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NATIONAL AND BORDER COMMUNITY LEADERS PROVIDE CONGRESS WITH ROADMAP TO IMPROVE BORDER SECURITY AND ADDRESS COMMUNITY NEEDS

Groundbreaking collaboration of law enforcement, elected officials, faith leaders, and immigration advocates issue recommendations for keeping their communities safe

Washington, D.C. – **The National Immigration Forum** along with local partners **Border Action Network** of Arizona and **Border Network for Human Rights** of El Paso, TX / Southern New Mexico sponsored a delegation of leaders from Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas visiting Capitol Hill this week to announce a comprehensive set of recommendations for improving community security and reducing civil rights violations in the border region.

“Individuals and institutions from different sectors – including law enforcement – of our border community have engaged in a very unique policy thinking process, and they have come out with this Border Policy Report”, said Fernando Garcia, Executive Director of the Border Network for Human Rights based in El Paso, Texas. “The Border Task Force provides this roadmap with the belief that it is possible to shape new comprehensive and effective border enforcement policies and strategies that protect our borders, provide community security, encourage accountability and oversight, and respect human rights,” added Mr. Garcia.

The report – *Effective Border Policy: Security, Responsibility and Human Rights* – is the result of a collaboration of law enforcement officers, local elected officials, faith leaders and communities advocates from across the border region who now comprise the **US/Mexico Border and Immigration Task Force**. The over 60 concrete and sensible recommendations in the report supply a clear roadmap for federal policy makers, as well as community advocates and faith leaders, to improve the security of border communities while supporting the need for national comprehensive immigration reform that includes effective, responsible border policy.

“Border policy is not a choice between enforcement or no enforcement; it is about smart enforcement that creates national and community security,” said El Paso Sheriff-elect and Task Force member, Richard Wiles. “I came to Washington because I believe that border security and community security are not mutually exclusive. Establishing and maintaining trust between local law enforcement and the immigrant community is central to the security of my county. If we trust each other, then as Sheriff I can focus on the real dangers facing our community.”

The recommendations in the report are divided into several key areas: accountability and oversight, review of border operations, technology, and infrastructure, ports of entry, border walls and fencing, diluting law enforcement resources, military at the border, detention and deportation, community security and just and comprehensive development.

Specific proposals include:

- Communities are more secure when border enforcement policies focus on the criminal element and engage immigrants in fighting the real dangers facing our country;
- Communities are safer when we implement policies that ensure accountability and provide local oversight of enforcement activities;
- Communities flourish when Ports of Entry are treated as vital gateways to America;
- Communities are stronger and lives are saved when we replace border blockade operations with more sensible enforcement; and,
- Communities are safer when local law enforcement is not pressed into immigration-enforcement roles and the military is not used to enforce civilian law.

Some of the recommendations in the report were incorporated into recent legislative proposals but now benefit from further consideration and input from the growing number of members of the US/Mexico Border and Immigration Task Force. Members of the Task Force from Texas, Arizona, and New Mexico have also visited with various Congressional offices this week to present the report's recommendations.

“As Arizona will continue to play a key role in the bi-partisan call for immigration reform, we welcome the opportunity to work with all Members of Congress and our incoming President to address our concerns as a unified border region,” said Jennifer Allen, Executive Director of Border Action Network. “Our Congressional delegation, state and local leadership, and even local law enforcement in Arizona all understand the critical role our state plays and have demonstrated their willingness to work together for responsible, humane policy. Now we just need national leadership to follow suit.”

“The National Immigration Forum is thrilled to partner with the Border Task Force on the release of these recommendations. The on-the-ground intelligence behind the Task Force's proposed solutions represents the real need for community security all along the border region. For too long border security has been a sound bite and an excuse for those opposing immigration reform. Today's report is a clear sign to the country that border enforcement is a difficult issue that deserves a solution based on security, responsibility and human rights, not fear mongering and posturing,” noted Ali Noorani, the organization's Executive Director.

The report can be viewed here: www.bordertaskforce.org

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The National Immigration Forum is the nation's premier immigrant rights organization, dedicated to embracing and upholding America's tradition as a nation of immigrants. The US-Mexico Border and Immigration Task Force is a coalition of members representing multiple sectors of border communities from Arizona, New Mexico and Texas.