



COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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

A Party without Shame: Republican Campaign Season Stunts Ignore the Border and Lead to Threats on our Communities

September 18, 2024

I want to begin by expressing my appreciation to the Secret Service for their work protecting President Trump over the weekend. There is no place for political violence in our country, and I am thankful former President Trump was unharmed.

Turning to the topic of today's hearing, I want to start by discussing the situation unfolding in Springfield, Ohio. In recent days, the Springfield community has received at least 33 bomb threats against schools, hospitals, and city facilities because of false rumors about Haitian immigrants abducting and eating pets in the community. Elementary schools have been evacuated, residents are understandably shaken, and Governor Mike DeWine has deployed state troopers to reassure the community.

The Governor has tried to dispel the false rumors, saying *"there is no evidence at all of anyone eating a dog or any Haitians doing any of that. These Haitians that are there are legal, and they work very, very hard."* City officials have also repeatedly refuted the lies.

Yet former President Trump and running mate JD Vance have pushed the false rumors, with the former president saying, *"they're eating the dogs – the people that came in – they're eating the cats."* Apparently aware the rumors are false, JD Vance nonetheless tried to justify *"create[ing] stories"* on the matter.

Anti-immigrant rhetoric and racist tropes should have no place in our public discourse. They are un-American. And too often, they have helped fuel real-world violence against immigrant and minority communities across our country.

We recently observed the fifth anniversary of the Walmart attack in El Paso, Texas. A self-described white nationalist targeted a Hispanic community along the border, shooting and killing 23 innocent people and injuring 22 more. Tragically, similar violent ideology led to the deaths of 10 shoppers in a predominantly African American community in Buffalo and 11 members of the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh. We have an obligation to be responsible with our rhetoric as we discuss border security and immigration.

And there is, in fact, a lot to discuss — from the Biden-Harris administration's successful efforts to bring down the number of unlawful border crossings to the ongoing need for congressional action to fix our broken immigration system and provide more border security resources.

While you probably won't hear it from those on the other side, border encounters are at their lowest level in years. Since the President's proclamation on June 4, encounters border between ports of entry have decreased by 55 percent, with Border Patrol recording the lowest number of border encounters

since September 2020. The Biden-Harris administration has also removed more than 92,000 individuals to more than 130 countries and conducted over 300 international repatriation flights. Total removals and returns over the last year exceed the total removals and returns for any year since 2010.

The administration has also decreased the number of people released from detention pending their immigration removal proceedings by 70 percent. Meanwhile, Customs and Border Protection has seized more fentanyl than the last five years combined, keeping the dangerous drug from reaching our streets.

None of these administration actions are a substitute for congressional action to fix our immigration system and provide resources to law enforcement on the border. Only Congress can do that – and it is our responsibility to act.

Unfortunately, my colleagues on the other side have refused to move legitimate border security legislation all Congress. At the direction of former President Trump, Republicans blocked the Senate’s bipartisan border deal, and they are refusing to move necessary border security funding.

Republicans don’t want border security solutions – they want a political issue. Don’t believe me? Well, they themselves have admitted putting partisanship over progress. As one GOP Member of Congress said, he’s not willing to *“do too damn much right now to help a Democrat...why would I?”* That’s Washington at its worst.

Former President Trump has now called for the largest deportation program in U.S. history, with so-called *“concepts of a plan”* to deport 11 million undocumented migrants *“following the Eisenhower model.”*

The *“Eisenhower model”* – more commonly known by a name that includes an ethnic slur, which I won’t repeat here – was a mass deportation begun in 1954 that rounded up more than one million immigrants as well as brown-skinned American citizens.

The former president even suggested using the military to sweep people up under his plan, which would cause chaos in border communities, destroy millions of American families, and leave critical sectors of our economy like agriculture without the workers they need.

Instead of partisan fearmongering and dystopian deportation plans, we need real solutions about how we can strengthen border security, fix our immigration system, and grow our economy while upholding our American values.

Sheriff Hathaway, as enforcement officer on the border, former DEA agent, and a fifth generation Arizonan, I look forward to your insights today. I know you take great pride in your beautiful, safe community and have said that the immigrants who live there are family-oriented people of faith. I want to hear about what Congress can do to support you in your work. I welcome all of our witnesses and thank you for being here today.

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Media contact: Adam Comis at 202-225-9978