

Testimony of Ronald D. Vitiello to the Subcommittee on Immigration, Citizenship, and Border Safety

Chairman Padilla, Ranking member Cornyn and members of the sub-committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony of my experience, past and present, regarding the humanitarian and border security crises on our nations southwest border. I started my career in the United States Border Patrol in 1985. My first duty station was Laredo, Texas. I have worked in border communities of Texas, Arizona, and Vermont. In the headquarters I was Deputy and Chief at Border Patrol and acted as the Deputy Commissioner, then was nearly confirmed as the ICE director during a 9 month period before my retirement in 2019. I currently work for Axon a company that supports law enforcement and our communities by providing Body Worn Cameras, Tasers, Virtual Reality training systems, drones and supporting software that protects life and truth. In Border Patrol, my last field assignment was in the Rio Grande Valley in Texas where I was the Chief Patrol Agent. I've implemented and or operationalized every change in the Immigration and Nationality Act since 1986. I've rescued and attempted to revive those who suffered at the hands of unscrupulous smugglers. I've watched my colleagues risk their own well-being to save the lives of those who smugglers had abandoned. I was an Assistant Chief at headquarters in 2002, just after 9-11, and helped shape the newly created DHS and CBP headquarters under the Direction of Secretary Ridge. In my experience prior to 9-11 most Americans were unaware of the issues regarding border security. Border communities and law enforcement see first-hand the challenges posed by drug and alien smugglers, deaths of migrants are common and a great burden on border towns. Post 9-11 we attempted to fully respond to the threats exposed by porous borders and lax immigration enforcement.

We began to plan and think differently about the borders and tried to meet the demand the public had for more effectiveness. Experience shows us that surges in illegal entries are slowed when consequences are applied.

Lack of consequences to those who cross illegally has and will continue to exacerbate this problem. It encourages more families to take a dangerous journey

I appreciate the opportunity to inform this congress and stand ready to assist with expertise as needed.

Thank You,

Ronald D. Vitiello

Former Chief of The U.S. Border Patrol and Retired Acting ICE Director.