



National Border Patrol Council

"Protecting Those Who Protect Our Borders"

Testimony of Paul Perez President of the National Border Patrol Council Before the House Natural Resources Committee March 11, 2025

Chairman Tiffany, Ranking Member Neguse, and Members of the Subcommittee, I want to thank you for asking me to testify this morning in support of Congressman Ciscomani's FLASH Act.

My name is Paul Perez, and I am the President of the National Border Patrol Council. The Council is the union that represents over 16,000 frontline Border Patrol agents protecting our country. After serving in the U.S. military, I joined the Border Patrol in 1997 and I am an active-duty Border Patrol Agent assigned to the Kingsville Station in the Rio Grande Valley Sector, located in South Texas.

Border Patrol agents need three things to patrol our border – manpower, access, and situational awareness. Although the first on this list, manpower, is outside of your jurisdiction, I would like to spend a moment educating you on the challenges we are facing.

We currently have 19,500 Border Patrol Agents on duty to protect our border. Of this number, more than 2,500 are eligible to retire – today. These agents could literally put in their retirement papers and be gone tomorrow. Another 4,000 agents will be eligible to retire in the next 4 years. In total, we are looking at nearly one third of our manpower potentially leaving in the next 4 years.

Why this matters is because under the last administration we had approximately 2 million illegal aliens observed on Border Patrol surveillance platforms walk right into this country without being arrested. We saw them, but we literally did not have enough agents to arrest them. That is what happens when you do not have enough manpower to meet the mission.

President Trump recognizes this challenge. He has proposed increasing Border Patrol agent pay and offering retention bonuses to keep the agents we already have. In addition, he has proposed recruitment bonuses to add an additional 10,000 agents above our current staffing level. I hope that all of you will support these initiatives as they are brought forward in reconciliation and through the FY 2026 appropriations process.

The second thing that you need to secure our border is access and that is why the FLASH Act is so important. Let me give you an example. When we detect drug cartel members or a group of illegal aliens crossing our border, we will dispatch agents to intercept them. Ideally, we will have agents close by and in sufficient numbers to apprehend the group without incident.

However, if it takes a long time to physically get agents on the scene, we have a problem. In some cases, we have agents in a foot chase, often at night, across difficult terrain with a motivated adversary that has a 30–45-minute head start. To be candid, that is not the situation we want to be in. The longer it takes us to get on scene, the higher the likelihood the cartel smugglers and illegal immigrants will evade capture.

Where I am stationed in South Texas, much of the land north of the border is privately held. We have partnerships with local farmers and ranchers to access their land and in some cases install temporary surveillance assets that increase our situational awareness. I cannot tell you how important these partnerships are to securing our border. These farmers and ranchers don't just allow us to access their land, but they are another set of eyes and ears and will call us if they see anything suspicious.

Approximately one third of our border with Mexico abuts U.S. federal lands – nearly 600 miles. It’s ironic that Border Patrol has, in some instances, better access to private land than we do with federal land held by the Departments of Interior and Agriculture. Our ability to access federal land now is largely at the discretion of individual federal land managers. To be clear, many of the federal land managers are terrific partners and support our mission. However, there are others who are more reticent to cooperate with Border Patrol.

The FLASH Act addresses this very issue and provides for the construction and maintenance of nearly 600 miles of roads across these federal lands. These roads will all be constructed within 10 miles of the border and will allow us the access we need to apprehend cartel smugglers and illegal immigrants.

Finally, the third thing you need to patrol the border is situational awareness, and the FLASH Act has the potential to increase that in two important ways. First, there are over one million acres of designated wildness areas along our border. The FLASH Act guarantees Border Patrol access to these areas and specifically allows us to install tactical infrastructure such as radio repeater towers and surveillance equipment.

Second, it allows for border states to install temporary infrastructure on federal lands to support border security. In Texas, where I am stationed, Operation Lone Star has been wildly effective and dramatically drove down the rate of illegal immigration.

I want to thank your committee again for their consideration of the FLASH Act and I look forward to answering any questions that you may have.