

What I learned at the southern border

By Sen. Dan Lauwers
25th Senate District

I traveled with a small group of elected officials to McAllen, Texas to learn and observe firsthand from people living and working with the situation at the U.S. southern border.

Here is what I learned: The border is not secure. Not even close. Anyone who claims so is either ignorant of the actual facts or intentionally choosing to mislead. There are major gaps in the border wall. I observed sections of the border wall built during the Clinton, Bush, Obama and Trump administrations. Biden's is the first administration to halt all construction of a secure border since the '90's.

The U.S. Customs and Border Protection's resources are spread too thin. Consider this: There are more than twice as many police officers in New York City than officers in the entire U.S. Border Patrol — not just at the southern border, but in the entire country.

Given the length of Rio Grande in the McAllen area, and the number of Border Patrol agents and local sheriff deputies, an individual encountering a problem at the border is 20 to 30 minutes from help. This is why all the farmers in the area have had to purchase homes in town where they can be protected. This is happening some two miles inside the U.S. border. As the farmer told me: "When the Cartel rolls into your driveway with several armed men and tells you have 20 minutes to leave and don't return, you surrender your home and move to town or be prepared to shoot it out." The farmers, their families and employees all carry firearms for personal protection.

Simply put: U.S. citizens are forced to surrender their homes to Mexican cartel criminals. This is an invasion of our country and our sovereignty. The fact that it is a criminal element from a foreign country rather than a foreign military makes it worse, but somehow shamefully avoids the press coverage it would have if it were in fact a foreign military invasion.

We visited a Catholic Relief Services facility in McAllen that only assists families who cross the border through normal border crossings, like walking across the Ambassador or Blue Water bridges. They are not smuggled in by the cartel, but simply walk across a border bridge like we drive back and forth to Canada. The ministry accepts illegal immigrants who have sponsors in the U.S. willing to take them. The service addresses their nutritional and medical needs and arranges transportation for them. Roughly half of the people traveling had the necessary documents I saw the relief service had provided them the day before. When asked how many people they assisted, they answered roughly 1,000 per day.

I learned that most illegal immigrants are not from Mexico but from Nicaragua, Honduras, or other countries south of Mexico. I also learned from the farmer kind enough to let us tour his property on the Rio Grande that a month ago he said nearly all the people coming across were single Chinese men and women. They fly to the nearest airport to the U.S. border and then make their way in.

People defend the acceptance of illegal immigrants as the “humane” thing to do. Being there in that ministry service, I see their point. However, when we met with a former head of the Southern Customs and Border Patrol, we learned that the policy of **nonenforcement** at our border invites terrible human abuse. People are treated, traded and transported with less care than we provide our livestock on the farm.

For example, an agent thought a young boy of three to four years old looked familiar one day. Upon further investigation, it was determined that this was this young boy’s third trip across the border. Each with different “families,” that is, adults.

Current U.S. open border policy creates an open market — an open market for smuggling of drugs, people and the most horrific kinds of sex trafficking. The Border Patrol official I spoke with said the same thing the farmer did: This is all happening because of one single decision from the Biden administration — a decision to leave our border undefended and unprotected.

“Change the decision,” they pleaded. Make the decision to close and defend our border, and all this smuggling, trafficking and human abuse will diminish, and with enough commitment, end.

We live in a time when the primary responsibility of our national government is intentionally being disregarded: The protection and defense of our nation, our borders and our citizens.

Sen. Dan Lauwers, R-Brockway Township, represents the 25th state Senate District, which includes Huron and Sanilac counties, along with portions of Tuscola, St. Clair and Macomb counties.