

**Testimony of John Franklin, Mayor of Vista, CA**  
**The Biden-Harris Border Crisis: California Perspectives**  
**Committee on the Judiciary**

**U.S. House of Representatives**

**September 6, 2024**

Good morning, Mr. Chairman and members of this committee. My name is John Franklin. I'm the Mayor of the City of Vista in San Diego's North County.

Known as the climatic wonderland for our outstanding weather, Vista is a beautiful city of middle-class and working families.

Vista is also a community made up overwhelmingly of recent immigrants. 50% of the people in Vista are Latino or Hispanic. Nearly a third of my city speaks Spanish and 13% of the residents of Vista only speak Spanish. I want to make clear that America always has been and must always remain a beacon of hope for immigrants from all over the world. We honor our immigrant heritage and we welcome those who come to our country to contribute to our society and we recognize our obligation to mankind to provide safe harbor for those who are persecuted in their home countries and have legitimate asylum claims. I fully support those who immigrate to the United States lawfully and I believe it bears repeating that the United States of America affords more opportunities for lawful immigration than the rest of the nations of the world combined.

At the same time that we honor our legal immigrants, we also have a right to expect that all persons in our society abide by the laws of our nation and our state.

The President is required by our constitution to "take care that the Laws be faithfully executed." It isn't an option or a suggestion. He is bound by his oath of office to do this.

Unfortunately, The Biden-Harris Administration, has decided not to "take care that the laws be faithfully executed" with respect to the border and our immigration laws.

I want to talk to you today about what this Administration's open border has done to my community.

The San Diego county medical examiner has reported 1,203 people died last year of an accidental drug overdose.<sup>1</sup> This is double the rate that it was just a few years ago. Double. Yet the administration refuses to take action. The drug – fentanyl – is being smuggled across our open border by drug cartels. Last year, over 700 people died from fentanyl alone. This crisis is killing at a higher rate than we've ever seen before. Why? Many unwitting victims don't realize they are consuming fentanyl. They have no opioid tolerance, and when they consume a substance laced with fentanyl, they' overdose immediately.

One of these individuals was my friend's son who died this year. He thought he was taking Adderall. He bought it from a drug dealer whose product has likely killed others. These drugs come from all over the world, but they only arrive in our country through one source – our open borders.

Just a few years ago and extended family member of mine spent months unconscious in the ICU after ingesting what she thought was a prescription drug, which was laced with fentanyl.

We're also dealing with high rates of crime. Statistics on crimes committed by illegal immigrants are unavailable, because unlike in Texas, California state policy makers refuse to collect these data.

According to Texas DPS, over 441,000 criminal noncitizens have been booked into local Texas jails between 2011, and 2024, of which over 312,000 were classified as illegal noncitizens by DHS.

These 312,000 illegal noncitizens were charged with more than 542,000 criminal offenses which included arrests for 1,006 homicide charges; 69,515 assault charges; 9,736 burglary charges; 63,438 drug charges; 1,277 kidnapping charges; 27,292 theft charges; 42,259 obstructing police charges; 3,093 robbery charges; 6,850 sexual assault charges; 7,882 sexual offense charges; and 6,696 weapon charges.

Because we know that the California border sector experiences approximately 26% as many illegal border crossings that Texas experiences, it is reasonable to extrapolate that we are experiencing these crimes at approximately 26% of the rate. This means that my

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/2024/08/29/overdose-deaths-in-san-diego-county-decrease-but-fentanyl-and-meth-remain-key-culprits/>

community has been subjected to tens of thousands of crimes that would not otherwise have occurred if not for an open border.

In Vista I organized an anti-retail theft task force to address an epidemic of shoplifting that has forced multiple grocery and drug stores to close in my city. I stood with the deputies in the security office monitoring the store. In less than 10 minutes, we identified our first shoplifter. As we arrested them and looked into their background, we were shocked to discover the people stealing from our stores were not troubled individuals down on their luck, but members of organized criminal organizations with connections south of our border who were stealing and looting from not just Vista's businesses, but businesses across our region in a methodical fashion – exploiting not only the fact that they could travel freely across our border, but also that in California we have allowed people to steal with impunity as long as they take \$950 or less. Businesses and grocery stores in our city have closed – usually in our poorest neighborhoods because of victimization by these organized criminals.

Finally, we have to deal with the fact that illegal immigrants put negative wage pressure on our job market. When illegal immigrants come into our country, many are exploited by violations of our labor laws. They often take jobs that pay below the market rate, many don't pay taxes, and now our state legislature is even considering allowing illegal immigrants to be employed in our state government.<sup>2</sup> This is insane. If you broke the law when you came to our country, certainly we should all agree that you shouldn't get a job paid for by our taxpayers. I am the Mayor of a working-class city with a large Latino population. They elected me for a reason – because I gave voice to their concerns and promised to be their champion. I appreciate the opportunity to be here to speak to my community's concerns and my city feels the economic effects of illegal immigration.

I have toured our porous border numerous times throughout the past 20 years, including at least a half a dozen in the past 5 years. I've watched as multiple generations of fencing proceeded the existing wall. And I watched with puzzlement when the current administration took office as the materials to complete 37 holes in the San Diego sector fence rusted and laid the waste unused after President Biden and border czar Kamala Harris refused to complete the wall and then sold the completed sections for scrap instead of installing them to complete the wall. Taxpayers invested in those materials to complete a wall that is vitally important. Yes, I have seen the many discarded ladders, and I know it is possible to climb this wall, but I hear directly from our US border patrol agents that the wall is an essential force multiplier. Making it possible to patrol a mile of border with as few as two agents instead of hundreds required to patrol one mile of open border. A nation without

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<sup>2</sup> [California to Give Illegal Immigrants Jobs in State Government \(reformcalifornia.org\)](https://reformcalifornia.org)

borders is no nation at all. We must always be a nation that honors our heritage as a land of immigrants, but one that expects all citizens, including newcomers to follow our laws equally.

The President and Vice-President must adhere to their oaths to take care that the law is faithfully executed. They swore these oaths before God and our Nation. My city needs them to uphold the law. I ask President Biden and Vice-President Harris to please start enforcing our laws beginning with securing our border. Thank you for letting me speak before you today.