



U.S. House of Representatives Committee on the Judiciary F. James Sensenbrenner, Jr., Chairman

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News Advisory

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Sensenbrenner Holds Immigration Field Hearing in El Paso Thursday

What: Oversight Hearing on “Should Mexico Hold Veto Power Over U.S. Border Security Decisions?”
Who: House Judiciary Committee - F. James Sensenbrenner, Jr. (R-Wisc.), Chairman
When: 10:00 a.m. (MT) Thursday, August 17, 2006
Where: Chamizal National Memorial Park Theater, 800 South San Marcial El Paso, Texas

Both the House Border Security bill and the Senate’s Reid-Kennedy bill have provisions to provide increased fences, roads and barriers on the Southwest Border. But the Senate bill provides that none should be built without consultation with Mexico. Mexico is unlikely to provide its approval for new fences because it’s political leaders have made it a top priority to stop any more fence construction. Consequently, the Senate’s fence provisions become meaningless, and an important precedent has been established to cede control of security on the Southwest border to Mexico. At the same time, the lawlessness on the Southern side of the border continues to escalate, with an increasing number of Mexican policemen, local officials, and visiting U.S. citizens being kidnapped and killed.

BACKGROUND...

- H.R. 4437 directs the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to construct double layered and reinforced fencing and additional physical barriers, roads, lighting, cameras and sensors along the designated stretches of the southern border which are the major points of current illegal border crossing. The House-passed legislation provides 72 miles of fence in California, 342 miles of fence in Arizona, 70 miles of fence in New Mexico including the border area just west of El Paso, and 370 miles in Texas, primarily in the Laredo region. The Senate Bill provides only 370 miles of fence in total, and makes construction of any fences conditional upon consultation with the Mexican government.
- The House Border Security bill adds language to the Immigration and Nationality Act to clarify that states have the “inherent authority” to enforce all immigration law. H.R. 4437 also directs

DHS to provide training manuals to local law enforcement officers on how to handle the investigation and arrest of illegal aliens encountered while enforcing the law, along with more access to training programs. The Senate bill actually puts restraints on local sheriffs and police with regard to assisting voluntarily with immigration law enforcement, and states that they only have inherent authority to enforce some immigration laws.

- The House bill provides for grants directed specifically to states and local governments to procure equipment, technology, facilities, and other products that facilitate or are directly related to investigating, apprehending, arresting, detaining, or transporting immigration law violators, including any administrative costs. The Reid – Kennedy bill has no comparable provisions.

THIS HEARING WILL EXAMINE :

- ✓ The need for better physical barriers to improve border security and the impact of the Reid-Kennedy bill's requirement that Mexico be consulted before the U.S. begins any fence construction on the border.
- ✓ Language in the Reid-Kennedy bill prohibiting local law enforcement from voluntarily assisting in the enforcement of immigration laws, severely limiting its ability to apprehend and detain illegal aliens.
- ✓ How section 607 of the House-passed Border Security bill providing \$100M a year for border county law enforcement agencies would help the undermanned and outgunned border law enforcement agencies combat illegal immigration.

WITNESSES: Sheriff Leo Samaniego, Sheriff of El Paso County; **Dr. Alison Siskin**, Senior Analyst, Congressional Research Service; **Andrew Ramirez**, Chairman, Friends of the Border Patrol; **Chief Richard Wiles**, El Paso Police Chief; and **Ms. Kathleen Walker**, immigration attorney and President-elect of the American Immigration Lawyers Association.

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