



**TESTIMONY OF**

**REP. GABRIELLE GIFFORDS**

**TO THE**

**HOUSE HOMELAND SECURITY SUBCOMMITTEE ON  
BORDER, MARITIME & GLOBAL COUNTERTERRORISM  
MAY 22, 2008**

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*TOPIC: "The Border Security Challenge: Recent Developments and Legislative Proposals"*

Chairwoman Sanchez, Ranking Member Souder, and members of the Border, Maritime & Global Counterterrorism Subcommittee, thank you for allowing me to testify today.

I proudly represent approximately 9,000 square miles of southeastern Arizona, including 114 miles of the 2,000 mile U.S. – Mexico border. Our communities are on the frontlines of America's immigration crisis.

Immigration is just as polarizing and emotional in my district as it is on Capitol Hill, but in Southern Arizona we want Congress to tone down hysteria & rhetoric, roll up its sleeves, and reform ALL aspects of a broken system.

Along with most of the Arizona delegation, I support comprehensive immigration reform as opposed to piece meal policies.

addition, Congress needs detailed information about apprehension success rates including the exact distance apprehensions take place from the border and the release rates for those apprehensions.

**Before** we throw more money at the border, we should have a thorough assessment of staffing, equipment, training, and policies for all border security functions.

Currently the Tucson Sector has:

- 22.2 Miles of permanent fencing;
- 9.6 Miles of temporary vehicle fencing;
- 14.5 Miles of Permanent vehicle fencing;
- 3 Ground Surveillance Radar Units; and
- 2900 agents, including 424 that were hired this year.

As HR 5552 instructs, Congress must demand meaningful data from DHS on the effectiveness, or lack thereof, of costly investments such as these. In addition, I am working to make sure that my constituents have opportunities to evaluate these structures and operations and provide input during the planning of new projects.

Tucson Sector Chief Robert Gilbert and his staff have been exceptionally responsive, joining me at dozens of public forums, answering questions from residents, and accommodating concerns whenever possible.

## **ENFORCEMENT ONLY:**

In addition to knowing a lot about border security, my constituents have a broad understanding of the immigration crisis as a whole. They know, and I agree, that an enforcement-only approach will not fix the problem. We must improve our visa programs, upgrade and expand the federal government's capacity to verify the citizenship of employees, and take a thoughtful look at our economy and workforce needs.

## **CONCLUSION**

Southern Arizonans, like most Americans, expect their elected officials to tackle not just the easy issues – but the tough ones. The fact that immigration has become polarized, radioactive, divisive, and ugly is evidence, *in fact*, that Congress **must** tackle it instead of run from it.

It has become fashionable on Capitol Hill to sound tough on border security while running scared from the larger immigration crisis in our nation. That is short-sighted.

The fact remains that **ALL** of it – the borders, the visas, the deportations, the citizenship verification data, the social security system, green cards – is the responsibility of the FEDERAL GOVERNMENT. We cannot pick and chose which part of immigration we want to handle.

While Congress wrings its hands, states and localities are paying the costs and designing a patchwork of policies. It is a mess.

With all due respect, Ms. Chairwoman, if the series of immigration hearings, like this one, being held in House subcommittees fail to move thoughtful immigration legislation to the Floor by the time we adjourn in September, the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress will have failed to do its job.