

House Homeland Security Committee
Subcommittee on Oversight, Investigations, and Accountability
“Biden’s Growing Border Crisis: Death, Drugs, and Disorder on the Northern Border
March 28, 2023

Testimony of Rep. Pete Stauber (R-MN)

Chairman Bishop, Ranking Member Ivey, and Members of the Subcommittee, I would like to thank you for convening this very important hearing, as well as for allowing me the opportunity to testify today on behalf of the people of Northern Minnesota.

I am proud to represent Minnesota’s 8th Congressional District, which contains a large portion of Minnesota’s nearly 550-mile-long border with Canada, including important crossings like the Northwest Angle, Grand Portage, and International Falls. Throughout the 8th District, cross-border traffic, commerce, recreation, and tourism play an incredibly important role. However, rather than benefiting the lives of my constituents the proximity to our unsecured Northern border with Canada is increasingly becoming a liability, as the effects of the Biden Administration’s disastrous immigration and border security policies become a part of my constituents’ everyday lives. As this Administration fails to properly address our growing crisis at our Southern border, the consequences are echoing throughout communities across the United States—particularly in our northern border communities.

As I visit with the hardworking Customs and Border Protection Agents in my district, I hear their concerns about staffing levels and the lack of focus to the north. According to agency data, CBP staffing levels along our Northern border have remained stagnant over the past decade, even as threats have increased. Agents in my district are being pulled away from their patrols, either being dispatched to patrol our Southern border, or being relegated to sit in their offices to process paperwork related to illegal crossings at the Southern border. On average, there is now only one officer on duty for every 275 miles of border in my district. Every minute that these officers’ attention is focused elsewhere, we are leaving our Northern border vulnerable to illicit activity, whether it be illegal crossings by individuals or trafficking of dangerous drugs. Drug smugglers and human traffickers are taking notice of the lax enforcement and growing vulnerability at the Northern border and are using it to their advantage.

As some of my colleagues have shared, drug trafficking along the Northern border is increasing exponentially. According to Customs and Border Protection data, drug smuggling across the Northern border has increased by nearly 600% since Fiscal Year 2021. These drugs are pouring over the Northern border and flowing directly into our communities, killing our citizens.

The communities in my district are being ravaged by the influx of lethal fentanyl. Today, fentanyl is the leading cause of death among adults in the United States, taking more lives each year than car accidents, suicide, heart disease, or cancer. In 2021, nearly 1,300 Minnesotans died of fentanyl overdose—a staggering 22% increase from the previous year.

Just last week, law enforcement officials in Hennepin County, MN charged six individuals for possession of 34 pounds of fentanyl, 14 pounds of methamphetamine, and nearly two pounds of cocaine. As many of us in this room have unfortunately learned in recent years, it takes only two milligrams of fentanyl to kill an adult. Last week's seizure—those 34 pounds of fentanyl—would have been enough to kill 7.8 million individuals, or enough to kill every Minnesotan nearly 1.5 times over.

During my twenty-three years working as a law enforcement officer in Duluth, MN, I worked tirelessly to keep illegal drugs off the streets and out of the hands of our young children. You do not know pain until you have to give a death notification to an unsuspecting parent, as I have had to do too many times. The drug crisis in this country has grown out of control, taking the lives of countless Americans from all walks of life each and every day. We will never be able to overcome this epidemic until we address this nation's porous borders and stop the flow of these drugs into our country.

Over Memorial Day weekend in 2022, resort owners along the border in my district encountered individuals trying to cross the northern border illegally by boat. When the resort owners went to call Customs and Border Patrol, no one answered their call. In fact, the voicemail said they were closed through the holiday. Unfortunately, illegal immigrants do not observe federal holidays, and five illegal immigrants escaped into our country.

This is just one of countless examples. In Fiscal Year 2022, we saw nearly 110,000 apprehensions of illegal immigrants across our entire Northern Border. So far, this year we are on track to see well over

150,000 apprehensions, according to the latest CBP data. In Minnesota, we are currently on track to see the number of apprehensions double year-over-year. And, keep in mind, these numbers only reflect the ones who got caught.

As Members of Congress, we have a duty to deliver results for the American people. The crisis at our Southern border, and increasingly the growing threat at our Northern border, is affecting the lives of Americans across the United States. We must act. Accordingly, I want to thank the Members of the Homeland Security Committee for taking on this issue. I stand ready to work with each of you to push back against the Biden Administration's disastrous open borders policies and once and for all address our growing, dual border crisis.

Thank you.