

3384           \*Mr. Allen. Right, exactly.

3385           Mr. Blair, in your testimony you outline the  
3386 complexities of how the Mexican cartels operate to struggle  
3387 (sic) drugs into the drugs.

3388           \*Mr. Blair. Yes, sir.

3389           \*Mr. Allen. And you mentioned that the policies of  
3390 parole or notice to appear have enticed cartels to continue  
3391 smuggling drugs into our country.

3392           \*Mr. Blair. Yes, sir.

3393           \*Mr. Allen. What was the different \_ what was  
3394 different under previous administrations compared to what is  
3395 happening now?

3396           \*Mr. Blair. Prosecutorial discretion. That is what it  
3397 is. So when someone comes up to the border itself, we are  
3398 not asking credible fear questions. We are not asking the  
3399 questions that need to be answered. We are not vetting  
3400 them. We are letting them in and releasing them into the  
3401 United States based off of a few categories. One is  
3402 nationality. Two is familial status. Three is if they have  
3403 a criminal record within the United States.

3404           It has nothing to do with credible fear. It has  
3405 nothing to do with whether they actually meet the parole  
3406 guidelines. And so we are really seeing that in that  
3407 aspect.

3408           \*Mr. Allen. Thank you all, and I am out of time, and I  
3409 yield back. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

3410           \*Mr. Griffith. The gentleman yields. I now recognize  
3411 the gentleman from Utah, Representative Curtis.

3412           \*Mr. Curtis. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will be  
3413 brief, but I \_ the magnitude of what is happening there has  
3414 caused me to be here today. I am grateful to those who have  
3415 waited so long for all of us to have our words.

3416           Look, I have been to the border under President Trump,



3417 and I have been to the border under President Biden, and I  
3418 will be at the border in a couple of weeks, and I don't know  
3419 how anybody, regardless of political persuasion, can feel  
3420 good about what is happening down there. One of my  
3421 Democratic colleagues said this is an unmitigated,  
3422 embarrassing, unforgivable disaster.

3423 I don't care what level you are talking about, that is  
3424 true. If you are talking about human rights, we are  
3425 destroying human rights. If you are talking about human  
3426 trafficking, if you are talking about drugs, any of these  
3427 issues, this is just unacceptable.

3428 And I live in a state far away from the border, and it  
3429 is a big issue. It may be the Number 1 issue in my  
3430 district. I can understand that we have policy  
3431 disagreements, but we are hurting Utahns and we are hurting  
3432 Americans.

3433 I would like to submit for the record this Washington  
3434 Post article outlining the explosion of fentanyl from Mexico  
3435 in Southern Utah in a tiny town called \_ well, it is not  
3436 tiny, but a town called St. George. The article is the  
3437 narrative of how a Mexican cartel got a foothold in Southern  
3438 Utah, particularly St. George, bringing fentanyl, cocaine,  
3439 meth from Mexico like a pizza delivery. The article  
3440 explains about a gentleman \_ well, I won't call him a  
3441 gentleman, a thug, Rubio, and how he used this front to

3442 bring this in.

3443           And since he started this, fentanyl overdose deaths  
3444 have increased 300 percent in just a three-year period in  
3445 this Utah town. Thankfully, he was apprehended, but the DEA  
3446 estimates that there were 541 overdose deaths in Utah in  
3447 2022, with opioids attributing to 74 percent of those, and  
3448 fentanyl related deaths were 122 in 2019. With open  
3449 borders, they are not safe, my district doesn't feel safe,  
3450 and it is unacceptable on every level.

3451           And because of time, Mr. Chairman, I am going to yield  
3452 and save my questions for later. Thank you very much.

3453           \*Mr. Griffith. I thank the gentleman very much and  
3454 appreciate it. I know the witnesses appreciate that as  
3455 well. And I will now recognize Mr. Carter of Georgia for  
3456 his five minutes of questioning. The gentleman from  
3457 Georgia.

3458           \*Mr. Carter. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I thank all  
3459 of you. I know it has been a long day and we appreciate you  
3460 sticking in here.

3461           I am real concerned about what is going on down here  
3462 because \_ obviously I am sure you have been with just about  
3463 everything today. All of us know we have got a border that  
3464 is just in chaos, and it is entirely open, and I am  
3465 concerned obviously, and people in my district are concerned  
3466 about the illegal immigrants coming across that border and

3467 about potential terrorists coming across.

3468       None of us are naive enough to believe that there  
3469 aren't terrorist coming across that border with the intent  
3470 of hurting us, and we are going to see an incident. You can  
3471 mark my word. We are going to see an incident soon, and it  
3472 is going to be from one of those terrorists who came across  
3473 that border, and that is just despicable to me.

