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Office of the Press Secretary
October 22, 2005

President's Radio Address

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 [In Focus: Homeland Security](#)

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THE PRESIDENT: Good morning. This week I signed into law a bill that supports our ongoing efforts to defend our homeland.

To defend this country, we have to enforce our borders. When our borders are not secure, terrorists, drug dealers, and criminals find it easier to sneak into America. My administration has a clear strategy for dealing with this problem: We want to stop people from crossing into America illegally, and to quickly return the illegal immigrants we catch back to their home countries.

For the past four years, we've been implementing this strategy. To stop illegal immigrants from coming across our borders, we've added manpower, upgraded our technology, and taken the final steps necessary to complete a 14-mile barrier running along the San Diego border with Mexico. To enforce our immigration laws within our borders, we've hired more immigration agents, gone after criminal gangs, and targeted smugglers and coyotes who traffic in human beings. We are getting results: Since 2001, we have removed more than 4.8 million illegal immigrants from the United States, including more than 300,000 with criminal records.

Our border patrol and immigration agents are doing a fine job, but we still have a problem. Too many illegal immigrants are coming in, and we're capturing many more non-Mexican illegal immigrants than we can send home. And one of the biggest reasons we cannot send them back is that we lack space in our detention facilities to hold them until they are removed. When there's no bed available, non-Mexicans who are caught entering our country illegally are given a slip that tells them to come back



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for a court appearance. Most never show up. And then they disappear back into the shadows of our communities. This is called "catch-and-release," and it is unacceptable.

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The bill I signed includes \$7.5 billion that will help us address the problem of illegal immigration in two important ways. First, it provides more than \$2.3 billion for the Border Patrol so we can keep more illegal immigrants from getting into the country in the first place. These funds will help us hire a thousand new border patrol agents, improve our technology and intelligence, expand and improve Border Patrol stations, and install and improve fencing, lighting, vehicle barriers, and roads along our border areas. I appreciate the help Congress has given us for our common goal of creating more secure borders.

Second, this bill also provides \$3.7 billion for Immigration and Customs Enforcement so we can find and return the illegal immigrants who are entering our country. With these funds, we can expand the holding capacity of our detention facilities by 10 percent. This will allow us to hold more non-Mexican illegal immigrants while we process them through a program we call "expedited removal." This will make the process faster and more efficient. Putting more non-Mexican illegal immigrants through expedited removal is crucial to sending back people who have come here illegally. As Secretary Chertoff told the Senate this week, our goal is to return every single illegal entrant, with no exceptions. And this bill puts us on the path to do that.

For Mexicans who cross into America illegally, we have a different plan, but the same goal. Now, most of the 900,000 illegal immigrants from Mexico who are caught each year are immediately escorted back across the border. The problem is that these illegal immigrants are able to connect with another smuggler or coyote and come right back in. So one part of the solution is a program called "interior repatriation" where we fly or bus these illegal immigrants all the way back to their hometowns in the interior of Mexico. By returning illegal Mexican immigrants to their homes, far away from desert crossings, we're saving lives and making it more difficult for them to turn right around and cross back into America.

As we improve and expand our efforts to secure our borders, we must also recognize that enforcement cannot work unless it's part of a comprehensive immigration reform that includes a temporary worker program. If an employer has a job that no American is willing to take, we need to find a way to fill that demand by matching willing employers with willing workers from foreign countries on a temporary and legal basis. I'll work with members of Congress to create a program that will provide for our economy's labor needs without harming American workers, and without granting amnesty, and that will relieve pressure on our borders.

A critical part of any temporary worker program is ensuring that our immigration laws are enforced at work sites. America is a country of laws; we must not allow dishonest employers to flout those laws. So we've doubled the resources for work site enforcement since 2004.

We have much more work ahead of us. But the Homeland Security bill I signed this week provides vital support for our efforts to deal with the problem of illegal immigration, and make all Americans safer and more secure.

Thank you for listening.

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