



WISCONSIN LEGISLATURE

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May 4, 2021

Open Letter to Vice President Kamala Harris from Assembly Majority Leader Jim Steineke and Assembly Speaker Pro Tempore Tyler August
Re: Southern Border Crisis

Vice President Harris:

It's been widely reported that today you are going to be making an official visit to Wisconsin. While we have you here, in one of the northernmost states, we wanted to share some concerns we've heard from our neighbors to the south – ones who have yet to receive a visit from you.

Back on March 24th of this year, President Biden publicly stated that he was putting you in charge of the growing crisis at our southern border. As I'm sure you are aware, since January the numbers of migrants illegally crossing our southern border has escalated to a point that the United State's Border Patrol along with local law enforcement agencies in border states have been overwhelmed. He said at the time in reference to tapping you for the job that, "I can think of nobody who is better qualified to do this."

We were hopeful that given this high-profile announcement that your office would be heading up this effort, we'd soon begin hearing news coming from our communities along the border that the tide of migrants was beginning to slow. To the contrary, we saw just last week firsthand that the border crisis is in fact still in full swing. We made arrangements to meet with Val Verde County Sheriff Joe Frank Martinez, a Democrat; Texas Border Coalition Executive Director Clint McDonald; officials from the US Border Patrol and US Customs & Border Protection; as well as dozens of local land owners around Comstock, Texas.

What we found was shocking. Not a single person we spoke with could name one thing the federal government has done in the last six weeks since your appointment that would indicate that this administration is taking this crisis seriously, or is at a minimum offering additional help. Most concerning to many of them was that you haven't even taken the time to visit the border to see the situation for yourself. As we said earlier, we appreciate the visit to Wisconsin; but, respectfully, you have much bigger problems to deal with right now.

Those on the frontlines – people who we're sure would love the opportunity to talk to you face-to-face – told us that in March, 170,000 migrants crossed into the US illegally with no signs of slowing down. The sheer number of illegal crossings has put a tremendous strain on Border Patrol agents, local law enforcement, and people living in communities throughout the south. They do not have enough agents to deal with this level of an invasion (the word used by officials on the border). They do not have facilities large enough to house them, children are being held routinely for longer than they should, family units are now being released into our communities, and we have no idea how many are crossing the border with the intentions of doing harm to American citizens.

This is not hyperbole. Border Patrol themselves indicated that they have intercepted people from more than 60 different countries that have attempted to gain entry. Countries such as Somalia, Iraq, Russia, and China just to name a few. In just the 200 mile Del Rio Sector of the border that we toured, sex offender apprehension was up 2,433%, and criminal migrant apprehensions were up 265%. Law enforcement officials along the border are rightfully concerned that American lives are at risk due to this threat.

If you're hesitant to take any action for fear of being labeled anti-immigrant at best, and racist at worst – trust us, we understand the position the far left has put you in. But the truth is, if you took some time to visit the border, you'd see that what's happening at our southern border is not just a national security threat, it's a humanitarian crisis. Migrants that cross illegally are dying in the Rio Grande and dying in the Texas wilderness, many times on the ranches of the people we spoke with. And if they're fortunate enough to survive, they are being enslaved by the Mexican cartels that assisted them in illegally crossing the border. The cartels have expanded their business model beyond just illicit drugs, and now make more than **\$24,000,000 per week** in human trafficking in this 200-mile stretch alone. They are renting out buildings, buying car dealerships and warehouses, and stashing the migrants there while they work on plans to send them to every corner of this nation.

When we met with ranchers in and around Comstock, Texas, the frustration and fear was evident on their faces, and the strain was clear in their voices. They are living in a war zone, and they are fed up. Their properties are being invaded by illegal migrants and their homes are often being broken into. In fact, many leave their homes open when they are gone so that the migrants won't break down their doors. When we asked how many of them feared for their lives on their own property, nearly every hand was raised. As Sheriff Martinez said to us while we were there, the cartels are more in control of the US border than we are. That is terrifying to us and should be to you and the President as well.

Today we are calling on Governor Evers to step up and support the people of Texas and other border states by sending whatever assistance we are able to send. We are also calling on you and the President to step up and do your job. Send our brave men and women of the border patrol some help. There is no more critical role that you have than protecting the people of this country from invasion. It's well beyond time that you understand the seriousness of that responsibility.

We know based on your efforts to protect Washington DC that you can act very quickly. Where is that same urgency with the southern border? When it is about protecting the ruling class, there is no hesitation; when it's about protecting citizens along the border, there is no action. As the person who is supposed to be the most qualified to address this issue, we implore you to start taking action now to help our southern border.

We will continue to advocate for our neighbors to the south until you do your job and secure our border. While you choose inaction, we will choose to continue to speak out. While you choose to ignore the problem, we will continue to encourage leaders from other states to send the help they can. We will uphold our oaths of office, and it's our hope that you will do the same.

May God continue to bless you and these United States.

Sincerely,
Rep Steineke and Rep August