



**“Open Borders” Rhetoric and Failed Policies Waste Valuable Texan Resources:
Testimony Opposing SB 6**

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In the eight years that Governor Abbott has been in office, he has called for, and this committee has approved, nearly \$12 billion Texan tax dollars designated for his failed “border security” strategy. SB 6 would allow the Governor’s massive waste to continue by sending another \$1.5 billion (with little oversight) to the Trusteed Programs department in his office. Billions have been spent on border security strategies, specifically Operation Lone Star, with the expressed mission to deter people from attempting to migrate to the United States. There is little to show for that effort.

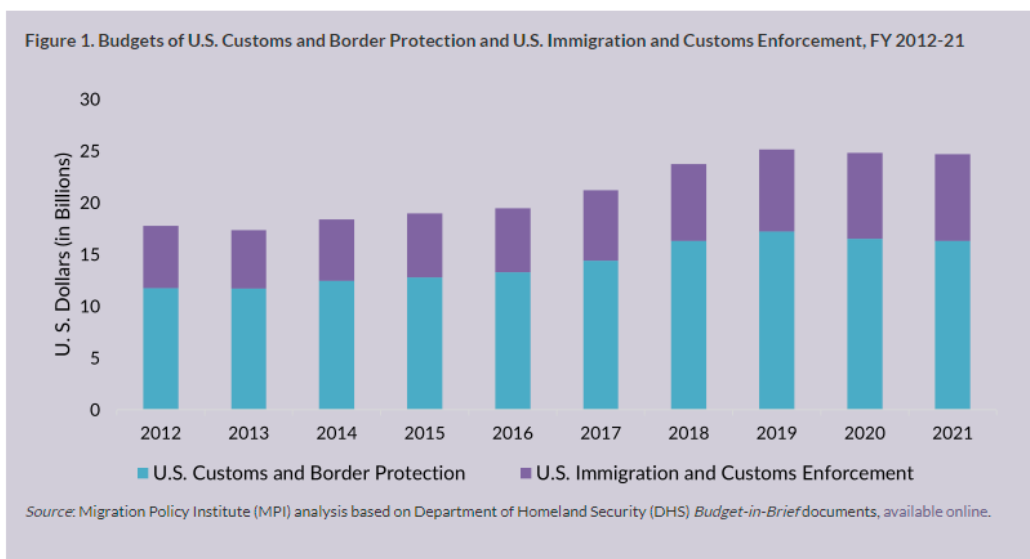
Despite requirements for agencies to report on border security spending, Texans have little proof of its efficiency or effectiveness as a state policy outside the media attention desperately sought by the governor. Each budget Governor Abbott signed has required state agencies engaged in border security efforts to report their spending and performance indicators to the Legislative Budget Board (LBB) at least twice per year. In the hearing for the equally wasteful HB 6 (88S3), the Governor’s office claimed agencies are reporting as required, but it has been over a year and a half since the LBB released that information to the public.¹ The Senate Finance committee should not continue to spend on programs such as Operation Lone Star unless the public can appropriately determine if the agencies tasked with those duties are showing their efficient and effective use of Texas tax dollars. SB 6 should be rejected, and instead, the committee exercise its authority to conduct more stringent oversight of the Governor’s deterrence only border security strategy because Texans deserve more than counterproductive rhetoric.

Rather than accepting politicized rhetoric about “open borders,” this committee could hold hearings about ways it could work with the Biden Administration which is already requesting nearly a billion more in funding for immigration enforcement in FY 2024 than the year before. While we casually spend billions in Texans’ hard earned tax dollars, the current administration is

¹ [Border Security Appropriations \(March 2022\)](#)



prepared to spend \$25 billion in one year for both Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). The United States federal government has spent more money on immigration enforcement in recent years than any other time in our history, and yet, masses continue to huddle at our border yearning to breathe free. The growth in federal spending is directly tied to the growth in staffing for the U.S. Border Patrol which has nearly doubled in the last twenty years.² Nationally, that spending powers a border infrastructure industry worth \$48 billion in 2022 which is expected to be worth as much as \$81 billion by 2030, much of it supporting the profits of the world’s largest arms-producing companies.³ Yet, as the Texas Senate Finance committee considers spending even more of our hard earned tax dollars on a failed experiment, politicized “open borders” rhetoric continues to rob Texans of a legitimate policy debate while enriching the investors of multinational corporations.



Governor Abbott’s “open borders” rhetoric plays well among the safe spaces provided by folks at the ignominious Defend Texas Liberty PAC, but in effect, Abbott’s attempt to draw a contrast between himself and the Biden Administration exacerbates the problems deterrence policies claim to address.⁴ A recent poll of 600 people living in Central America shows that 59% of those who heard “open borders” rhetoric were more likely to consider attempting to migrate to the U.S.

² [Border Patrol Agent Nationwide Staffing by Fiscal Year](#)

³ [Global Spending on Immigration Enforcement Is Higher than Ever and Rising](#)

⁴ [Leader of anti-immigration group Texans for Strong Borders also runs anonymous, hate-filled social media accounts](#)



border.⁵ Consistent, anti-immigrant rhetoric and the scapegoating of immigrant Texans is a signature part of Abbott's tenure that has become a self-fulfilling prophecy. As he takes that vitriol to new levels by targeting communities such as Colony Ridge, the Senate Finance Committee should not condone reckless and counterproductive behavior with another \$1.5 billion appropriation.

Instead of increasing total spending on failed policies to \$6.6 billion for this biennium, Texans could be better served by spending on programs that would actually help us. All Texans, whether they live in the borderlands of Texas/Mexico or Texas/Oklahoma, deserve a state government that pursues budget strategies that are both efficient and effective. This Senate Finance Committee should give Texans what they want and need: more rural hospitals and healthcare, funding to address the desperate needs of the state's 5.5 million public school students, or at least, the resources to finally address the thousands of minor Texans living in the state's custody. Texans deserve better than allowing the Governor to continue wasting money on failed policies with little oversight. Every Texan encourages members of the Senate Finance Committee to reject SB 6, and once again, focus on fiscally responsible public policies.

⁵ ["Open Borders" Disinformation Increases Migration to the Border New Poll of Central Americans Reveals](#)