

Testimony before the House Committee on the Judiciary
Member Day Hearing
Congresswoman Susie Lee (NV-03)

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Chairman Jordan, Ranking Member Raskin, and members of the House Judiciary Committee, thank you for providing me with the opportunity to share my perspective on issues under the Committee's jurisdiction.

I will focus my testimony today on three critical issues facing Nevada's Third District: immigration, public safety, and access to housing.

Immigration

For years, Republicans in Congress said we could not consider immigration reform until the border was secure. Well, I have to say, all I have heard about this year is that President Donald Trump has successfully secured our border. It seems to me that it's time for us to finally address this issue for the first time in three decades.

Right now, we can all agree that our border and immigration system are broken.

We all know the most effective border security is a comprehensive immigration reform package. That is why I have been an early backer of the ***Dignity Act (H.R.4393)***, led by Republican Maria Salazar and Democrat Veronica Escobar.

I represent Las Vegas, Nevada, the entertainment capital of the world. Immigrants built our community, our neighborhoods, and our economy. That's why I'm proud to support this bill, which is a carefully crafted compromise that would allow us to protect our borders, grow our economy, and defend the dignity of immigrants trying to make a better life for themselves and their families.

And if you believe that there is still work to be done to secure our border, I also want to mention the ***Advanced Border Coordination Act (H.R.285)***, a bill I have led with Congressman Dave Joyce. As you know, DHS has periodically established joint operations hubs to help federal and local law enforcement work together to strengthen border security and crack down on transnational crime including drug and human trafficking. This bill would expand on this successful interagency cooperation model by establishing joint operations hubs along the southern border.

Public Safety

I also want to speak on the issue of public safety.

One of the most important responsibilities of members of Congress is ensuring our constituents feel safe in their communities. Unfortunately, an ongoing scourge of organized retail crime is threatening that sense of safety.

Organized retail crime is the large-scale theft of retail merchandise with the intent to sell the items for financial gain. Organized retail crime—or ORC—is often perpetrated by criminal enterprises that use a group of people to steal and then sell merchandise.

Cracking down on ORC is an economic imperative. In my state of Nevada alone, ORC caused an estimated loss of \$85 million in tax revenue and over \$466 million in lost goods in 2021. In total, ORC cost Nevada over \$1 billion in lost products, higher insurance, increased prices of goods, and unrealized wages.

And this isn't just an economic issue, it's also a safety issue. Criminal enterprises often steal goods through brazen and dangerous means, putting members of our community throughout the supply chain—from the clerk ringing up your purchases at Target to the driver delivering goods for UPS—at risk.

Our local and state law enforcement are doing incredible work cracking down on organized retail crime through partnerships with local businesses of all sizes, like the Nevada Organized Retail Crime Association.

As federal representatives, we must ensure our local and state law enforcement officers have the proper federal support and resources to fully investigate and prosecute these crimes given the nationwide aspect of this threat.

That's why I joined Republican Representative Dave Joyce to introduce the bipartisan ***Combating Organized Retail Crime Act (H.R.2853)***. This bill would support law enforcement with the tools they need to crack down on these criminal operations and keep our communities safe.

Your colleagues on the Senate Judiciary Committee, led by Chairman Chuck Grassley, who leads the Senate's version of this bill, heard firsthand about the dangers of ORC in a July full committee hearing.

I encourage this Committee to follow suit and give my legislation, which has bipartisan support from over 200 members across both chambers, full consideration.

Housing Access

Finally, I want to spend the remainder of my time discussing housing access.

I know that housing issues are not usually a topic for consideration by the Judiciary Committee. But in this one unique instance, you can actually play an important role in supporting access to housing for a population that Congress has a special responsibility to protect: veterans and active members of the Armed Forces.

For years, I have worked with the Veterans Association of Real Estate Professionals—known as VAREP—to secure their position as a Congressionally Chartered Veterans Service Organization.

VAREP delivers HUD-approved housing counseling and case management across the full housing lifecycle: pre-purchase, rental support, VA loan troubleshooting, loss mitigation, and homelessness services.

The VA offers five basic veteran benefits: 1) disability compensation, 2) healthcare, 3) pension, 4) education, and 5) home loan guaranty. The only one of these five VA benefits which does not have a congressionally chartered VSO supporting the effort is the home loan guaranty.

As a congressional chartered VSO, VAREP would be better positioned to serve our nation's veterans and active members of the Armed Forces. My bipartisan bill with Congresswoman Jen Kiggans—***H.R. 3981***—would grant this congressional charter to VAREP, making housing more accessible for the brave men and women who put their lives on the line defending our nation.

Conclusion

Thank you again for providing this opportunity. I look forward to collaborating with the Committee to make life for Nevadans better.