3474       But having and being a pharmacist, I am more concerned  
3475 about fentanyl poisoning that is happening in our country  
3476 right now. Now we got a two-fold problem here. We have got  
3477 the amount of fentanyl that is coming across that border,  
3478 coming across that border. We have got to stop it. That is  
3479 why we have got to secure the port.

3480       Take the illegal immigration out of it. Just take that  
3481 factor out of it. If for no other reason, we got to secure  
3482 that border to stop the flow of drugs into this country.  
3483 Now that is one of the problems.

3484       The second problem is what about the amount of fentanyl  
3485 that is already in this country. That has got to be  
3486 addressed as well. Enough to kill all of us many times  
3487 over. We are losing 200 people every day, every day to  
3488 fentanyl poisoning.

3489       Now I will tell you I am \_ as I mentioned, I am a  
3490 pharmacist, a healthcare professional. I made a mistake at  
3491 a town hall meeting one night, and I referred to it as

3492 fentanyl addiction, and a mother stood up and corrected me,  
3493 as she should have, and she said, no, sir, it is not  
3494 fentanyl addiction, it is fentanyl poisoning. My son took  
3495 one pill and he is dead. One pill and he is dead. 200  
3496 people every day.

3497         Now there \_ fortunately there is a drug out there in \_  
3498 naloxone, and if used quickly enough it can reverse the  
3499 effects of fentanyl. I carry it in my backpack everywhere I  
3500 go. Thank God I have never had to use it, but I got it.  
3501 And I have got legislation right now that would call for  
3502 naloxone to be in every school in America. Every school in  
3503 America. Wherever you see a defibrillator, wherever you see  
3504 a fire extinguisher, we ought to have fentanyl (sic). It  
3505 ought to be in every emergency box in America right now.  
3506 And I hope you will look at that legislation, and I hope you  
3507 will consider it.

3508         Councilwoman Vernikov, I want to ask you if you  
3509 consider the unprecedented rates of fentanyl crossing the  
3510 border, do you support equipping all schools with naloxone  
3511 to address the crisis and save lives?

3512         \*Ms. Vernikov. Yes, and actually we \_ I supported a  
3513 bill on the City Council to make sure that all our schools  
3514 are equipped with narcan.

3515         \*Mr. Carter. Thank you for doing that. What \_ any  
3516 other initiatives that you can think of? I mean, obviously

3517 education. Whenever I go and speak to classes, I am always  
3518 warning them and asking them, please don't take anything,  
3519 anything that someone else gives you. Make sure it has come  
3520 from pharmacy.

3521 \*Ms. Vernikov. We have actually been working very  
3522 closely with the DEA to make sure that we have the resources  
3523 and that we provide education at our local public schools  
3524 regarding fentanyl and all other drugs so we are actually \_

3525 \*Mr. Carter. Mr. Rector, what about you, what other  
3526 kind of urgent measures would you suggest that the  
3527 administration might implement in schools and public areas  
3528 to not only expand the access to naloxone but proactively  
3529 prevent these tragedies from occurring at the alarming rate  
3530 they are occurring at?

3531 \*Mr. Rector. Well, I think the point here has been  
3532 made is that basically the huge crisis on the border with  
3533 all of the millions coming across serves as a kind of  
3534 camouflage for bringing all of these drugs in. So that  
3535 would be the main thing I would take from this today, that  
3536 as long as you have millions and millions of illegals coming  
3537 across and being released, that creates such a chaos and it  
3538 diverts the activity of the border protection to \_ and so  
3539 you are not able to block the drugs from coming in.

3540 \*Mr. Carter. Well, let me ask each one of you just  
3541 very quickly. Do you believe there is fentanyl infested in

3542 your community where you live?

3543 \*Mr. Blair. Yes, sir.

3544 \*Mr. Rector. Absolutely.

3545 \*Ms. Vernikov. There has been over 3,000 overdoses in  
3546 New York City last year.

3547 \*Mr. Nowrasteh. Yes, along with every other illegal  
3548 drug in \_

3549 \*Mr. Carter. Ah, come on, man, don't give me that.

3550 \*Mr. Nowrasteh. [Crosstalk.]

3551 \*Mr. Carter. Every other illegal drug. This fentanyl  
3552 is coming across the border. It is poisoning 200 people  
3553 every day.

3554 \*Mr. Nowrasteh. Are you telling me there is not  
3555 illegal drugs in my community of every type? I don't  
3556 understand why you disagree with what I said.

3557 \*Mr. Carter. I don't understand \_

3558 \*Mr. Nowrasteh. I don't understand why you disagree.

