

Capitol Comments

Volume XII

BORDER UPDATE

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As the saying goes, "Never let a good crises go to waste."

Last night, after much talk over social media about the situation at the Texas border and unfortunately a good bit of it is political theater by some of my colleagues, the Governor, Lt. Governor, and Speaker of the House all signed a letter to DPS Director Steven McCraw authorizing a surge in our DPS presence on the border. An excerpt from the letter is below.

"The responsibility for securing the border rests exclusively on the federal government. The federal government's failure to secure the border has created an incentive for families to send their children on a dangerous, and sometimes fatal, journey. Until the federal government fulfills its duty, it falls on the State of Texas to address those obligations... With this letter, you are directed to plan and execute a surge operation of increased law enforcement in Texas border counties."

I appreciate these three men taking this action. This is what we all have asked for and I am glad this is happening sooner rather than later.

In my very first hearing in early 2013 as a member of the House Committee on Homeland Security and Public Safety, I asked Commander McCraw, "What is the number one threat to the citizens of Texas?" Without hesitation he answered, "Mexican drug cartels."

Nothing has changed. Along with other committee members, I went to the border last fall and received a special briefing on the border situation and the answer was the same. The number one threat to our border and to the entire state of Texas is the multiple forms of illegal activity conducted by these cartels.



Rep. Simmons and committee members with DPS officials on the Texas-Mexico border near McAllen, TX.

During the 83rd Legislative Session, the Legislature increased funding to DPS for border security. I participated in the House Appropriations Sub-Committee that debated and decided on this issue. I assure you that the vast majority of the Texas Legislature takes this seriously, as we have already taken actions to increase funding and are willing to do so again as necessary.

The main challenge we face today is that the effort we (mainly federal forces) are having to spend processing the illegal immigrant children reduces our ability to focus on the drug cartels and their affiliated criminals.

We must remember that there are two issues - the illegal immigrant children AND the increased drug cartel activity. Although the illegal immigrant children could ultimately be a huge cost to Texas (think education, Medicaid and foster care) and must be stopped, we unfortunately will have to depend more on our federal government for this solution. However, we can and should do whatever is necessary to reduce and eventually eliminate drug cartel activity in Texas, and it all starts at the border. We owe it to the citizens along the border and the rest of Texas to do so.

Thank you to all of the constituents of HD 65 who have commented on this issue as well as my fellow colleagues in the House and Senate who have been involved in discussing this issue within our legislative bodies and with the citizens of Texas. We must now start focusing on discussions of solutions for both border situations as well as how we utilize taxpayer money to pay for the associated cost - which will not be small.

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As always, please stay in touch with me and feel free to drop by my District Office, follow me on [Facebook](#), or find me on the [House Website](#) to hear about upcoming events.

Thank you. It is truly an honor and a privilege serving you.

Best regards,



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