



**THE HONORABLE SAMUEL S. PAGE
SHERIFF OF ROCKINGHAM COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA**

**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE U.S. HOUSE OF
REPRESENTATIVES JUDICIARY COMMITTEE**

Hearing on Immigration Enforcement Bills

WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 11, 2015

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The Gowdy Immigration Enforcement Bill:

Mr. Chairman, Co-Chairman, and Distinguished members of this U.S. House of Representatives Judiciary Committee. I would like to thank you for allowing me this opportunity to talk to you about the Gowdy Immigration Enforcement Bill introduced in 2013 by Representative Trey Gowdy and some issues that I have identified with border enforcement and interior immigration enforcement.

I give greetings from the citizens of Rockingham County, North Carolina whom I represent. Currently I am serving in my fifth term as the elected Sheriff of Rockingham County, N.C.. I am the Past-President of the North Carolina Sheriffs' Association, and currently serve on the National Sheriff's Association Border Security and Immigration Committee as Co-Vice Chair. I am a U.S.A.F. Veteran, and have served in civilian law enforcement for more than 33 years in North Carolina.

I believe that you all in our Congress have one of the toughest jobs in our Nation today. You are being asked to fix our broken immigration system in the U.S., and to make sure that your legislation will provide a solution that will last for many years to come. I come before you today not as an expert in immigration law or border security. I am just one of 3080 Sheriffs across America that are asking for your help in solving our immigration and border security problem that impacts all of our citizens across the U.S. in many ways. What I can tell you about is public safety.

In 1990, I had my first encounter with illegal immigrants in my county. While on patrol we located (six) suspicious subjects camped out near the bypass highway. It was determined that they were all in the U.S. illegally. When our area ICE agent was contacted, I was told that if we had not charged the subjects we had to release them. The ICE agents had no funds for transportation.

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Fast forward, between 2011-2014. While working with the Triad D.E.A. Drug Task Force we arrested fifteen Mexican Drug Cartel associates within my county in North Carolina. During the investigative process, we located large amounts of Marijuana, Kilos of Cocaine, more than one Million dollars in cash, (five) AR-15 Rifles, and other assorted firearms in the possession of these persons that are not only affiliated with the Mexican Drug Cartel, but are committing criminal drug trafficking offenses within my county and state. The Sheriff in the county next to mine reported that they had (two) drug related execution style murders in the past seven years.

According to my last D.E.A. briefing, North Carolina is second only to the Atlanta Region in the South-East for drug trafficking routes by the Mexican Drug Cartel. These Drug Cartels are also reported to be operating in approximately 1200 cities within the U.S.. As I have explained to the citizens of my county it only takes two or three days traveling time for illegal drugs to travel from the border to anywhere in the United States, including rural Rockingham County, N.C..

In North Carolina, since October 2010, I have participated in the ICE "Secure Communities Program." Since that time, we have processed (233) persons that have been criminally charged and are residing illegally in the U.S.. Of those arrested, (9) Illegal immigrants previously removed by I.C.E. have returned to my county to be arrested a second time. Approximately 45% of those arrested that were found to be illegal were charged with D.W.I. offenses, 15% were charged with Assault, 5% for Rape/ Indecent liberties With Child, 1% Death by Motor Vehicle and (1) charge of Attempted Murder.

Issues at the Border Areas:

I personally have traveled to the South-West U.S. / Mexico border areas three times in the past four years. The purpose being to educate myself about local, State and Federal concerns regarding U.S. border security, drug trafficking, human trafficking, and illegal immigration activities. The South-West

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border is the primary point of entry for most illegal drugs and criminals associated with this business. Once they leave the border area they transition to my county in North Carolina and others States across the U.S. within only a few days.

Last summer, I traveled to the Rio Grande Valley of Texas, where almost 70,000 illegal immigrants, including unaccompanied children, were apprehended by Border Patrol agents. According to C.B.P. representatives most of the apprehensions were "Give Ups." The immigrants didn't try to avoid apprehension.

When visiting one Border Patrol station, I noticed several C.B.P. patrol trucks sitting idle at the station in the parking lot. An unidentified agent advised that the reason for all of the vehicles parked in the lot, instead of in the field, was that the agents were all tied up processing the family units and U.A.C.'s. He said they were overwhelmed.

When talking with the C.B.P. agents, the issue of the President's D.A.C.A. program came up and the border surge that they were experiencing at that time resulting in several thousand illegal immigrants crossing the border with Mexico originating from Central America. Approximately 86% of the border crossers apprehended in that area were from Central America.

I noted during the C.B.P. visit that some discussion came up about ways to curb the border surge crisis. There was mention about amending the 2008 "Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act," thus subjecting all illegal immigrant minors to expeditious return home if they have not been trafficked, and don't face the likelihood of persecution. This is exactly what Representative John Carter's bill does, and introduced in July of 2014 in order to deal with the border surge.

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This bill would send a clear message to parents of these children there is no benefit to putting your children at risk by contracting with criminal smuggling organizations to bring your children to the U.S. illegally.

Who is profiting from last summer's border surge and human trafficking/smuggling business? I believe it's the Mexican Drug Cartel and human smugglers. I also understand that next to drug trafficking, smuggling human beings brings in the next highest amount of dollars from this criminal activity.

