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LOIS W. KOLKHORST

STATE SENATOR
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Senator Kolkhorst Surveys Crisis at Texas-Mexico Border

AUSTIN - On Monday, March 23, State Senator Lois W. Kolkhorst (R-Brenham) joined five of her fellow female senators to survey the challenges facing Texas due to unchecked illegal immigration along the Texas-Mexico border.

Accompanied by Department of Public Safety Director Steven McCraw, the group surveyed the emerging humanitarian crisis at the southern border, first visiting the Carrizo Springs Youth Processing Center, followed by aerial surveillance of the Rio Grande by helicopter. Lawmakers also met personally with Chief Patrol Agent of the US Border Patrol for the Del Rio Sector, Austin L. Skero.

With the Biden administration's shift in immigration policies, Texas lawmakers are increasingly concerned with the recent mass migration headed to the U.S. border, with an estimated 480,000-plus apprehensions in Fiscal Year 2021 (which begins in October), more than double of all apprehensions from fiscal year 2020. The US Border Patrol estimates that they apprehend less than half of those crossing the border illegally.

In the Del Rio Sector alone, authorities have encountered at least 58 nationalities, including individuals from Honduras, Iraq, Guatemala, Haiti and Yemen.

As Chair of Health and Human Services in the Texas Senate, Kolkhorst is charged with overseeing public health policies and helping to craft the state budget. Unlike federal and state facilities, the Carrizo Springs facility is run by a nonprofit, the Baptist Children Family Services, which houses about 700 boys ranging in age from 13 to 17. Before being released across the country, these minors typically stay in the facility for an average of 10 days, at a cost of about \$1,000 per child per day.

"The crisis at our border has become a catastrophe in a few short months, due to decisions being made in Washington D.C. with the repeal of several of the Trump Administrations executive orders," said Kolkhorst. "Where the federal government has failed, our state will continue providing resources and manpower to assist through the Texas Department of Public Safety, although the state has limited authority regarding immigration. This is a difficult and avoidable situation that will tragically cost human lives, strain our healthcare system, and cost taxpayers billions of dollars."

Kolkhorst said that according to her briefing with the Del Rio Section Chief of the U.S. Border Patrol, apprehensions in 2020 are up 278 percent, unaccompanied minors apprehensions are up 179 percent and apprehensions of known sex offenders are up a staggering 1,967 percent.

The Del Rio Sector which includes 47 counties is currently the second-most prolific crossing in the United States, behind only to the neighboring Rio Grande Sector in Texas which includes 19 counties.

"This crisis was created in Washington D.C. and it can be solved in Washington D.C. if the Biden Administration simply reenacts the 'Remain in Mexico' policy that eliminates incentives to cross the border before seeking asylum," Kolkhorst said. ###