3559 \*Mr. Carter. But we are talking about the border and  
3560 securing the border. We are talking about the fentanyl that  
3561 is coming across the border.

3562 \*Mr. Griffith. All right. Direct your comments to the  
3563 chair, both of you. Direct your comments to the chair or to  
3564 a witness for a specific question.

3565

3566 AFTER 6:00 p.m.

3567 \*Mr. Carter. Mr. Chairman, I apologize, but I \_ I  
3568 mean, that is ridiculous to think that we have an open  
3569 border that fentanyl is coming across killing 200 people  
3570 every day, 200 Americans. If we had a plane crash today and  
3571 it killed 200 people, you would stop every airplane that was  
3572 flying until we figured out what happened. Yet we continue  
3573 to have an open border where fentanyl is coming in and  
3574 infesting every community in America and killing 200  
3575 Americans every day. That is despicable.

3576 \*Mr. Griffith. The gentleman's time \_

3577 \*Mr. Nowrasteh. [Crosstalk.]

3578 \*Mr. Carter. I yield back.

3579 \*Mr. Griffith. The gentleman's time is up. And before  
3580 he yields back, I need to ask him a question.

3581 Earlier I think you misspoke. You said that we needed  
3582 to have fentanyl, I think you meant naloxone or narcan, in  
3583 every school at \_

3584 [Laughter.]

3585 \*Voice. Uh-oh.

3586 \*Mr. Griffith. -- every \_ everywhere there was a  
3587 defibrillator \_

3588 \*Mr. Carter. Mr. Chairman, please correct that for the  
3589 record.

3590 \*Mr. Griffith. Okay, thank you.

3591 \*Mr. Carter. Please correct that for the record.

3592 \*Mr. Griffith. I thought you might want that corrected  
3593 for the record. You said fentanyl, but you meant naloxone?

3594 \*Mr. Carter. Obviously.

3595 \*Mr. Griffith. Obviously. That is what I thought.

3596 \*Mr. Carter. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

3597 \*Mr. Griffith. All right, very good.

3598 The gentleman yields back. I now recognize Mr. Weber  
3599 of Texas for his five minutes of questions.

3600 \*Mr. Weber. Sorry I am late. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

3601 Mr. Rector, I am wondering how the release of illegal  
3602 immigrants into communities across the country affects local  
3603 school districts. I imagine this problem is not only  
3604 limited to schools and communities near the border. What  
3605 are the short-term costs \_ I am going to follow the question  
3606 up with just a quick line. What are the short-term costs to  
3607 taxpayers to take on each additional student and are you  
3608 concerned about any long-term impacts to educational  
3609 standards?

3610 And before you answer, I was \_ I spent four years in  
3611 the Texas House before I got demoted to Congress. I was on  
3612 the Pub Ed committee and I was the vice chairman of the  
3613 border my second term. It was 2009, 2012. It was bad then,  
3614 it is unbelievably worse now. How do you think this affects  
3615 education?



3616           \*Mr. Rector. Well, we have all the unaccompanied  
3617 minors coming in. But more importantly, this 6.7 million  
3618 that we have brought in, they are not going anywhere, they  
3619 are going to be here for 30, 40 years, and what we see from  
3620 the illegal immigration that has occurred in the last 20  
3621 years, they have kids, and those kids, they are \_ 10 percent  
3622 of all the poor children in the United States are the  
3623 children of illegal immigrants, and they \_ the cost per  
3624 child to the education system is \$15,000 per child.

3625           There is no way that the illegal immigrant parents with  
3626 their education and wage level can pay anything with respect  
3627 to that, so it has to be brought up by the general taxpayer,  
3628 which absorbs money that otherwise would go to American  
3629 students, and that is a major reason why illegal immigrants  
3630 cost so much money. But people then argue, oh well, their  
3631 kids are going to rise up and they are going to make all  
3632 that money back. Their kids do have upward mobility, but  
3633 the National Academy of Sciences has analyzed that and finds  
3634 that that \_ for this sort of a low-skill immigrant, even the  
3635 second generation has additional costs.

3636           So illegal immigrants, when they come here, we are  
3637 going to let them, they are going to stay here forever, they  
3638 are going to have families, and that type of person with low  
3639 socioeconomic standing, there is nothing wrong with them,  
3640 but our society subsidizes them heavily, and we can't afford

3641 to do that unlimited.

3642 \*Mr. Weber. Let me move on. Somebody has got to pay  
3643 to educate those kids, and guess who that somebody is.

3644 \*Mr. Rector. Yeah.

3645 \*Mr. Weber. It is the American taxpayer.

3646 And Ms., is it Vernikov, am I saying that right?

3647 \*Ms. Vernikov. [Inaudible.]

