

**RANKING MEMBER RON BARBER (D-AZ)**  
**OPENING STATEMENT**

Committee on Homeland Security  
Subcommittee on Oversight and Management Efficiency

***“The Impact of Sequestration on Homeland Security:  
Scare Tactics or Possible Threat?”***

9:00 a.m., Friday, April 12, 2013

On March 1, 2013, President Obama signed an Order of Sequestration as required by the Budget Control Act. The Order required every federal government agency, including the Department of Homeland Security, to cut its budget by 5% in every single program, project or activity, for 2013.

The genesis of sequestration was the failure of the Super Committee to reach a deal on the debt ceiling.

Presumably, the threat of sequestration would force an agreement. It did not.

Now, forty-three days into sequestration, we are here today to answer the question: What is the impact of sequestration on DHS and homeland security?

To some degree it's too early to tell. We are still awaiting a final plan from DHS on how they will implement the irresponsible cuts mandated by sequestration.

But without a doubt, the impact will be negative. To me, it is not a question of if sequestration will hinder our national security and our ability to respond to the real threats to the United States at our border and across the country, but rather a question of the degree to which it will do so.

My fear is that the real measure of sequestration's impact has yet to be seen and may not be fully known until it's too late and we see a tremendous roll back of security at our border.

What I do know is that the cuts mandated by the sequester may well cause the safety of border-area residents and security of the nation to be severely compromised.

According to Secretary Napolitano, the sequester will result in “diminished capability and capacity to detect and interdict illicit activity along Arizona's border with Mexico.”

As the representative of a District with over 80 miles of shared border between Arizona and Mexico, this causes me grave concern.

Fortunately, the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) received enough funding in the recently passed Continuing Resolution to delay the immediate furlough and elimination of overtime for front-line border security personnel.

However, according to CBP, this may only serve as temporary relief and cuts to overtime and the future furlough of both Border Patrol Agents and CBP Officers are still possible.

This is unacceptable.

More efforts are being made to secure our border and the Border Patrol is better staffed today than at any time during its 88-year history. And these investments in our border are being made because they are necessary.

In recent years we have made progress with respect to apprehensions, interdictions and illegal immigration attempts.

And, over the past three years, the Department has seized 74 percent more currency, 41 percent more drugs, and 159 percent more weapons along the Southwest border as compared to Fiscal Years 2006-2008.

But there is much more work ahead. We cannot turn back the clock on border security efforts. My constituents and the American public deserve better, they deserve safety in their homes and on their land.

To roll back these efforts now would create windows of opportunity for criminals and terrorists to cross our borders.

I am aware that sequestration leaves little flexibility in how an agency applies cuts.

However, cutting agents' overtime and reducing their work hours should only come as the last resort and every measure should be taken to prevent this from happening.

As Members of Congress we play a vital role in ensuring that the necessary resources are in place to keep our country safe from harm.

And as Members of the Committee on Homeland Security, we must carry out this mission by ensuring that the Department has the resources it needs to secure our borders, protect our nation's communication and information infrastructure, and take every conceivable measure to protect the homeland.

This cannot be achieved at the same time that sequestration forces reductions in staffing levels nationally, and specifically on the southwest border and in my district.

Proposed furloughs and overtime would reduce the force of border patrol agents on the ground by the equivalent of a loss of nearly 25 per cent of the work force. I ask the members of this subcommittee and the witnesses giving testimony today: How do we maintain and continue to improve the security of our border and our nation with those types of personnel losses?

Today I am honored to have with us Brandon Judd, the National Border Patrol Union President to speak to this very point. Brandon was an agent in the Tucson sector, my district, and can speak specifically to the impacts of these potential cuts.

His members, our border patrol agents, are facing potential cuts in salary of up to 40 per cent. What family can endure those levels of cuts? And what law enforcement agency can survive a nearly 25 percent cut in force—not to mention the immeasurable impact on agent morale— while maintaining and improving security levels?

Our agents rely on this overtime. Our agents' families rely on this overtime. Cutting our agents' and their families livelihoods undermines morale and our security.

I thank Brandon for being here with us today. This is an incredibly important topic and one that deserves the full attention of Congress.