

**Opening Statement of Chairman Ron Johnson**  
**“The Effects of Border Insecurity and Lax Immigration Enforcement on American Communities”**

**March 1, 2017**

*As prepared for delivery:*

Good morning and welcome.

Today we will examine how our porous southwest border affects American communities thousands of miles away. Some of this testimony will be difficult to hear—accounts of graphic violence and drug abuse fueled by border insecurity and lax immigration enforcement. It is important that we hear these stories because they represent the real-world consequences of our insecure border and our failure to enforce our immigration laws.

America’s borders are not secure. To truly secure our borders, the United States must identify and eliminate the incentives for illegal immigration. Our failure to do so can have tragic consequences. We’ve heard the stories of Dennis McCann, Kate Steinle, Grant Ronnebeck, Jamiel Shaw II, Josh Wilkerson, Detective Michael Davis Jr., and Deputy Danny Oliver—lives cut short at the hands of criminal illegal aliens. In each case, we learned that federal policies and procedures played a role in these horrific tragedies.

Today we welcome Julie Nordman from New Florence, Missouri. On March 8, 2016, Julie’s husband, Randy, was murdered in his home by an illegal alien. Authorities allege that one day earlier, the same man murdered four other individuals in neighboring Kansas. The man had numerous run-ins with the law, and had even been deported once before. Julie, you have our sincerest condolences, and we thank you for sharing your experiences today.

Our committee’s work on border security last Congress led to the conclusion that the key driver of our borders’ insecurity is America’s insatiable demand for drugs. According to the Drug Enforcement Administration, 10,574 Americans died from heroin-related overdoses in 2014. As Homeland Security Secretary John Kelly described in his testimony before this committee in January, heroin is produced solely outside the United States, most often from Mexico, and enters the country through our porous southwest border.

Local law enforcement leaders are on the front lines of America’s battle with opioids and the many problems that have accompanied the opioid epidemic. Between 2006 and 2015, deadly heroin overdoses in Wisconsin increased from 0.5 per 100,000 residents to 4.9 per 100,000—an increase of 880% over that period. I am pleased to welcome Sheriff Eric Severson of Waukesha County, Wisconsin. Sheriff Severson can explain how drug interdiction efforts at the southwest border affect the drug trade in Wisconsin. We will also hear testimony today from Ryan Rectenwald of the Grant County Sheriff’s Office in Washington State. He will describe how the drug trade through the southwest border incites violence in his northern border community.

Border security and immigration laws are not just a concern for communities along the border. They affect all Americans. I thank the witnesses for their willingness to be here today and I look forward to your testimony.