

**U.S. Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs
“Unprecedented Migration at the U.S. Southern Border: The Year in Review”**

**OPENING STATEMENT OF RANKING MEMBER GARY C. PETERS
NOVEMBER 13, 2019
AS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY**

I'm proud to say that, over the past year, our committee has been able to come together on a bipartisan basis to examine the migration and humanitarian challenges at our borders.

We have found compromise and passed commonsense legislation to address staffing shortages at our borders and ports of entry, strengthen security at our Northern and Southern borders, and ultimately make our country safer.

In June, we came together to unanimously advance my bipartisan bill to strengthen border security and address law enforcement shortages at ports of entry throughout the country.

Last month, the full Senate approved my bipartisan bill to hire more agricultural inspectors and canine units to protect the nation's food supply from harmful contraband.

Last week, our committee approved important legislation led by Chairman Johnson to support the U.S. Border Patrol by hiring new agents and support staff, improving retention, and providing medic training to agents that could save lives.

And just yesterday, I had the chance to see CBP's officers and canines in action at the Detroit Metropolitan Airport and I was stunned to hear just how many seizures they make to keep our country safe.

I'm proud that the men and women of CBP at Detroit Metro are leading the nation when it comes to the interdiction of potentially harmful biological materials.

Detroit Metro has been the number one intercepting port for the last two fiscal years with more than half of all interceptions at ports of entry nationwide.

Detroit Metro has also pioneered training programs that have been deployed nationally with positive results being generated in Boston, Newark, and Dulles.

They also told me that, among all airports nationwide, Detroit Metro is second in the nation for discovery of wood packing material containing potentially harmful pests.

These species pose a direct threat to our forestry and agricultural industries and Michigan's natural beauty.

The CBP officers and canines in Detroit are doing phenomenal work to protect Michiganders and the rest of our country from harm and I'm proud to support their efforts and ensure they have the resources needed to do their jobs efficiently and effectively.

This past year has posed many challenges for our border security professionals. The situation on our Southern border, and throughout Central America, is dynamic. And our border security efforts should reflect that fact.

Often this Administration's border security policies have been short-sighted.

If we're going to successfully address both the conditions at our border and the root causes that are driving migration, then we need a comprehensive approach that looks at data and finds commonsense solutions to address these serious challenges.

I appreciate our witnesses for joining us today and for their commitment to serve our country.

But I also recognize that addressing these border security and humanitarian challenges requires stable and effective leadership.

I am deeply concerned by the lack of Senate-confirmed leaders in nearly all of the top leadership positions at the Department of Homeland Security and I will continue to call on this Administration to nominate qualified leaders for these vacant positions who can gain broad, bipartisan support in the Senate.

The men and women of DHS, and the American people, deserve the stability and accountability that comes from nominating and confirming qualified leaders who can ensure that the Department can carry out its national security missions effectively.

Thank you and I look forward to hearing your testimony today.