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Proposed BOUND Act aims to protect northern border staffing

By Cara Chapman Press-Republican Sep 16, 2019



PLATTSBURGH — A new bill co-sponsored by Congresswoman Elise Stefanik (R-Schuylerville) would require minimum U.S. Customs and Border Protection staffing levels at ports of entry along the U.S.-Canadian border.

Stefanik and Congressman Brian Higgins (D-Buffalo), co-chairs of the Northern Border Caucus, introduced the BOUND (Border Officer Utilization for National Defense) Act this week.

"Travel and trade between Canada and the North Country is a critical source of revenue that directly impacts our local economy, as well as the national economy," Stefanik said in a statement.

"Maintaining strong staffing levels at the northern border will ensure our tourism industry and economy are not stifled and that CBP officers are able to effectively carry out their duties.

"I'm proud to introduce this bipartisan legislation to support our northern border personnel and keep our economy strong."

BUSIEST SEASON

Recently, CBP officers were pulled from the northern border during its busiest season and temporarily reassigned to the U.S.-Mexico border, according to a press release from Stefanik's office.

Northern border crossings jump from about six million in January and February to almost 11 million in July and August.

"The northern border constitutes the longest land boundary between two countries in the world," according to the press release.

"At 5,525 miles, approximately 400,000 people and over \$1.6 billion in goods cross the border daily through more than 120 ports of entry."

Higgins and Stefanik have repeatedly objected to the diversion of CBP officers from the U.S.-Canadian border, and led a bipartisan letter to U.S. Homeland Security in May also signed by several members of congress who represent northern-border communities.

"The northern border has unique needs related to security, trade and travel," Higgins said in a statement.

"Shortfalls in staffing make it more difficult for CBP officers to do their jobs, impacting both the national and local economies that rely on the efficient flow of goods and people, and placing additional, unnecessary stress on national security operations between the two nations."

RETURNING

Currently, 162 CBP officers continue to assist border patrol along the U.S.-Mexico border, the press release said.

"It is anticipated that 105 CBP officers will return to their home stations by September 15, 2019 and the remaining 57 will return by September 22, 2019."

Deploying northern-border CBP officers impacts morale, adds stresses to the job of safeguarding and streamlining lawful trade and travel, and can result in significant delays for travelers crossing the border, the press release said.

Other congresspeople cosponsoring the BOUND Act are Democrat Collin Peterson of Minnesota, Republican Cathy McMorris Rodgers of Washington, Democrat Peter Welch of Vermont and Democrat Elissa Slotkin of Minnesota.

Homeland Security was mandated to provide a report on the number of CBP officers assigned to the northern border and temporarily assigned to the southern border by the Emergency Border Supplemental bill, signed by President Donald Trump on July 1, the press release said.

CHAMBER SUPPORT

The North Country Chamber of Congress welcomes and supports the BOUND Act.

"No dynamic is more important to the North Country economy than the most efficient possible flow of legitimate travel and commerce from Canada," Chamber President Garry Douglas said in a statement.

"For years, we suffered inadequate investment and staffing on the northern border, constantly having resources diverted to the southern border."

Recent years have seen staffing increases, modernized infrastructure at many crossings and the deployment of new technologies, he continued.

"But now we are again being subjected to the old practice of stealing from the northern Paul to feed the southern Peter.

"Congress needs to authorize and require the proper staffing levels for both borders and

this initiative would make certain the bad old days don't return," Douglas said.

"We thank Congresswoman Stefanik and her bipartisan colleagues for this leadership and hope Congress will approve it."

Conversation

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SG

Shlongmaster General 3 DAYS AGO

I have never seen a more depressed bunch than the USA border patrol, meanwhile the Canadian Border officers appear happy and content.

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