

**“Unprecedented Migration at the U.S. Southern Border: By the Numbers”**  
**Opening Statement of Chairman Ron Johnson**  
**April 4, 2019**

*As prepared for delivery:*

There is a humanitarian and national security crisis at our southern border. In the first six months of this fiscal year, Border Patrol apprehended over 175,000 family unit aliens and over 33,000 unaccompanied children. According to Secretary Nielsen, we are on track to reach one million apprehensions by the end of the year, the first time since the fiscal year 2006. The migrants crossing today—mostly families and unaccompanied children—are likely to remain in the United States for years or even permanently because of laws that make it extremely difficult to detain and remove them even without a valid asylum claim. Conversely, prior to 2011, the vast majority of migrants were single adult males from Mexico who could be removed within days or even hours of crossing the border.

CBP is shifting 750 officers to help care for families. In El Paso, 40 percent of Border Patrol agents are no longer engaged in the border security mission due to the need to care for and process family units and unaccompanied children streaming across our border. This diversion of personnel and resources is being repeated across nearly all sectors on the southern border. As a law enforcement agency, CBP was not designed to care for children but have heroically met this challenge. This is not sustainable.

We are also witnessing a new phenomenon of large migrant groups of 100 migrants or more crossing the border together. In fiscal year 2017, only two such groups were apprehended; in fiscal year 2018: 13. In just the first six months of this fiscal year, the number has skyrocketed to 100. These groups tax Border Patrol resources and allow cartels and other smugglers to exploit the preoccupied agents to smuggle in drugs, criminals, and other contraband undetected. This coupled with the need to shift law enforcement to care for families and large groups is making our border less and less secure.

Last week DHS directed most Border Patrol chiefs on the southwest border to expeditiously process and release all non-criminal crossing family units. It appears that other categories of migrants are not far behind. This is a new sad reality. We now have a virtual open border for any migrant who crosses with a minor, and our border security enforcement has been reduced to a mere speed bump for migrants on their path to long-term occupancy in the United States.

This crisis is not the fault of the dedicated, hardworking men and women of DHS; they have been given an impossible task. The fault rests with Congress alone. I challenge my colleagues to act. Unless you support this new reality of open borders, work with me now to address this crisis.

Today we are holding the first in a series of hearings about the unprecedented crisis at the southern border. The purpose of these hearings is to set out the facts, from which I hope we can begin our work to solve these problems. We welcome Mark Morgan, former Chief of the U.S. Border Patrol; John Daniel Davidson, a Senior Correspondent at The Federalist; and Dr. Andrew Selee, the President of the Migration Policy Institute. I am grateful to the witnesses for being here.