

## MINUTES

### SENATE COMMITTEE ON BORDER SECURITY

Thursday, September 19, 2024

10:00 AM

Capitol Extension, Room E1.016

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Pursuant to a notice posted in accordance with Senate Rule 11.10 and 11.18, a public hearing of the Senate Committee on Border Security was held on Thursday, September 19, 2024, in the Capitol Extension, Room E1.016, at Austin, Texas.

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#### **MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Senator Brian Birdwell, Chair  
Senator Pete Flores, Vice Chair  
Senator César Blanco  
Senator Juan Hinojosa  
Senator Phil King

#### **MEMBERS ABSENT:**

None

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The chair called the meeting to order at 10:00 AM. There being a quorum present, the following business was transacted:

The chair laid out the following committee charge:

- **Securing the Texas-Mexico Border:** Examine the impact of transnational criminal activity on commerce including, but not limited to, organized crime fuel theft to fund criminal operations. Make recommendations to support and strengthen interagency border operations to combat criminal enterprises.

The following individuals provided invited testimony. (See attached witness list)

#### **Panel One:**

Department of Public Safety  
*Colonel Steven McCraw, Director*

**Panel Two:**

Department of Public Safety

*Captain Omar Villareal*

Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts

*Chief James “Jim” Harris, Director of Law Enforcement – Criminal Investigations Division*

*Lieutenant Brett Froh, Criminal Investigations Division*

Texas Trucking Association

*John Esparza, President and CEO*

The following individuals provided public testimony. (See attached witness list)

The chair laid out the following committee charge:

- **Support for Border Security Personnel:** Consider the effect on personnel who have actively served or participated in Operation Lone Star and the impact of their service on their health and well-being, and their regular employment or assignments outside of Operation Lone Star. Study the challenges and barriers that affect the recruitment and retention of personnel engaged in border security efforts.

The following individuals provided invited testimony. (See attached witness list)

**Panel One:**

Texas Military Department

*Major General Thomas Suelzer*

*Command Sergeant Major Frederick Heard*

*Colonel Mark Gunn*

*Command Sergeant Major Dale Williams*

**Panel Two:**

Department of Public Safety

*Colonel Steven McCraw, Director*

**Panel Three:**

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department

*Lieutenant Colonel Ron VanderRoest, Interim Director of Law Enforcement*

Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission

*Ronald Swenson, Chief of Enforcement*

**Panel Four:**

Department of Public Safety Officers Association  
*Clay Taylor, Executive Director*

National Guard Association of Texas  
*Mireya Cruz, President*

The following individuals provided public testimony. (See attached witness list)

The chair laid out the following committee charge:

- **Monitoring:** Monitor the implementation of legislation addressed by the Senate Committee on Border Security passed by the 88th Legislature, as well as relevant agencies and programs under the committee's jurisdiction. Specifically, make recommendations for any legislation needed to improve, enhance, or complete implementation of the following:

**Senate Bill 1133**, relating to a program to compensate landowners for property damage caused by certain criminal activities

The following individuals provided invited testimony. (See attached witness list)

**Panel One:**

Office of Attorney General  
*Lane Brown, Chief of the Crime Victim Services Division*

South Texas Property Rights Association  
*Charles Maley, Advocacy Director*

Texas Farm Bureau  
*Warren Cude, State Director – District 6*

Texas & Southwestern Cattle Raisers Association  
*Joey Aguilar Jr., Special Ranger*

The following individuals provided public testimony. (See attached witness list)

**Senate Bill 602**, relating to law enforcement authority of federal border patrol agents.

The following individuals provided invited testimony. (See attached witness list)

**Panel One:**

National Border Patrol Council  
*Chris Cabrera, Vice President*

Department of Public Safety  
*Chief Derek Prestridge*

Border Prosecution Unit  
*The Honorable Tonya Spaeth Ahlschwede, 452nd District Attorney*

The following individuals provided public testimony. (See attached witness list)

**Senate Bill 1484**, relating to a border operations training program for peace officers employed by local law enforcement agencies.

The following individuals provided invited testimony. (See attached witness list)

**Panel One:**

Department of Public Safety  
*Chief Derek Prestridge*

Texas Commission on Law Enforcement  
*Greg Stevens, Executive Director*

The following individuals provided public testimony. (See attached witness list)

There being no further business, at 4:16 PM Senator Birdwell moved that the Committee stand recessed subject to the call of the chair. Without objection, it was so ordered.

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Senator Brian Birdwell, Chair

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Jennifer Trevino, Clerk