



Summary: Secure Miles with All Resources and Technology (SMART) Act

On July 27, 2017, Rep. Will Hurd (R-Texas) introduced the Secure Miles with All Resources and Technology (SMART) Act ([H.R. 3479](#)) with a bipartisan group of [eight original cosponsors](#). The bill would expand border security in the United States through the use of border security technology, eradication of the Carrizo Cane and Salt Cedar along the Rio Grande and development of a comprehensive southern border strategy, among other provisions.

Key Provisions of the SMART Act

- **Deploys Technology Along the Border.** The bill would direct the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Secretary to deploy “the most practical and effective” technology available along the U.S. border, such as radar surveillance systems, sensors and border tunneling detection technology, as well as any other technologies found to be more effective or advanced than those specified in the bill.

Analysis: Congress should prioritize U.S. Customs and Border Protection’s (CBP) use of modern technology to build a virtual fence in areas along the southern border and elsewhere in which a physical barrier is not the most appropriate solution to secure the border. CBP already relies heavily on technology, which at times serves as a better force multiplier than a fence, in order to secure the United States’ borders and ports of entry. Congress should assess the effectiveness and cost-benefit of these technologies and invest in technology to monitor areas of the border where such monitoring is the most appropriate and effective.

- **Eradicates Carrizo Cane and Salt Cedar Along the Rio Grande.** The bill directs the DHS Secretary to begin eradicating the Carrizo Cane and Salt Cedar plants along the Rio Grande by January 20, 2019.

Analysis: Removing the invasive Carrizo Cane and Salt Cedar plants along the Rio Grande River in Texas would [provide](#) the Border Patrol with greater visibility and access to the Rio Grande. These plants, which cover between 30,000 and 60,000 acres, must be removed from the riverbanks to provide Border Patrol agents with greater access and visibility in areas where building a fence or other physical barriers is not practical.

- **Develops a Comprehensive Southern Border Strategy.** The bill directs the DHS Secretary to submit to Congress a comprehensive border strategy within 12 months of the bill’s enactment. It should contain a list of known physical barriers, technologies, tools and other devices that can be used to secure the border, their projected per mile cost estimate, a detailed account of which barriers, technology, tool or devices DHS believes are necessary to secure the border, an explanation of why they are necessary, and an examination of existing manmade and natural barriers, among other information.

Analysis: DHS should develop a comprehensive border strategy to secure the border. The lack of a comprehensive strategy with clear metrics to measure border security has greatly contributed to the lack of clarity surrounding our nation’s border security and dissemination of resources at the border. This has made it difficult for Congress to hold the agency accountable and to know what additional resources are needed, or perhaps not needed, to secure the U.S. border.

- **Authorizes Operation Stonegarden.** The bill authorizes \$110 million through the Operation Stonegarden program for each of fiscal years 2018 through 2022 to increase collaboration between U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and state and local law enforcement entities to support border security operations.

Analysis: Previous investigations of Operation Stonegarden indicate that not all funds are used for enhancing border security. An investigation by ABC-7's New Mexico Mobile Newsroom [found](#) that funding was being spent on fuel for shifts of absent deputies or to work town events. In addition, an audit of the Dona Ana County Sherriff's Office in New Mexico [found](#) a lack of internal controls that allowed upper management to consume about 30 percent of the grant's resources for county activities. The lack of a clear mission for the program has historically contributed to the misuse of taxpayer funds.