



STPRA Border Security statement

THE ISSUE

STPRA had its origins in the spring of 2005 at a meeting of South Texas landowners and managers who were concerned about a disturbing trend of massive illegal immigration across their properties. Their concern also centered on the changing nature of those illegal immigrants, which showed a higher prevalence of gang members, drug runners and human traffickers, plus an increase in “other than Mexicans” or OTMs. These types of trespassers, along with the potential for terrorists to enter the country, were seen as a threat to the safety and security of South Texas properties.

Since that initial meeting in 2005, the issue of illegal immigration and border violence has gotten even more disturbing, becoming the subject of intense nation-wide attention and debate. While a comprehensive solution has yet to be forth-coming, many billions of federal dollars and, to a growing extent, hundreds of millions of state dollars, have been spent to remedy the situation. Thousands of additional border patrol agents have been assigned to the southern border and National Guard troops are under long term deployment to the region, having been moved from supporting role only to an active deterrent role by Texas military commanders. A more than 700- mile fence has been erected in strategic places along the border and at least some limited inspections of south-bound traffic for guns and currency has begun. Efforts by the state of Texas are now seemingly the only actual deterrents to illegal immigration as CBP has been restrained from actually doing the job they were hired to do.

OUR POSITION

STPRA supports complete enforcement of our nation’s national borders. A country without solid borders is only an area on a map. In the face of an intentional disregard by the national government for enforcement of all US laws at the border, STPRA supports the right of individual states to mitigate the adverse impacts of illegal immigration within their borders according to state law. We support robust legal trade of goods and services across those borders at points designated for that purpose. We support federal immigration law reform that provides for specific and limited legal immigration into the US. We support the role of a temporary legal migrant workforce.

We oppose any policies or practices that endanger the lives and property of US citizens and legal Texas residents. We oppose policies and practices that contribute to the flood of illegal drugs and human trafficking victims currently taking place. We oppose any attempts at a blanket amnesty for anyone illegally in this country.

We support market-based visa caps and oppose any new paths for citizenship, except possibly for children who were brought here illegally and meet stringent qualifications including no criminal background and solid work and school performance.

We support the right of a free and self-governed people to live peacefully and safely on their own private property.



PAST ACTIONS

Since its formation, STPRA has strived to keep the issues of border security and immigration reform in the consciousness of policy makers and allied state-wide and national groups. Each of our annual members meetings has featured speakers who have addressed these issues, including Senator John Cornyn, Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison (via video), Congressman Henry Cuellar, Alonzo Peña, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Homeland Security, 3 U.S. Border Patrol Chiefs (David Aguilar, Carla Provost, Raul Ortiz), and T. Michael O'Connor, head of the Border Sheriffs' Coalition, among others. At the invitation of Senator Cornyn, board member Lavoyger Durham testified before the Senate Subcommittee on Immigration and Border Security in the spring of 2006. His testimony illustrated the day-to-day realities of South Texans who have had their properties invaded. He also offered ideas for solutions.

In the summer of 2007, STPRA's board of directors adopted a resolution that called for "... legislation which will permit South Texas property owners to safely and peacefully enjoy their lands, which legislation may include responsible and reasonable provisions relating to a guest worker program, tamper-proof identification cards, and employer sanctions for violations of such programs." STPRA has also consistently advocated increased financial and human resources, particularly federal, to secure the border and was one of the first groups to recognize the need for south-bound inspections and enforcement.

By 2009, STPRA had started an active state level campaign to provide much needed relief for property owners being besieged by illegal immigrant trespassing and damage.

In the 2011 legislative session, we testified in support of HCR 88, which closely tracked our official position on federal responsibility. During that session, we also successfully worked to pass legislation that would limit landowners' liability due to law enforcement activities, like pursuits of illegals and smugglers.

In 2012, after the brutal heat of summer had claimed well over a hundred lives of illegal immigrants in Brooks County alone, virtually bankrupting the county coffers because of autopsy costs necessary in unattended deaths, STPRA worked with 2013 Senatorial candidate and Texas Lt. Gov. David Dewhurst to highlight the problem on the national stage. As a result, in his capacity as Lt. Gov., Dewhurst was able to secure some relief funding for Brooks County and national attention on South Texas began to grow. STPRA's role as an advocate for law enforcement and their needs was solidified.

From 2013 through 2015, we worked with the Lt. Governor and the legislature to provide increased funding for South Texas counties and sheriff departments to deal with an ever-increasing surge of illegal immigration.

In 2017 and 2019, STPRA member and Kleberg/Kenedy County District Attorney (DA), John Hubert asked state senator Chuy Hinojosa to sponsor a human trafficking bill.



During the legislative session of 2019, STPRA worked closely with the Texas State Soil and Water Board to maintain and increase funding for carrizo cane eradication. Carrizo cane is a huge drain on water resources in the Rio Grande River and makes it difficult to impossible for BP to do their job along the river. Previous years funding levels stayed in place even though many other programs were cut.

Following the legislative session in 2019, STPRA invited State Senator Lois Kolkhorst to our annual meeting. At the AMF, she had the opportunity to meet and visit with USBP Chief Karla Provost. After listening to some concerns about the progress of the Texas State Soil and Water Board carrizo cane eradication program, Sen. Kolkhorst agreed to introduce legislation to assist the effort.

In 2021, after two sessions of no action on his legislation, DA Hubert and STPRA began to press the legislature on the issue, with Sen. Hinojosa filing S.B. 576 and STPRA property rights champion Rep. J.M. Lozano filing H.B. 687. With a final hour push by Reps J.M. Lozano and Richard Raymond, S.B. 576 passed the house. With its passage, human smuggling across agriculture lands became a felony, guides faced increased penalties for firearm possession, and Border Patrol agents were allowed to become “special investigators” on behalf of the state. Sen. Lois Kolkhorst followed up on her promise to introduce the privacy bill relative to carrizo cane and passed it through both houses quickly.

FUTURE ACTIONS

STPRA will continue to be a forceful voice for border security, made stronger through immigration reform, within our allied organizations, in the halls of Congress, and in the Texas legislature.

In the absence of active border enforcement by the federal government, we will work with the Governor of Texas to develop and implement state-based solutions for mitigating the impacts of illegal immigration, drug smuggling and human trafficking on the legal residents of our state.

We will pursue and develop workable market-based solutions to help reduce illegal trade and human trafficking.