As you travel 65 miles North of McAllen, Texas you come upon a ranch owned by Mike and Linda Vickers. There is a C.B.P. checking station near their ranch. The Vickers have lived on this ranch for years. They told the visiting Sheriffs that when the President issued the Executive orders for the (D.A.C.A.) in 2012 that they started finding younger suspected illegal immigrants crossing their property.

What comes through the border doesn't stay there. In just hours, or a few days driving time, the drug trafficking, human smuggling and trafficking, illegal immigrants, and gang members enter my state, and other states. When you look at the D.H.S. annual summary of apprehensions, I ask this question. How many illegal immigrants and criminal offenders did you detect? How many others did you miss?

The Next Question: How can we restore the Rule of Law in Immigration Enforcement?

Our Congress needs to address the misunderstood issue of Detainers. Several of the Sheriffs across the U.S. have discussed concerns regarding detainers within the National Sheriffs' Association. I think we all know that ICE does not patrol our streets, and can't place an agent inside of every county jail in the U.S. to identify non-citizens who are arrested in our Communities because

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we in local law enforcement are the ones who are most likely to make these encounters.

Regarding criminal aliens, we need a way to work together with ICE. To communicate, share information, and have a way to transfer custody of Criminal aliens to ICE. Regarding removal, the Secure Communities program was a huge improvement in the process and largely solved the problem of communications. The Detainers allowed us to complete the process efficiently and to avoid having criminal aliens slip between the cracks, and return to our communities, sometimes to flee and then to commit new crimes. Now, detainers are controversial, and many Sheriffs are concerned about lawsuits if they comply with the Federal detainers. Small counties like mine can't risk costly litigation like that even though we want to cooperate with ICE and do what we see as our duty as fellow law enforcement agencies.

We badly need our Congress to step in and clarify the authority of ICE to issue detainers, and our ability and obligation to comply with the detainer, just as we would any other law enforcement agency in connection with legitimate law enforcement action.

The "Gowdy Immigration Enforcement Bill" would do that.

My fellow Sheriffs and I have had the discussion of the problem of decreasing numbers of criminal aliens that have been taken into custody by ICE from our facilities. In my facility since 2010 only 66% of the incarcerated criminal aliens have had detainers placed on them by ICE. Basically only 154 picked up by ICE out of 233 criminal alien offenders.

Recently DHS Secretary Johnson has issued a memo for an updated priority offense list which indicates which current types of offenses will place a criminal alien in removal status. This priority list of offenders should concern all law enforcement officials.

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The Gowdy Immigration Enforcement Bill will help us by ensuring that ICE lives up to its responsibility and role as a law enforcement partner by detaining and removing all of the criminal aliens that we work together to identify. It would give ICE more tools to make them more efficient and effective. For example it clarifies that gang members, drunk drivers, sex offenders, those who commit domestic violence, identity theft, fraud, and those who show contempt for our laws by failing to appear in court or abide by removal orders will not fall between the cracks.

There is the tragic case in California where two Sheriff's Deputies were recently killed by an illegal alien who had been deported at least once prior for criminal offenses, who apparently worked for the Mexican drug cartel, and had a record of multiple serious traffic violations in Utah. This should illustrate why ICE Interior enforcement is a necessity in the U.S.

"On Notification of Criminal Aliens to ICE"

What I want as Sheriff, and what my citizens in Rockingham County want, is to know that ICE Agents will be able to do their job and will actually take custody of and seek to remove the illegal aliens who are committing crimes in my county.

I have read the Gowdy Immigration Enforcement Bill, and I have listed a few points of interest:

1. This Bill empowers all law enforcement in America to cooperate in the process of making our communities safer as a force multiplier.
2. This Bill gives our Federal ICE agents the Congressional backing they need to carry out their duties to enforce our Nation's immigration laws as they should be.

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3. This Bill reduces the chances of criminals of all types including gang members, aggravated Felons and Sex offenders from receiving or benefiting from protected status.
4. This Bill places oversight and accountability on the Secretary of DHS for decisions being made regarding interior immigration enforcement.
5. This Bill Establishes an ICE Advisory Council to advise the Congress and ICE on ways of improving enforcement, addressing the needs of ICE personnel, and assessing the effectiveness of enforcement policies.

Representative Gowdy's bill will in my opinion restore the "Rule of Law" in immigration enforcement in America as well as the authority reserved for ICE Agents to conduct proper interior immigration enforcement with those powers protected by Congressional legislation.

Mr. Chairman, I personally think that Mr. Gowdy's Bill and its provisions it covers are a tremendous step in the right direction in interior immigration enforcement. I look forward to assisting you all in this proposed legislation. I believe it to be a promising piece of legislation in the bigger picture of immigration reform.

Mr. Chairman, I have included an attachment from the National Sheriffs Association Position Statement on Comprehensive Immigration Reform for your review. It was adopted by the NSA Board of Directors on June 25, 2013.

THANK YOU AND I LOOK FORWARD TO ANSWERING YOUR QUESTIONS.



Sheriff Sam Page
Rockingham County, North Carolina