

SENATORS UNVEIL MEASURE TO FULLY SECURE U.S.-MEXICAN BORDER

Proposal will add new enforcement measures to the border without adding to the deficit

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WASHINGTON, DC—U.S. Senator Claire McCaskill, along with Senators Charles E. Schumer (D-NY), Patty Murray (D-WA) and Mark Begich (D-AK) today announced a \$600 million emergency package to improve security along the U.S.-Mexican border. The proposal would deploy 1500 new enforcement agents and fund unmanned aerial vehicles to boost border surveillance.

It would avoid adding to the deficit by raising fees on a handful of foreign corporations that exploit U.S. visa programs to import workers from India. Unlike Senate Republicans' border security proposal, which takes away from job-creating programs by robbing the Recovery Act of important funds, the Senate Democrats' proposal is paid for by raising fees on companies that take jobs away from U.S. workers.

The package, which would provide a 10-percent boost above 2010 border spending, could come up on the Senate floor before the chamber adjourns for its August home work period. The proposal is also cosponsored by Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, Senate Appropriations Chairman Daniel Inouye (D-HI), and Senators Dianne Feinstein (D-CA), Jeff Bingaman (D-NM), Bob Casey (D-PA), Jeff Merkley (D-OR), Mark Udall (D-CO) and Roland Burris (D-IL).

Senator McCaskill said: "There's no doubt that our country needs to do more to prevent illegal immigration. Border security is an area where we should be investing more resources, and this amendment does just that."

Senator Schumer, the Chairman of the Senate Immigration Subcommittee, said: "This package shows a serious commitment to securing the border, even though we know it will take comprehensive immigration reform to fully address the problem. We plan to push this measure immediately in the Senate, and it will be a test of whether people really want action on the border or just want an issue. This bill will send the personnel and equipment we need along the border. It doesn't add a dime deficit and unlike the Senate Republicans' proposal, it doesn't take money away from job programs to do it. If people are serious about confronting border security, this proposal should earn bipartisan support."

Senator Murray said: “Protecting our borders shouldn’t be a partisan issue, and this bill helps give our law enforcement agencies the technology, equipment, and resources they need to do the job right.”

Senator Begich said: "This bill provides the necessary resources to the Department of Homeland Security and other relevant agencies to increase southern border security. These agencies have been underfunded and under resourced for too long. As the situation on the southern border becomes more volatile, we need to ensure federal agencies have the tools they need. I am also very pleased the bill is paid for by increasing fees for H1-B and L visas for companies who have half of their work force overseas, as this will protect American jobs and industry.”

Last June, to respond to concerns about increased violence along the U.S.-Mexican border, President Obama announced he would deploy 1500 National Guard troops there. At the same time, he called for Congress to approve \$600 million in spending to further bolster border security operations. Since then, the House has approved the requested spending, but it was not deficit-neutral. The proposal announced by Schumer today largely mirrors the House proposal except that it is fully offset.

To offset the emergency border spending, the Senate proposal would hike fees assessed on particular companies that exploit two categories of visas. A handful of foreign-controlled companies that operate in the United States—such as Wipro, Tata, Infosys and Satyam—rely on H1B and L visas to import foreign workers to the United States. The Senate Democrats’ border security proposal would increase the visa fees paid by these companies by roughly \$2,000 per visa application.

A full summary of the proposal appears below.

SENATE DEMOCRATS’ BORDER SECURITY BILL

Provides for Border Enforcement at the Actual Border

- Additional Funding for Border Personnel (\$254 million)
 - \$176 million for 1,000 new Border Patrol agents to form a “strike force” to be deployed at areas most needed
 - \$39 million for Customs and Border Protection (to keep current levels of officers)
 - \$29 million for 250 new Customs and Border Protection officers at ports of entry
 - \$10 million for investigators to stop corruption in border patrol and customs and border protection
- \$14 million for communication equipment for new officers

- \$32 million to deploy unmanned aerial vehicle surveillance (i.e. drones) on border
- \$6 million to deploy forward operating bases along the border (as opposed to using current bases that are 100 miles away)
- Additional Funding for Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) (\$80 million)
 - \$30 million for border interdiction
 - \$50 million for 250 new ICE personnel, including special agents, intelligence analysts, and support personnel
- Federal Law Enforcement Training Center (\$8 million)
- Federal Judiciary resources for increased caseload (\$10 million)
- Additional Funding For the Department of Justice (\$196 million)
 - U.S. Attorneys and other legal expenses along border (\$13 million)
 - U.S Marshals along border (\$8 million)
 - Interagency Crime and Drug Law enforcement along border (\$21 million)
 - Border processing of apprehended drug dealers and human traffickers (\$7 million)
 - FBI along border (\$24 million)
 - DEA along border (\$34 million)
 - ATF along border (\$37 million)
 - Federal Prison System for Immigrant Criminals (\$20 million)
 - Administrative Review and Appeals expediting along border (\$2.1 million)

Border Funding is Fully Offset By Fees on Companies That Offshore High-Paying American Jobs

- The bill raises fees on H-1B visas (for temporary skilled workers) for companies who have more than 50 percent of their employees on H-1B visas (this does not affect U.S. tech companies).
- The bill also raises fees on L visas (given to multi-national transferees) for foreign companies. The L visa is often used by foreign companies to circumvent the requirements of the H-1B visa.