

ATASCOSA COUNTY JUDGE

WEDNESDAY 10/18/2023

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Just a few weeks ago, at the end of September, South Texas dealt with a renewed influx of migrants crossing the U.S. southern border. The number of border crossings reportedly dropped earlier this summer after pandemic-era migration rules (Title 42) went away, but the numbers are climbing again. Statistics, as we know, aren't always a perfect measure of the situation at the border. When the federal government reports that border crossing numbers are down, our small communities still feel the heavy impacts of bailouts, law enforcement pursuits, property damage, and more. This leads to confusing perceptions of the reality of the border crisis.

Nonetheless, the Federal Government has confirmed more recently that numbers are rising. In Eagle Pass, they declared a state of emergency after U.S. Border Patrol reported nearly 6,000 migrants had crossed the Rio Grande River from Mexico in just two days. More recently, the Israel-Hamas war has renewed concerns about the U.S. southern border. Data from U.S. Customs and Border Protection shows that more than 8,000 migrants from "special interest countries" were encountered by Border Patrol at the southern border in

September alone. Special interest countries are areas identified by the U.S. government that present a national security risk, some with links to global terrorism. While it remains unknown whether militants have attempted to sneak across the U.S. border, the number of people arriving alone, has national security implications. The various scenarios across the country paint a picture of the strained immigration system's continued impact on our communities. As your County Judge, I stand committed to working with our state and federal partners on issues related to the border crisis.

This past summer, when Title 42 ended, we gathered the attention of nearly 300 residents who were concerned about the potential impacts of border policy changes that could affect their properties and land. My gut instinct at the time was to unite with my county judge colleagues from around the state by initiating a border security coalition of judges. I'm eager to pick up this initiative again, especially now that border security and national security should be at the forefront of our work due to the times we find ourselves in.

I'm pleased to report that I will be traveling to West Texas at the end of the month to hold meetings with several county judges. I plan to travel southeast in early November to expand our reach and grow the coalition. During these meetings, I'll be joined by a resident from Atascosa County who is a dedicated property owner and shares the same passion for strengthening border security measures. Collaborating strategically with other county judges, my goal is to provide my viewpoint as a judge while my partner can contribute valuable insights and firsthand experience as a landowner dealing with these issues. Together, our goal is to earn the interest of at least 25 Texas counties. Once we achieve this, our next step will be to work more closely with the state to understand challenges and make every possible effort to obtain more help and resources to support our law enforcement.

Like many others, Atascosa County is fighting against the challenges posed by illegal border crossings. We are responsible for supporting law enforcement agencies working to protect us and ensure the rule of law. Now more than ever, we need to increase our efforts to defend against criminal activities, human trafficking, and the entry of illegal drugs, which threaten our loved ones. Our officers are at the front line and forefront of fighting the impacts that come into our county from the weak border policy down south. I love this county, and I love this state, and I am committed to doing whatever I can to ensure the safety of our residents.