

United States Senate

February 29, 2024

Joseph R. Biden
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Biden:

I am writing you regarding the need to strengthen America's border security as you visit the United States-Mexico border today. What is happening at the southern border is unacceptable, plain and simple. Congress and your Administration need to take action immediately to improve the situation before things deteriorate. I respectfully urge you to use all of the remaining tools at your disposal to strengthen border security where executive action is possible.

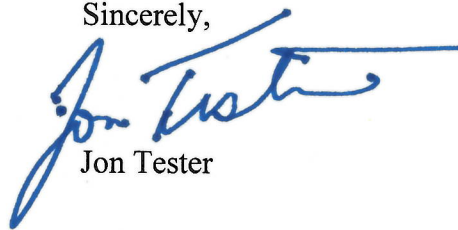
Montanans from every corner of my state tell me that they want a secure border and a solution to the fentanyl crisis. I regularly meet with law enforcement officers, community leaders, and families that all highlight the devastation wrought by drug trafficking and illegal entries across the southern border. Earlier this month, a news report ran stating that Mexican drug cartels are targeting Montana, particularly taking advantage of the sparsely populated parts of the state, including Tribal reservations. This cannot be tolerated and Montanans expect everyone to do what they can to crack down on this growing problem.

Congress had an opportunity to address this dire situation in February but ultimately failed due to election year politics. For months, a bipartisan group of Senate negotiators led by Republican Senator James Lankford of Oklahoma, Independent Senator Kyrsten Sinema of Arizona, and Democratic Senator Chris Murphy of Connecticut worked to produce the strongest border security legislation we've seen in years. This bill was endorsed by and received strong praise from the National Border Patrol Council, which represents thousands of U.S. Border Patrol agents and personnel charged with enforcing our country's border security policies. The Director of Customs and Border Protection stated that it "would provide the strongest set of tools we have had in decades to effectively manage migration and enhance our nation's border security." And Senator Lankford said it would have stopped 800,000 entries over the past four months had it already been signed into law. The fact that many of my Republican colleagues voted to kill this strong, bipartisan proposal simply because they wanted to score political points is beyond frustrating but I won't give up on getting something done. While only Congress has the power to provide the critical funding needed to secure our border through manpower and technology, and only Congress has the power to tighten our asylum laws, action is needed. So, as we wait for my colleagues in Congress to stop putting politics ahead of our national security, it is up to you to act.

I have said many times over the past three years, your Administration can and must do more to secure the southern border. I hope during your trip today you listen to the officers, agents, and law enforcement leaders on the ground and give them the additional tools they need to do their job and keep America safe. I also urge you to take immediate action to improve our asylum processes so that only those with valid claims are processed, to stop illegal border crossings and enforce our immigration laws, and to boost manpower with the limited tools you have and support the men and women who are working to keep our country safe.

The current situation at the southern border is unacceptable and the ongoing instability is a threat to our national security. I urge you to use your executive authority, to the maximum extent, to keep our country safe until Congress can deliver the effective, long-lasting solutions that Montanans, and our men and women in law enforcement have been asking for.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jon Tester", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jon Tester