

Opening Statement of Chairman Ron Johnson
“CBP Oversight: Examining the Evolving Challenges Facing the Agency”
June 25, 2020

As prepared for delivery:

Last year the men and women of Customs and Border Patrol faced a humanitarian and national security crisis along the southern border with an unprecedented surge of migrants. More than 144,000 migrants were apprehended or deemed inadmissible in May 2019 alone. This year, CBP faces the challenge of having to perform its duties during the COVID-19 pandemic. Today’s hearing will focus on how CBP is confronting these new and evolving challenges.

CBP’s mission is to secure America’s borders while enabling lawful trade and travel. These responsibilities do not stop during a pandemic; they only become more difficult. CBP must continue to protect against the flow of illegal drugs, terrorism, and human trafficking, among other threats. They must remain vigilant as bad actors adapt and seek out new ways to circumvent our laws. Now during this pandemic, CBP officers and agents must also enforce other legal restrictions to protect the health and safety of migrants, CBP personnel, and our nation’s border communities, while at the same time helping to safely process migrants with legitimate claims for asylum.

Unfortunately, even when this pandemic subsides, our broken immigration system all but ensures that there will be future crises at the border. The administration has taken necessary steps to curb the flow of illegal migration. Programs like the Migrant Protection Protocols, Prompt Asylum Claim Review, Humanitarian Asylum Review Process, and the execution of Asylum Cooperative Agreements with the northern triangle countries have all helped to reduce the flow of illegal migration. I appreciated the opportunity to work with CBP and some of my colleagues on our Operation Safe Return proposal that formed the basis for some of these programs.

Although these programs help ensure the processing of asylum claims is more efficient and effective, they are only temporary solutions to a long-standing problem. Our immigration system is outdated and ill-equipped to deal with the reality we face today, and the blame falls squarely on Congress. Regardless of your opinion of the Supreme Court’s recent decision on DACA, it is a stark reminder of how much authority Congress has ceded to the Executive Branch on immigration issues. It is well past time for Congress to pass legislation to fix this horribly broken system.

I would like to conclude by thanking the men and women of CBP. They continue to work tirelessly on the frontlines to keep America safe and secure. In addition to CBP’s work securing our border and responding to COVID-19, CBP has also provided assistance to local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies to protect the right to peacefully protest. We ask CBP to do a lot, and time after time, they respond with admirable dedication and professionalism. I would also like to thank Mr. Morgan for testifying before our Committee today and for his leadership during this critical time. I look forward to your testimony and discussion.