



# COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

**David Price (D-NC), Chairman, Subcommittee on Homeland Security**

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## **OPENING STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN DAVID PRICE** *Land Border Enforcement Hearing – Part 1, 12:30 PM*

Good afternoon. Today we review the Department of Homeland Security's border enforcement programs, including its plan for fencing on the Southwest Border. I would like to welcome five witnesses this morning, two of them public officials: Mayor Chad Foster, of Eagle Pass, Texas, the Chairman of the Texas Border Coalition, and Sheriff Arvin West of Hudspeth County, Texas, who represents the Texas Border Sheriffs Coalition. In addition, we are fortunate to have the perspective of private citizens who are landowners and businesspeople: Mr. Jim Ed Miller of Fort Hancock, Texas, and Richard and Nan Walden of Sahuarita, Arizona. We welcome you and look forward to your testimony.

Last week, in a speech about "Why Washington Doesn't Work", Secretary Chertoff said that implementing border security presented a "structural problem" - one where those with an intense personal stake in a policy decision may have more influence than the great majority of citizens whose interest is more general. For example, he argued that the cost of not building a border fence should be taken into account - including the impact of drug dealing in Chicago, or the consequences of letting criminals or potential terrorists enter. These impacts, he argued, should be weighed against local opposition to a fence. In his words, a fence would be for "the greater good."

I would ask the witnesses who testify today to reflect on whether DHS policies to secure the land borders of the U.S. seem to be consistent with "greater good" for the United States! Do you see any conflict between achieving such goals and, at the same time, taking into account local conditions and needs? I hope and expect that you will have some ideas about how to address our broader goals as well as about the fence's local impact. While the Secretary alludes to the costs of consultation, I believe he ignores the fact that consultation often leads to an outcome that may be superior than any single party might achieve independently, while also satisfying the concerns of a greater number of stakeholders: the proverbial win-win situation.

Last year the Subcommittee traveled to the Southwest Border twice to learn firsthand the challenges involved in trying to secure almost 2,000 miles of diverse borderland. We met Border Patrol agents and CBP Officers on the ground; saw mountains, deserts, and the beautiful, snaking Rio Grande; visited the area where the SBInet technology project was being undertaken; and observed operations of CBP Air and Marine.

Of particular value were our meetings with local officials, law enforcement personnel, and citizens, where we heard concerns expressed about the prospects for extensive fencing through areas of great cultural, economic and environmental sensitivity. As a result, we incorporated language in the FY 2008 appropriation to require DHS to thoroughly justify its future projects and to participate in

meaningful consultation with the communities affected. I hope we can discuss how well the legislation is being implemented, including those provisions that require transparency, consultation and good stewardship in the use of public funding for such major and complex projects.

I look forward to your testimony this morning and to hearing your insights on how we can better manage the security of our border to the benefit of us all. Let me turn now to the distinguished Ranking Member, Mr. Rogers, for his comments.

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