

## While Congress argues, border patrols struggle

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Everyone has an opinion about illegal immigration. As I've listened to it debated in Congress, I've often been frustrated the way many members of Congress have politicized the issue. They seem more interested in scoring political points than in solving problems.

That's too bad, because while we talk in endless circles about whether there should be a fence or how many soldiers we need patrolling the border or any other topic of the day, the problem continues without an honest attempt to solve it.

Yet even in today's highly charged partisan environment, you would think Congress could unite behind taking the strong and important first step of securing our borders.

The importance of taking this critical step was reinforced when I traveled to Nogales, Ariz., with a group of congressmen to meet with U.S. Customs and Border Protection officials and tour our border with Mexico.

I met many dedicated professionals who are literally on the front lines of a never-ending battle with drug dealers, smugglers, counterfeiters, and human traffickers. And while we've been arguing, they've been acting. And they're getting results.

The Border Patrol is using a combination of personnel, technology and infrastructure improvements as part of its Secure Border Initiative. I was able to observe the coordinated use of mobile sensor towers, radar, infrared ground sensors, rapid response teams, helicopters, cameras and advanced

x-ray machines to monitor the border and inspect cargo. I talked to agents about the benefits of modern strategic fencing in urban areas and saw the futility of building fences in remote wilderness areas where they can easily be breached.

The Customs and Border Protection agents are making these investments because they know that securing our border means more than just stopping illegal immigration. It means a safer food supply, since more than 65 percent of all winter produce sold in North America flows through Nogales. It means safer highways since Mexican trucks are thoroughly screened before entering the U.S. And it means fewer counterfeit goods and illegal drugs like meth on our streets since commercial and passenger vehicles are inspected for contraband.

Despite these recent documented successes in Nogales, where arrests have gone down and seizures of illegal drugs and counterfeit goods have gone up, significant problems remain.

Our need to invest in infrastructure throughout the country is particularly critical along our borders. I saw high-tech equipment sitting idle because it didn't have electricity to operate. Hundreds of miles of the border remain inaccessible to border patrol agents because there are no roads across rugged terrain.

Congress needs to stop bickering and take politics out of the debate. We need to join the Customs and Border Protection agents in devising practical solutions to secure our border by investing more resources in infrastructure, high-tech equipment, personnel and strategic urban fencing.

Securing our borders doesn't have to be a partisan issue. It can and should be a cause that unites us, not something that divides us.

My trip to the border has made me realize that breaking the logjam on immigration policy should start with developing bipartisan solutions to our border security problems. I believe we can bridge party lines if we focus first on this important issue.

It's just common sense.