3648 \*Mr. Weber. Okay. Yeah, let's get your \_ that will  
3649 do. Okay. So, Councilwoman \_

3650 \*Ms. Vernikov. Nobody could get my name right.

3651 \*Mr. Weber. Nobody can? So how about your mom and  
3652 dad, can they get it right?

3653 [Laughter.]

3654 \*Ms. Vernikov. I am sorry?

3655 \*Mr. Weber. Can your mom and dad get it right?

3656 \*Ms. Vernikov. Sometimes.

3657 \*Mr. Weber. Okay. And so pronounce it for us.

3658 \*Ms. Vernikov. Vernikov.

3659 \*Mr. Weber. Okay, Vernikov.

3660 \*Ms. Vernikov. It used to be Vernikova with an A.

3661 \*Mr. Weber. Okay. You said in your testimony that New  
3662 York City has added 34,000 students during the border  
3663 crisis. Again, I was in the Pub Ed committee, I know what  
3664 that looks like. How do the parents in that district feel  
3665 about that situation?

3666           \*Ms. Vernikov. Well, that is just the general number  
3667 for New York City, but I think we are really struggling in  
3668 public schools. We are already \_ we already have really  
3669 poor math and reading skills as it is, and now we have this  
3670 influx of migrants of children who, quite frankly, don't  
3671 speak English, they need special instruction, they need ESL  
3672 teachers. We are \_ the teachers are not equipped to handle  
3673 this amount of students and they are not equipped to handle  
3674 all the languages that these students speak.

3675           \*Mr. Weber. Mm-hmm.

3676           \*Ms. Vernikov. So it is really challenging and, you  
3677 know, they are really struggling with that.

3678           \*Mr. Weber. Well, my beautiful bride of 47 years  
3679 taught fourth grade 27 years and every time she got an ESL  
3680 in her class, she had to slow things down, okay, which  
3681 hampered \_ slowed it down for the whole class. Their test  
3682 scores \_ she did really well with test scores, and her test  
3683 scores failed because she had people who couldn't speak  
3684 English and they had to go through things over and over.

3685           I go back to you. We know that the virtual classes  
3686 forced on our children during the pandemic by Biden's  
3687 Department of Education and teachers unions caused  
3688 incalculable damage to our children's education. Learning  
3689 loss is a problem that we will be dealing, back to his  
3690 example, these kids are going grow up but we are going to be

3691 dealing with that for a long time.

3692 Councilwoman, if New York City continues to host  
3693 illegal immigrants in public schools, how do you think it is  
3694 going to affect those children's ability to learn and to  
3695 develop socially? We got 30 seconds.

3696 \*Ms. Vernikov. So I think that is the concern about  
3697 sheltering migrants in our schools and like we saw in my  
3698 district what happened with James Madison where they had to  
3699 be \_ students had to be dismissed early and go remote  
3700 because of the migrants coming in. I think the concern is  
3701 that how many more times are we going to host migrants, you  
3702 know, as a place for shelter, right. We can't afford to do  
3703 that. We cannot afford to do any more remote learning.

3704 \*Mr. Weber. Well, thank you for that. And I think we  
3705 would all agree it is only going to get worse.

3706 Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

3707 \*Mr. Griffith. The gentleman yields back. Seeing  
3708 there are no further members wishing to ask questions, I  
3709 would like to thank our witnesses again for being here today  
3710 and particularly for letting us start late, and then having  
3711 a vote series in the middle of this, it is never good, and  
3712 we do appreciate your patience. Your testimony was very  
3713 important, and I am glad we got that on the record for the  
3714 benefit of Congress and for the American people, so I do  
3715 thank you all for being here today.

3716           Got a couple of housekeeping matters to take care of.  
3717   I ask unanimous consent to insert into the record the  
3718   documents included on the staff hearing document list, which  
3719   includes all the ones that were asked by both sides, the  
3720   members who asked for unanimous consent. Without objection,  
3721   that will be the order. Hearing none.

3722           [The information follows:]

3723

3724   \*\*\*\*\*COMMITTEE INSERT\*\*\*\*\*

3725

3726           \*Mr. Griffith. Pursuant to committee rules, I remind  
3727 members they have 10 business days to submit additional  
3728 questions for the record. And you all heard some members  
3729 say that they were going to ask questions or submit  
3730 questions for the record. So what happens is they have 10  
3731 days to get us questions, then the \_ we will send those  
3732 questions on to you and ask the witnesses to submit your  
3733 responses to those questions within 10 business days upon  
3734 receipt.

3735           Without objection, the subcommittee is adjourned.

3736           [Whereupon, at 6:07 p.m., the subcommittee was  
3737 adjourned.]