

IMMIGRATION & THE 86TH LEGISLATIVE SESSION

CURRENT CONDITIONS AT THE BORDER

Right now, children, women and men in U.S. Border Patrol custody are living in inhumane conditions — in cages with little food and without basic necessities. [Children continue to be separated](#) from their parents. Despite pushback from humanitarian groups, immigration advocates, and the American public, the Trump Administration has refused do anything meaningful about it.

In response to this inaction, in early July I signed a bi-partisan letter with more than 60 of my colleagues to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security urging them to end the inhumane treatment of children at our border. [Read coverage about the letter here.](#)

Soon after, I toured the Carrizo Springs migrant shelter, a facility with a capacity of 1,300 that is located about two hours south of San Antonio and at the time of my visit, housed 206 children. Run by U.S. Health & Human Services in partnership with Baptist Children's and Family Services, this facility is a marked improvement over the overcrowded and harsh conditions at the Border Patrol facilities on our border. The shelter staff is working to reunite the children with their families in less than 30 days. I appreciate the work being done at this shelter, and it stands in contrast to the horrific images we have seen from some Border Patrol facilities. However, both are a symptom of our nation's overall failure to deal with immigration in a comprehensive, effective manner. We will continue to pay a human and financial cost until we do.

Last week, it was announced that the [Carrizo Springs shelter would be closing.](#)

In June, the Tarrant County Commissioners Court [voted 3-2 to continue the 287\(g\) program.](#) Ahead of the vote, I joined several of my Tarrant County colleagues in signing a letter opposing its continuation out of concern that extending the program would increase distrust of law enforcement, encourage racial profiling and ultimately make our communities less safe. [Read the full letter by clicking here.](#)

THE 86TH LEGISLATURE, BORDER SECURITY & IMMIGRATION

The most significant legislation involving immigration and border security was the continuation of \$800 million for border security spending. This amount has been appropriated for several two-year budget cycles and is largely earmarked for use by the Department of Public Safety.

House Democrats stopped attempts to add [\\$100 million](#) to border funding. This would have been in addition to the \$800 million already appropriated for this purpose. Additionally, [HB 4306](#), which would have designated funds to build “border physical barriers,” also failed.

Following the end of the legislative session, in late June, the governor, lieutenant governor and the speaker of the House announced that the state will [deploy 1,000 Texas National Guard troops](#) to the border to aid at holding facilities and at ports of entry. According to the governor, the cost will be covered by the federal government. Time will tell if that is the case.

SB 4

In 2017, the Legislature passed SB 4, known as the “show me your papers” law. [SB 4](#) allows local enforcement agencies to question the immigration status of anyone they detain or arrest, including drivers and passengers stopped for minor traffic infractions, victims who have called the police to report crimes, and people who have been witnesses to crimes. This law effectively condones profiling and creates a dangerous divide between local immigrant communities and local law enforcement. During the recent legislative session, there was legislation filed that would repeal the dangerous provisions put in law by SB 4; unfortunately none were considered by either chamber.

HOW TO HELP AT THE BORDER

If you are looking for ways to aid the humanitarian crisis at the border, the *Texas Tribune* has compiled a [comprehensive list](#) of organizations that are helping the children and adults detained at the border.