



COMMITTEE *ON* HOMELAND SECURITY

Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Joint Subcommittee Hearing Statement of Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS)

Opening the Flood Gates: Trump's Broken Border Barrier

July 18, 2023

We are here today to focus on a policy that has little to do with border security, and that's Donald Trump's border wall. Trump's wall has not only been ineffective in providing security at the border, but it's also had a devastating financial and humanitarian cost. Financially, this wall has been a disaster for the American people.

Former President Trump promised Mexico would pay for this wall. Mexico has not paid one penny towards the wall. Instead, former President Trump and Republicans have left American taxpayers to foot the bill.

Let's remember, the strategy to build the border wall had so little support that the Trump Administration had to divert billions of dollars away from the Department of Defense to build a small part of the ineffective border wall. This ill-conceived plan resulted in the previous administration building only 52 miles of new border wall when the regional plan called for 1,000 new miles.

These 52 miles of new wall cost taxpayers billions of dollars. In fact, some segments cost the American taxpayers up to 46 million dollars per mile. The billions of dollars spent on this wall have not made the border more secure or stopped migrants from coming to our border.

Numerous reports suggest individuals are using \$100 power tools to breach the wall. CBP reports the border wall was breached over 4,000 times in just Fiscal Year 2022. As a result, CBP spent \$2.6 million from fiscal years 2019 to 2021 to repair damages to parts of the wall that were breached by individuals. Again, at the expense of American taxpayers.

Costly repairs also occurred due to weather damage. High winds and flooding have caused parts of the wall to fall or separate, creating huge openings in the barrier. It's clear the border wall has serious flaws and limitations as a deterrent. The financial cost to build and maintain Trump's wall is exorbitant, but nowhere near as damaging as the humanitarian cost it has created.

A record number of people worldwide are being forcibly displaced. People are fleeing war-torn countries, persecution, and human rights abuses. Individuals fleeing these terrible situations come to America in their most desperate hour. When we only have restrictive border policies, and no realistic pathway to legal immigration, migrants cross illegally out of desperation.

These are families willing to brave the Darien Gap and the treacherous journey to the border to seek help and opportunity. It should be no surprise that they are also willing to climb a 30-foot wall and risk injury or death to get to America. Tragically, we are seeing more injuries and deaths. There have been at least 28 deaths as a result of falls from border walls and fences from 2019 to 2022. The wall indirectly causes injuries and deaths by pushing individuals even further out into remote areas and treacherous conditions to cross. Clearly, the 30-foot border wall is inhumane, in addition to being ineffective.

In addition, it's ironic that the Republicans titled this hearing "Opening the Flood Gates: Biden's Broken Border Barrier" when a storm in Arizona blew the flood gates in Trump's wall off their hinges. And when flooding in Nogales, Mexico has been tied to the border wall. If we want to be serious about securing our border, let's look at things that actually work like providing better technology and more personnel.

I urge my Republican colleagues to join Democrats in finding effective and humane measures to secure our border.

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