



NATIONAL IMMIGRATION FORUM

Why We Need Sound Border Security Policies

Border security is and has always been an important part of the debate on immigration policy. When it comes to border security and management, we need smart enforcement that is humane and transparent and takes into account the daily impact on the 15 million people who live along our borders.

Significant Investments Have Been Made to Secure Our Borders

- Congress has provided funds to station a record 21,370 Border Patrol agents at the border, an increase of 50 percent since 2006.
- The amount spent per apprehension at the border rose almost 1,700 percent, from roughly \$630 per migrant in fiscal year (FY) 2000 to more than \$11,266 in FY 2015. At the same time, the average number of apprehensions for each border agent dropped from 182 in FY 2000 to 17 in FY 2015.
- Of the 652 miles that the Border Patrol has determined is operationally necessary to monitor, 651 miles of border fencing have been built, including double fencing in many areas.

How We Can Improve Border Management

- **Develop new border security metrics:** U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) needs to adopt transparent metrics to measure border security. The lack of metrics has greatly contributed to the lack of clarity surrounding our nation's border security and dissemination of resources at the border. It has also made it difficult for members of Congress to hold the agency accountable and to know what additional resources are needed or unnecessary to ensure our national security.
- **Provide additional infrastructure and personnel at ports of entry:** CBP Field Operations, which oversees the flow of commerce and immigration at land and sea ports, is understaffed. There are long wait times to cross the border, which can lead to billions of dollars in losses and can deter people from coming for tourism. The understaffing leaves the ports more susceptible to drug, weapon and human smuggling.
- **Require additional training and oversight of CBP:** CBP should be trained and held to the highest law enforcement standards, including robust and permanent oversight and accountability mechanisms.
- **Replace our broken immigration system:** Passing broad immigration reform would have the most significant impact on border security. Heads of government agencies under both Republican and Democratic administrations have stated that the best way to improve border security is to create an immigration process that provides legal avenues for workers to enter the United States when needed and allows families to reunify.

Potential Legislative Solutions

- **Border Security Results Act (H.R. 1417):** Develop a strategy that would include, among other provisions, an assessment of threats to border security, a comprehensive border security technology plan, specified security metrics and staffing requirements for the various border security functions.
- **Border Enforcement Accountability, Oversight and Community Engagement Act (H.R. 3576):** Enhance collaboration and consultation with border communities on immigration policies, as well as increase training for CBP officers and agents, develop an independent oversight commission and provide an assessment of ports of entry, among other provisions.
- **Southwest Border Security Threat Assessment Act (H.R. 4482):** Direct the Secretary of Homeland Security to conduct a threat analysis of the Southwest border and Border Patrol to design a new strategic plan based on that analysis.