

**House Committee on the Judiciary
Subcommittee on Immigration and Border Security**

Hearing Titled: “Restoring Enforcement of our Nation’s Immigration Laws”

**Tuesday, March 28, 2017
10:30 a.m. 2141 Rayburn House Office Building**

**Statement for the Record
Submitted by Rep. Andy Biggs (AZ-05)**

Chairman Sensenbrenner and Ranking Member Lofgren:

Thank you for holding a hearing before the House Judiciary Subcommittee on Immigration and Border Security to highlight the decline in enforcement of our nation’s immigration laws and the negative impact of such policies on our communities.

According to most estimates, there are at least 11 to 12 million illegal aliens currently reside in the United States. Frequently, any conversation relating to fixing our nation’s immigration laws begins with calls to provide a pathway to citizenship or legal status for these individuals. However, if history is any indicator, this is the wrong approach.

In 1986, Congress was having a very similar conversation to the one we are having today. Ultimately, they passed the Immigration Reform and Control Act, which provided citizenship to nearly 3 million illegal aliens in exchange for promises to focus on enforcement measures that would curb future illegal immigration. One of those promises was strict workplace enforcement. Thirty years later, mandated use of E-Verify is still being debated, current laws have been circumvented, and the illegal alien population has quadrupled. It is imperative that we learn from past mistakes and ensure that any actions we take focus on enforcement first.

According to the Federation for American Immigration Reform, illegal immigration costed U.S. taxpayers \$99.2 billion in 2010, even after accounting for taxes that were paid by illegal aliens. The bulk of these costs, roughly \$84 billion, are absorbed by state and local governments. Arizona’s share of that was more than \$2.5 billion. During a time when federal, state, and local governments are facing large fiscal constraints, it is illogical to support policies that force spending on individuals choosing to break the law.

While these costs are astounding, I also want to focus on how our lax enforcement policies have led to multiple unnecessary crimes within our communities. According to records from Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), nearly 900,000 illegal aliens who have been ordered removed from the United States currently roam free. Of these, about 174,000 have criminal convictions, including for serious crimes like homicide, sexual assault, and kidnapping. There are an additional 191,000 convicted criminals with pending deportation proceedings who are not in ICE custody. Yet removals by the Obama Administration have been in decline for the past five years.

It is becoming far too often that we hear of Americans across the country who are victims of crimes by illegal aliens. In January 2015, Grant Ronnebeck, a 21-year-old convenience store clerk in Mesa, Arizona, was shot and killed by an illegal alien with a violent criminal record who had been released from ICE custody in 2013, pending deportation. This loss of life is a senseless tragedy that absolutely could have been prevented had his killer been deported years earlier.

In memory of Grant, I introduced H.R.486, *Grant's Law*, to prohibit the release of any alien guilty of a deportable crime, and to require their deportation within 90 days. But this is only one of many actions Congress should take to regain control over our illegal immigration system. I strongly support efforts to increase border security until we have regained operational control, increase internal enforcement, and eliminate any incentive to entice new illegal immigrants to enter the United States.

There is absolutely no excuse for allowing these individuals to roam free on our streets or to make it so easy for illegal aliens to remain in the United States. As Andrew Arthur, a former Immigration Judge, said in his written testimony to this subcommittee, "A failure to remove aliens from the interior of the United States, and in particular aliens under final orders of removal, indicates to those who would enter the United States illegally that this country is not serious about its immigration laws. This encourages others to enter the United States illegally, knowing that if they are able to enter illegally, the odds of being removed are low."

It is time we get serious about enforcing our immigration laws. I have been encouraged by many of the actions President Trump has taken to secure our southern border, revamp partnerships with local law enforcement agencies, shine light on the dangers of sanctuary city policies, and increase deportations of illegal aliens. However, there are many actions Congress can take to ensure future Presidents are unable to circumvent the law in the manner we have seen over the past eight years. We absolutely must restore enforcement of our laws, and I look forward to working with this committee to implement policies that will truly curb illegal immigration in the future.