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The Border: Texas Steps Up Where Washington Falls Down

By Texas Governor Rick Perry

During a time when Washington seems more determined than ever to inject itself into the day-to-day lives of everyone in the country, border security is one area - a legitimate federal responsibility - where the federal government has demonstrated a decided lack of urgency.

For Texans, border security is not, and never has been, a mere rhetorical exercise. It has a direct and tangible impact on the lives of everyone who lives in the Lone Star State, as well as grave homeland security implications, which is why - over the past several years - we have given up waiting for Washington and done it ourselves.

In 2005, Texas vastly expanded our border operations, increasing the number of law enforcement officers on patrol along the border - the "boots on the ground" that are so vital to success. We focused first on local authorities, giving the people who best understood their specific needs the resources and support to address their problems directly.

Beyond that, we deployed state-of-the-art helicopters, enhanced integral radio communications between the various levels of law enforcement, and expanded the sharing of information and the use of new technologies.

In 2007, lawmakers authorized my request for \$110 million to expand our efforts further, increasing our patrol capacity to detect, disrupt and deter organized smuggling activity. A key part of the plan was providing critical funding to pay local law enforcement officers overtime to help U.S. Customs and Border Protection personnel conduct random inspections, helping intercept stolen vehicles, bulk cash and weapons flowing into Mexico.

The results were striking, as crime fell as much as 65 percent in the unincorporated areas of Texas counties bordering Mexico.

However, the process of securing a border is an ongoing effort, and a welcome drop in crime is no sign we can relax.

The profits from smuggling drugs and humans are enormous, and the Mexican organized crime cartels are too adaptable and too persistent.

Also, as battles wage between cartels in Mexico, the potential of spillover violence needs to be addressed. For example, Juarez has set a most unwelcome record, with more than 1,700 people murdered there so far this year.

In our own major cities, members of transnational gangs like MS-13, Barrio Azteca, Hermanos de Pistoleros Latinos, Tango Blast and the Mexican Mafia conduct criminal operations on our streets, along the way recruiting new members from our communities and schools into lifestyles of violence and death.

Compounding this are the countless lives devastated by drug violence, the drugs themselves, and related criminal activities such as human trafficking and child prostitution.

Thankfully, this year, the Texas Legislature allocated \$113 million to maintain and expand our border security efforts, affirming our commitment to working with local law enforcement and the U.S. Border Patrol to protect Texans.

This month, I announced the formation of Ranger Recon Teams, consisting of members of the Texas Rangers supported by Texas National Guard Counterdrug forces, in coordination with our Texas sheriffs and DPS Highway Patrol strike teams. These teams will be deployed to "hot spots" in remote areas along the border, where well-armed smugglers seek to avoid detection.

These teams are nimble, lean and tapped into the best information our intelligence sources can provide. They will redeploy as needed to consistently stay one step ahead of the bad guys, utilizing advanced technology and unified intelligence.

I also recently announced a commitment to continue a promising high-tech solution to increasing the patrol presence along the border through the Virtual Border Watch program, operated by the Texas Border Sheriff's Coalition. This program enables concerned Texans and others around the world to utilize technology to add their own energy to our efforts. I'm proud of the people who have participated and the deterrent effect they have provided. In meeting the challenge of border security, all effort is necessary.

More, of course, must be done. In the absence of adequate federal resources along the border, I've asked the Obama administration for an additional 1,000 National Guard troops under our control and six helicopters equipped with Forward Looking Infrared Radar to support our border operations. Under federal law, this authorization requires an order from the president, which I requested in January and have since continued to urge approval.

To date, I've received no official word from Washington.

Of all the issues in the national spotlight and all the funding being thrown around in D.C., border security is one area where Washington needs to make its presence known, and fast.

The Border: Texas Steps Up Where Washington Falls Down

Texas Governor Rick Perry

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Speak Out - comments from our readers

The following are comments from the readers. In no way do they represent the views of the The Anahuac Progress.

Bill wrote on Oct 3, 2009 4:23 PM:

" Go for it Texas! and hopefully the Pansey in DC will get behind your efforts. "

M. K. B. wrote on Oct 3, 2009 4:20 PM:

" The federal government has done little to stop illegals from entering our country.....proof: 12 million illegals in the U.S.A. now, and most of these came in since the Reagan years. Can't the feds realize that our laws are being broken? Apparently not. Thank you, Gov. Perry, for attempting to do something about this awful situation. If this continues, illegals will outnumber the citizens of Texas!!!! "

Texas Farmer wrote on Oct 3, 2009 3:22 PM:

" Great job, Rick Perry! Texas rules, DC drools. "

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The Border: Texas Steps Up Where Washington Falls Down

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