

09.13.23

Senate Budget Committee Hearing – “Unlocking America’s Potential: How immigration Fuels Economic Growth and Our Comparative Advantage”

SENATOR LEE OPENING STATEMENT

- **I want to thank the Chairman and the Ranking Member for the opportunity to address the Committee with a few opening remarks on the topic of today’s hearing.**
- **America is a generous country, welcoming to immigrants – it always has been and I hope it always will be. My home state of Utah is an excellent example of that generosity and welcoming spirit that has come to typify America. Tragically, as much as we would love to, America cannot be the safe harbor for every destitute and wandering soul in the world. Under this administration, the bounds of American generosity have been more than tested—they have been assaulted. The costs of an unsecured border and unprecedented, illegal immigration have been both stunning and debilitating.**
- **The costs of the current border crisis is impacting every American. It isn’t just placing unprecedented strain on our federal budget or the budgets of border states: Governors across America and mayors of cities large and small are feeling the burden of an unprecedented 3,000,000 people entering this country illegally and relying almost exclusively in many instances on tax-payer resources for their support.**
- **But, first and foremost, we must acknowledge the *human costs* of our unwillingness to close our border or enforce our laws: People are dying in cargo containers. Children—babies—are being trafficked as commodities, as the price of admission into our country. Women are being violated. Violent drug cartels are becoming enriched and increasingly powerful as they traffic untold amounts of fentanyl into our country.**
- **Over 100,000 people have died from fentanyl overdoses during the last year. There is no dispute about where the fentanyl is entering the country—it is through our porous southern border. An estimated 196 Americans are dying each day from fentanyl—as the Washington Post pointed out—that is the equivalent of a fully-loaded Boeing 757-200 crashing and killing everyone on board *every day*. If Secretary Mayorkas and President Biden had a 757 crashing every day in American airspace,**

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everyone would be understandably outraged, calling for his resignation. Not only the fentanyl streaming through our border costing American lives, it is placing an unsustainable burden on our healthcare system.

- **Now, while the human costs are the most significant, they are not the only costs of our porous border. We are also experiencing unprecedented strain on our federal, state, and local resources.**
- **One border town, Yuma, Arizona spent more than \$26 million to provide medical care for immigrants crossing into the United States just last year alone. About 27% of the patients come to deliver their babies in America.**
 - **According to a news reports, one doctor at Yuma Regional Medical Center said, “[T]he population of Yuma is 100,000. We’ve had 300,000 people cross the border in the past year, and we are the only hospital they come to. I don’t know how anybody can look at that and say this is a fair setup.” He says the medical facility will never be able to financially recover.**
 - **Not only does this crisis drive up costs for the only paying patients—American citizens and Yuma residents—but it has also depleted the hospital’s resources and ability to care for its own residents. The doctor mused: “Migrant patients are receiving free care that they have no ability to pay, we have no ability to bill anyone, we don’t know their final destination, we don’t know anything about them. We cannot provide completely free care to the residents of our community, so the situation is simply not fair and concerning to them.”**
 - **In El Paso, CNN reports, “about 2,300 [illegal aliens] are living on the streets around two shelters downtown.” What happens to the citizens of El Paso when they need a helping hand? I guess you have to get in line behind the 2,300 immigrants.**
- **But it is not only the border towns that are suffering from this deluge of illegal immigrants—democratic mayors across the country are declaring states of emergency because of the record number of dependent immigrants flooding into their cities. Two of America’s three largest cities**

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– New York City and Chicago – are now experiencing a small fraction of the unsustainable situation that border states and cities deal with every day, and their elected officials aren’t holding back their complaints.

- **Illegal immigration has occurred in the United States well before the Biden Administration, but make no mistake: the unprecedented surge in illegal border crossings and the ongoing crisis of the last 2.5 years is now being felt all across the country. This is not an accident. It is the result of non-enforcement of our immigration laws, unconstitutional uses of parole, and our unwillingness to correct perverse incentives built into our immigration laws. I have introduced the Stopping Border Surges Act which would go a long way to closing these loopholes, but following the laws currently on the books would be the first step in the right direction.**
- **All Americans want America to be a place of refuge, but Americans of all different political leanings recognize that the ongoing crisis at the southern border is threatening our ability not only to give relief to true asylum seekers but also to take care of our own.**
- **It is my hope that the Biden Administration will reverse course on an unacceptably abysmal record of border enforcement and start enforcing the law to bring an end to this crisis. The costs of the Biden/Mayorkas border policies are just too high for us to pay.**