



COMMITTEE *ON* HOMELAND SECURITY

Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Opening Statement of Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS) for Republican Northern Border Hearing

March 28, 2023

We are here today to discuss our shared border with Canada and how we are working with our neighbors to effectively manage the more than 5,000 miles of border that connect us geographically, economically, and culturally. Unfortunately, Republicans are trying to create a misimpression of chaos on the northern border. They are manipulating data and conveniently leaving out certain details to weave a politically motivated story about an unmanageable surge of migrants and drugs – and blaming the Biden Administration for long-standing border staffing shortages. However, the reality is far different.

When discussing increased “encounters” on the northern border, Republicans use percentages to exaggerate small numbers. They also compare current levels of border encounters with encounters during the worst of the COVID-19 pandemic, when the border was effectively closed, creating a distorted view of the current situation. Republicans point to increases in drug seizures from fiscal year 2021 to 2022. They don’t mention that so far this fiscal year, only 1 pound of fentanyl has been seized or that U.S. and Canadian officials continue to work closely to prevent drug smuggling across the border.

Republicans say that Border Patrol staffing remains static, but they fail to mention the 300 additional agents Democrats funded this year or that every Republican on this Committee voted against providing that money. Republicans will pay lip service to putting boots on the ground, but their votes show they aren’t backing up that talk with action.

Where there are issues on the northern border, they are manageable because of our strong security partnership with Canada. Just last week during President Biden’s visit to Ottawa, he and Prime Minister Trudeau finalized new agreements to address irregular migration along the northern border. The Safe Third Country Agreement was revised to allow both countries to return migrants who cross between ports of entry to the other side. Canada also agreed to welcome 15,000 migrants from the Western Hemisphere this year, providing them with a path to safety, stability, and opportunity.

These new agreements demonstrate our strong commitment to securing our shared border. That commitment certainly extends to personnel on the ground, with U.S. Customs and Border Protection, Coast Guard, and State and local police working with their Canadian counterparts every day to keep the border secure and facilitate trade and travel. As challenges continue to arise, which they are bound to do given the vast border we share, I am confident our shared security commitment will serve us well.

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