

Dear Chairman Corona,

Here is a key Report on the situation in Mexico. As you know, in 2008, 1600+ people were murdered in Juarez in cartel related violence. As a former chair of the 10 State Border Legislators Conference, I can tell you that this issue is the number one concern in many Border communities.

I have shared this Report with Lt. Governor Dewhurst and members of the Senate Homeland Security and Transportation Committee along with staff. I hope that you will take the time to read it.

Among the important findings:

*Mexico is not just fighting criminal activity, it is fighting for survival against narco—terrorism;

*Proposed US spending is a ‘drop in the bucket’ measured against the reality on the ground;

*The Obama Administration must focus now on the ‘dangerous and worsening’ situation in Mexico which threatens the fundamental security of the US.

We need a clear and strong Texas strategy. Here are the elements that we outlined in several Texas Senate Homeland Security Committee hearings:

*Deploy Proven Models: In the 80’s, the FBI and New York City together deployed a successful model to fight transnational gangs operating from Sicily to Brooklyn. We need adopt that proven strategy and use better, coordinated intelligence, fully staffed fusions centers, increased local, state and federal resources and cooperation, and a targeted strategy to arrest key cartel leaders and forfeit key properties of cartel operations along ‘drug corridors’.

*Increased Staffing and Resources: without resources, mostly federal, the Merida initiative will fail; our state needs to lead in securing and leveraging resources; the delicate diplomatic work of supporting courageous leadership in the Calderon Administration with resources to trusted enforcement has to accelerate;

*Secure, Smart, Fast Trade: state leaders need to support and increase secure, smart, fast trade. Texas trades with Mexico more than all the European Union combined. Border ports need a 21st Century overhaul with better infrastructure, more staffing, and state of the art technology. Right now, security slows trade because needed technology, staff and infrastructure has not been deployed to evaluate and move low risk border crossers, and identify and detain high risk targets. One of our best strategies is to support good, sustainable jobs in Mexico, not more narco--trade;

*Comprehensive Immigration: too often, immigration issues are used as a distraction to real security; we must separate the issues of immigration and security, and deal with a framework for comprehensive immigration, while doing much more to target the leaders and assets of violent, transnational criminal gangs.

I look forward to working with you on these important issues in the 81st Session of the Texas Legislature.

Keep the faith,

Senator Eliot Shapleigh

El Paso, Texas