

Senate – DHS Appropriations Summary

In July, the Senate Appropriations Committee advanced a spending bill that fails to address the border crisis and continues to allow the Biden Administration to refuse to enforce our immigration laws. The Senate appropriations bill ignores the fact that more than 8.6 million aliens have been encountered at our borders since January 2021, and that President Biden’s open-border policies are resulting in lives lost – to smugglers, drug traffickers, and criminal illegal aliens.

While the bill includes funding for border security technology (such as surveillance towers and tunnel detection capabilities) and a very small increase of 145 officers for the Border Patrol, it contains no money for wall construction and stronger physical barriers that are needed to deter mass illegal immigration. Given that many aliens are claiming asylum or obtaining parole, and being guided into the country by the Biden Administration, the bill lacks effective measures to end the crisis.

The Senate spending bill also severely lacks funding to detain people who enter the country illegally, resulting in the mass release of illegal aliens into the interior of the country. The Committee kept the number of detention beds at 34,000, above the President’s request of 25,000 beds, but falling short compared to previous Trump Administration levels of around 50,000. Today, the Biden Administration is only detaining around 31,000 illegal aliens.

The Committee also provided \$14.1 million for the Case Management Pilot Program, an ineffective Alternative to Detention program that provides services to illegal aliens, including legal access programs, social services, health screenings, and cultural orientation programs. This program has received approximately \$40 million dollars in recent years, but the Administration has not released data on enrollees, specific services they have obtained, and whether the aliens are checking in with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) or are compliant with court orders.

In addition, the Committee provided over \$455 million for U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), which manages the legal immigration system. In doing so, it is using taxpayer dollars to fund an agency that has long been funded through fees on those who actually apply for the benefits. USCIS could cover its own costs as it has done in the past, but under this Administration, it has refused to increase fees to ensure it has sufficient operating funds – despite the sheer number of illegal aliens seeking work permits and other benefits. Now, USCIS has turned to Congress (and American taxpayers) to bail them out. This particular appropriation is intended to fund work permits and additional resources for asylum adjudications.

While the Senate spending bill is intended to fund homeland security operations, it also includes a provision related to one of our guest worker programs. Currently, the H-2B visa program allows 66,000 foreign workers per year to come to the U.S. temporarily to work in low-skilled, non-agricultural work. Under the Senate Appropriations bill, however, the annual cap could be

increased with the Secretary's consent, thus dramatically increasing the number of foreign workers who would be allowed to enter the United States under the program.

At the same time that Senate Democrats seek to increase the number of guest workers to fill American jobs, millions of new illegal aliens are pouring into the country and receiving work permits from the Biden Administration. One must ask Congress if inviting more foreign nationals to participate in these temporary low-skilled visa programs is in the national interest. It is inevitable that oversaturating low-skilled industries with such workers will depress wages and working conditions.

In the end, Senate appropriators failed to use the power of the purse to end, or even mitigate, the border crisis. The Senate spending bill fails to address the abuse of asylum and parole authority, and does nothing to end the shell game being played by the Biden Administration. Instead, through complete inaction they are allowing the status quo to continue at the expense of America's sovereignty, security and safety.