

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

September 23, 2021

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg
Secretary of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, D.C. 20590

The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas
Secretary of Homeland Security
2707 Martin Luther King Jr Avenue, SE
Washington, D.C. 20528

Dear Secretary Buttigieg and Secretary Mayorkas:

We are gravely concerned by the Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA) order grounding private drones previously flying above our southern border¹. It is undeniable we have a crisis at the border as more than 1.3 million migrants have been apprehended at our southwest border this year, a 386% increase over this time last year. The Department of Homeland Security has routinely denied Members of Congress and the media access to border facilities, especially those over capacity and facing the most significant challenges.^{2 3}

Now the FAA has grounded privately owned drones from flying over the border to capture images of thousands of migrants sheltering under a bridge, waiting to be picked up by Border Patrol. According to the FAA's statement, "[t]he Border Patrol requested the temporary flight restriction due to drones interfering with law enforcement flights on the border".⁴ However, the impacted media outlets claim they have flown drones over the border in this general location for months without any federal impediment. Although the FAA ultimately granted this media outlet a permit to resume drone flights in this area, the question of why these flights were denied in the first place remains. The common thread is that President Biden refuses to be honest with the American people about the nature of this crisis or work with Congress to supply the resources this Administration needs to bring the border situation under control.

If we don't understand the extent of the problem and the Administration continues to take proactive steps to obscure the crisis at our southern border, the crisis will only get worse. We need transparency and a concerted, whole-of-government effort to tackle this crisis head-on if we are to secure our borders. It is also concerning that many of these individuals, reportedly more than 9,000 migrants, may cross into the U.S., untested for COVID, with no more than an "Notice to Appear" at an immigration hearing.

If the Administration will not be honest with the American people about this crisis, we must at least allow the media to provide accurate reporting on the situation. We strongly urge the FAA to reverse this decision to ground these drones and, to the degree Border Patrol requested this order, for Border Patrol to rescind this request. Furthermore, please provide responses to the following:

¹ <https://nypost.com/2021/09/17/faa-grounds-fox-news-drones-in-texas-near-sheltering-migrants/>

² <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/biden-administration-access-border-facility-capacity/story?id=76662203>

³ <https://nypost.com/2021/03/26/gop-congress-members-rip-biden-for-blocking-border-media-access/>

⁴ <https://nypost.com/2021/09/17/faa-grounds-fox-news-drones-in-texas-near-sheltering-migrants/>

- A detailed explanation from DHS on how they are processing these people, specifically if they are utilizing the Remain in Mexico Policy or if they are being released into the United States.
- Are individuals being tested for COVID or provided a vaccine? If so, how many positive tests have you recorded and are these people subsequently quarantined?
- How your Department plans to address the current surge and discourage people from trying to illegally coming into the U.S.?
- What actions and precautions DHS is taking to ensure children are not being trafficked by drug cartels along the border?

It is past time to address the problem and regain operational control of our borders. As Members of Congress, we stand ready to provide whatever resources necessary to secure our border.

We look forward to your prompt response.

Sincerely,



Ken Calvert
Member of Congress



Charles J. "Chuck"
Fleischmann
Member of Congress



Robert B. Aderholt
Member of Congress



Rick W. Allen
Member of Congress



Brian Babin, D.D.S.
Member of Congress



Mike Bost
Member of Congress



Tim Burchett
Member of Congress



Kat Cammack
Member of Congress



Madison Cawthorn
Member of Congress



Michael Cloud
Member of Congress



Andy Biggs
Member of Congress



Scott DesJarlais, M.D.
Member of Congress



Warren Davidson
Member of Congress



Mo Brooks
Member of Congress



Mario Diaz-Balart
Member of Congress



Russ Fulcher
Member of Congress



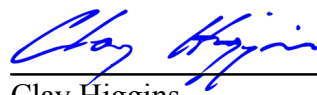
Kay Granger
Member of Congress



Lance Gooden
Member of Congress



Louie Gohmert
Member of Congress



Clay Higgins
Member of Congress



Michael Guest
Member of Congress



Mike Kelly
Member of Congress



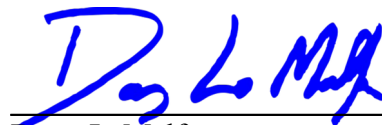
Debbie Lesko
Member of Congress



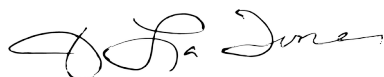
Julia Letlow
Member of Congress



Doug Lamborn
Member of Congress



Doug LaMalfa
Member of Congress



Jake LaTurner
Member of Congress



Tom McClintock
Member of Congress



John R. Moolenaar
Member of Congress



Alexander X. Mooney
Member of Congress



Ralph Norman
Member of Congress



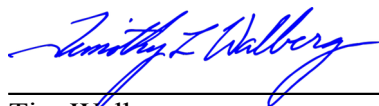
Roger Williams
Member of Congress



Bill Posey
Member of Congress



Randy K. Weber, Sr.
Member of Congress



Tim Walberg
Member of Congress



Jefferson Van Drew
Member of Congress



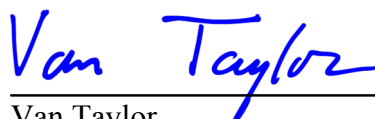
Harold Rogers
Member of Congress



John H. Rutherford
Member of Congress



David Schweikert
Member of Congress



Van Taylor
Member of Congress