



Chairman John Carter

*Subcommittee on Homeland Security
House Committee on Appropriations*

***FY 2018 Homeland Security Appropriations Bill - Full Committee Markup
July 18, 2017
Opening Statement As Prepared***

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm glad to be here today to present the fiscal year 2018 Department of Homeland Security Appropriations bill to the Committee. The recommendation is \$42.5 billion in nondefense, discretionary spending, \$1.9 billion in defense spending, and \$6.8 billion for disaster relief. The total is \$51.1 billion, which is \$327 million above the President's request and \$1.8 billion above the fiscal year 2017 baseline.

The subcommittee's recommendation stands in sharp contrast to prior years because the President's budget request is a major policy change in how DHS secures the border and enforces immigration laws. Consequently, Mrs. Roybal-Allard and many of the minority are opposed to the bill. While I regret not having a unified subcommittee mark, I respect everyone's right to assert reasonable and honest dissent. Moreover, I have no doubt that everyone on this Committee share the same objective for DHS – to ensure a homeland that is safe, secure, and resilient against terrorism and other hazards.

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, I realize that we're going to spend a lot of time today debating the pros and cons of spending nearly \$1.6 billion for border wall construction and \$3.2 billion for 44,000 detention beds, among other items. These are significant increases in spending and are worthy of debate.

All too often, the discussion veers off to heartbreaking stories of illegal migration...but that is only part of the story. The rest is that if illegal migrants can exploit vulnerabilities in the nation's border, so can terrorists, drug smugglers, and human trafficking organizations. This is unacceptable.

The recommendations in this bill change that dynamic. They reinforce current structures and build sturdy, secure fencing where Border Patrol agents have convinced me it is needed. They are invested in smart, 21st century technologies that assist those who work on the border. They do not build a solid wall stretching from Brownsville, TX, to San Diego, CA. They are not targeted at areas, like Texas' Big Bend National Park and Arizona's forbidding desert, where Mother Nature has secured the border in ways that man need not enhance.

Critics complain that putting physical barriers on the border don't work and aren't necessary. With respect, I disagree. In the early 1990s, over 500,000 people were apprehended as they attempted to illegally cross the border in the San Diego sector. To combat these illegal

crossings, CBP installed security infrastructure improvements. By fiscal year 2016, the number of apprehensions in that sector plummeted to 25,000. Similar success stories have occurred across the El Centro, Yuma, Tucson, and El Paso sectors. I am committed to bringing that same success to Texas.

Colleagues, this bill is focused on national security and law enforcement. It sends a powerful message that if you break our nation's laws and cross the border illegally, you will suffer the consequences, which are apprehension and a guaranteed stay in detention.

With that, here are additional highlights of the bill.

For CBP: In addition to the wall and associated technology, the mark supports increasing Border Patrol by 500 agents.

For ICE: In addition to the funds for 44,000 detention beds, which is an increase of 4,676 over fiscal year 2017, \$18 million above the request is provided to expand the Visa Security Program to two additional high-threat, overseas locations, and \$186 million to increase the investigative and support staff by 1,600, as requested.

For FEMA: \$3.0 billion for FEMA grants, training, and exercise programs, an increase of \$939.7 million above the request, which includes a \$25 million increase to the Nonprofit Security Grant Program; \$7.3 billion, as requested, for the Disaster Relief Fund.

For the Secret Service: \$1.9 billion to ensure they are paid for the work they do.

For TSA: Full funding for Transportation Security Officers to support aviation security and keep wait times low.

For Coast Guard: \$19 million is provided for the heavy icebreaker to continue program management activities and design work required to award a production contract in fiscal year 2019; \$500 million for the production of the first Offshore Patrol Cutter and long-lead materials for OPC #2; and \$95 million for a fully missionized C-130J to enhance long-range surveillance capabilities; and

For Cybersecurity and Infrastructure protection: \$950 million is provided to secure government networks and prevent cyber attacks, and \$380 million is for infrastructure protection programs, including the electrical grid and emergency communications systems.

Finally, the E-Verify system – which enables businesses to check whether their employees are eligible to work in the United States – is fully funded at \$131.5 million.

Colleagues, this is a good bill, and I ask you to support it. I am happy to answer any questions about the mark, but before I do, our Ranking Member, Mrs. Roybal-Allard is recognized, and then our full Committee Chairman and Ranking Members for any comments they would like to make.

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