



SB 6: Testimony Before the Texas Senate Committee on Finance

By Selene Rodriguez, Secure & Sovereign Frontier

Chairwoman Huffman and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to address you today. My name is Selene Rodriguez, and I am a policy director for the Texas Public Policy Foundation's Secure & Sovereign Frontier campaign. I testify in support of Senate Bill 6, which would appropriate roughly \$1.5 billion to the Trusted Programs within the Office of the Governor for border security operations.

The Foundation strongly believes in limited government, and that one of the government's legitimate roles is the preservation of liberty and security. As Texans, we know that only our *state* government will step up and do the job.

Since February 2021, President Biden's first full month in office, there have been more than 6.2 million encounters by Customs and Border Protection (CBP) at the southwest border, 5.4 million of whom were apprehended by Border Patrol agents after entering illegally. There has also been reports of over 1.7 million known gotaways.

In fiscal year 23, Border Patrol agents seized over 2,700 lbs of fentanyl between ports of entry which is more than enough lethal doses to kill the entire U.S. population. CBP noted in September that fentanyl seizures have increased more than 800% since fiscal year 2019, and fiscal year 2023 seizures of fentanyl have already surpassed the fiscal year 2022 seizure total.

Operation Lone Star has proven to be a successful law enforcement operation which has led to over 476,200 illegal immigration apprehensions and the seizure of over 400 million lethal doses of fentanyl. If not for the relentless work of Texas law enforcement and our state partners, thousands of people would have been smuggled into the United States, and even more Americans would become victims of fentanyl poisoning.

As the state with nearly two-thirds of the U.S. southern border, allowing this public-safety and national-security crisis to unfold unhindered is certainly not an option for Texas.

That is why the Foundation supports an aggressive and unprecedented effort by the state to both stand in the gap and stand up to a federal government that has neglected its first duty to protect its citizens.

Thanks to the courageous and creative efforts of state lawmakers and agencies, Texas can and will work to fill the gap and take its border back.

In September 2023, DHS released a Homeland Threat Assessment for 2024 which notes that terrorists and criminal actors are exploiting the elevated flow and increasingly complex security environment, and that "individuals with potential terrorism connections continue to attempt to enter the Homeland." Further, they even declared that these complex challenges we are facing *are likely to continue*.

We don't have the luxury to not spend this money to secure our border. We stand behind our state leaders who are calling on the federal government to reimburse the state of Texas for the billions of dollars we have to spend to secure the border in their absence.

The state of Texas cannot fall to the transnational criminal organizations that are working tirelessly to defeat us, because if Texas falls, there is no other Texas to turn to. Senate Bill 6 would empower Texas to rightfully fulfill its responsibility to protect its citizens.

Thank you for your time.

Selene Rodriguez is a policy director for the Secure and Sovereign Frontier campaign at the Texas Public Policy Foundation. In this role, she conducts research on public policy issues; assists the Foundation in academic publication; educates lawmakers and members of the public on Foundation research; and provides formal testimony to local, state, and federal entities.

Prior to this position, Rodriguez served in the Marine Corps as an Intelligence Specialist and completed an internship at the Texas Public Policy Foundation. Born and raised in Del Rio, Texas, Rodriguez graduated from Texas State University with a B.A. in political science and is currently a graduate student pursuing a Master of Arts in Political Science.

