

# 4 Facts about Border Enforcement

## 1. The border is more secure than ever.

**670**

miles of border fences, walls, bollards and spikes erected since 2007

**21,000**

number of Border Patrol agents in 2009 (up from 9,000 in 2001)

**1**

number of murders in 2009 in El Paso, TX, across the border from Ciudad Juarez in Mexico – crime rates in U.S. border cities are low and even decreasing<sup>1</sup>

### The cost to taxpayers:

**\$4 billion**

Cost of fencing and other barriers  
(does not include maintenance, estimated at hundreds of millions of \$ per year)

**\$4 bil/yr**

Border Patrol  
(does not include \$600 million border security bill passed in Aug. 2010)

**\$6 bil/yr**

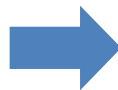
Other border security costs  
(includes electronic sensors; surveillance aircraft; police training; and detaining, incarcerating and deporting undocumented immigrants)

### Is this a good use of our money?

- Are these measures changing migration patterns?
- Or do they merely look good on a congressional campaign brochure?

## 2. Increased enforcement has had unintended consequences.

INCREASED ENFORCEMENT



INCREASE IN UNDOCUMENTED POPULATION<sup>2</sup>

**Because it is more difficult to cross the border, more stay**

- Seasonal laborers used to return to their home countries. Now, because it is so dangerous and/or expensive to cross, they remain in the U.S.



**More bring their families**

- Since they are remaining in the U.S., immigrants seek to bring their families here so they are not separated.



**Result: increase in permanent population**

- According to some studies, post-1986 border enforcement measures may have increased the size of the permanent Mexican population in the U.S. by a factor of nearly four.

### Other unintended consequences:<sup>3</sup>

Environment	Though fences and walls do little to deter human migration, they have severe impacts on animal migration, including several endangered and protected species in the American Southwest.
Landowners	Private landowners along the Texas border, including farmers and ranchers, have had fences and walls erected on their property, restricting their access to the river.
Businesses	American businesses along the border have been adversely affected —from those depending on tourism to those affected by increased restrictions and slower border crossings.
Public Lands	Federal lands have been damaged by fence construction and subsequent flooding; public parks have been walled off, limiting or eliminating public access. (NOTE: No amount of trash left by migrants is comparable to the damage caused by construction of fences and walls.)

<sup>1</sup> Padgett, Tim, "The 'Dangerous' Border: Actually One of America's Safest Places," Time, July 30, 2010, <http://www.time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,2007474,00.html>.

<sup>2</sup> Schrag, Peter, "Why strengthening the U.S.-Mexican border leads to more illegal immigration," Washington Post, July 18, 2010, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/07/16/AR2010071602720.html>.

<sup>3</sup> See [washington.mcc.org/issues/environment/border](http://washington.mcc.org/issues/environment/border) for resources on the impacts of the U.S.-Mexico border fence.

### 3. Borders cannot be “sealed.”

The notion that a border can be completely sealed is a myth.

136+

Number of deaths crossing the Berlin Wall 1961-89<sup>4</sup>

4,111+

Number of deaths crossing the U.S.-Mexico border since 1998<sup>5</sup>

Even with a wall and sniper towers, about 5,000 East Germans crossed into West Berlin during the time of the Berlin Wall.<sup>6</sup>



As long as people suffer from extreme poverty, violent conflict, and political and religious persecution, they will choose to leave their homes.



As long as there are opportunities here, people will use ladders or tunnels, cross hundreds of miles of desert, or travel across oceans in cramped shipping containers to come to the U.S.

Borders are a source of economic opportunity.

Canada & Mexico

the United States’ two largest trading partners

500 million

number of legal crossings of our borders with Canada and Mexico each year (for shopping, business, visiting family, vacationing, etc.)

### 4. Causes, not just symptoms, must be addressed.

Any immigration policy that ignores the root causes of migration<sup>7</sup> will fail.

- This is largely why past solutions have done just that – failed.

Immigration – both documented and undocumented – is affected more by the relative availability of jobs than by enforcement measures.

#### “Push” factors

- Just as in biblical times, people leave their homes to avoid violent conflict, natural disasters, and economic distress
- U.S. trade policies such as NAFTA have adversely affected farmers in Mexico

#### “Pull” factors

- People are drawn to the U.S. for economic opportunity, safety, and to reunite with family members
- By some estimates, 60% of U.S. agricultural workers are undocumented immigrants

### Smarter Solutions

Laws	Update immigration laws which have not been significantly updated in 20 years.
Family	Create better channels for legal immigration based on labor needs and to preserve family unity. Current wait times for spouses/minor children: 6-7 yrs; for adult children/siblings: 12-28 yrs.
Security	Focus border security strategies on real threats to national security and public safety, such as international human, drug, and weapon smuggling syndicates.
Labor	Enforce labor laws regarding wages, overtime, and safety. This would reduce employers’ incentives to hire and exploit undocumented workers.
Resources	Spend resources on economic development south of the border. Walls have a questionable impact on migration flows, but economic development can alter the “push”/“pull” equation.
Trade	Reform U.S. trade policies so farmers and others are not driven from their home communities.

<sup>4</sup> Deutsche Welle, “At Least 136 People Lost Lives at Berlin Wall, Study Shows,” Aug. 8, 2008, <http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,,3547649,00.html>.

<sup>5</sup> Hsu, Spencer, “Border Deaths Are Increasing,” Sept. 30, 2009, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/09/29/AR2009092903212.html>.

<sup>6</sup> The Cold War Museum, “Berlin Wall Time Line,” <http://www.coldwar.org/articles/60s/BerlinWallTimeLine.asp>.

<sup>7</sup> Alexander, Tammy, “Immigration and Trade,” Washington Memo, Spring 2010, <http://washingtonmemo.org/newsletter/spring10/immigration-and-trade/>.