

## **HOW SECURE IS OUR BORDER?**

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The LWVSD is privileged to have speakers from ICE and the Border Patrol at the March 29th Luncheon give us an update on border security under the Obama administration. In 2003, after 9-1-1, the Department of Homeland Security was initiated to pull together all the government agencies that work to keep Americans safe from terrorism and to protect our borders and workforce from illegal immigration. A recent Pew report estimated that 300,000 illegal immigrants crossed our borders annually between 2007-2009 which is down from 850,000 in 2000-2005. They credit this significant decrease to more personnel including the National Guard and to a significant crackdown on employers. Now, due to the recession and less jobs in the U.S., illegal crossings have decreased again. With both agencies in the same room, we hope to understand how they work together and how successful they are. Their mission is a huge undertaking and requires all kinds of experts from intelligence analysts to agricultural scientists to law enforcement professionals to trade specialists to lawyers and judges to prison guards.

Basically, the Border Patrol ensures security of America's borders while facilitating legitimate travel and trade. It does this by screening people entering the United States and apprehending people trying to cross illegally. It also scans cargo containers and keeps track of goods imported into this country while looking for illegal goods. On a typical day, Customs and Border Protection (CBP) processes nearly 1 million passengers and pedestrians and 58,000 cargo containers, executes 2,140 apprehensions between ports of entry and 107 apprehensions at ports of entry, seizes 6,650 pounds of narcotics and 450 plant pests and animal diseases. There are 327 ports of entry into the U.S. which are manned by 21,000 CBP officers. Another 20,000 Border Patrol agents work between the ports of entry. President Obama ordered 1,200 National Guard to assist the Border Patrol. The U.S. has 7,000 miles of land borders and 95,000 miles of sea borders to protect. Alan Bersin, the former Supt. of San Diego City Schools and former Attorney General for San Diego, now heads up CBP.

ICE, or the Immigration and Customs Enforcement arm of Homeland Security, is responsible for detaining those apprehended and checking on employees at worksites which sometimes requires a raid. President Obama has requested alternatives to incarceration for many of these people and has asked for more humane treatment, so our speakers will be able to update changes to meet the President's request. ICE's job is complicated by people who do not show up in court or who disappear (thus becoming fugitives) as well as countries who refuse to take back their citizens who have been apprehended in the U.S. According to the Office of the Inspector General in 2007, ICE did not have enough funds for beds and personnel to incarcerate 36% of those arrested by ICE while their case was in court. OIG also recommended that a better database be developed by ICE. In October, 2010, ICE announced that they had deported 392,882 illegal aliens of which 195,000 were criminals. They have developed a Secure Communities Program where they work with local law enforcement agencies in identifying illegal aliens with criminal records. Mike Carney will detail this program which is currently in the news in Escondido. In 2008, ICE adopted Performance Based National Detention Standards which focus on outcomes and appropriate behavior and oversight to allow an atmosphere of civility and trust. By nature, ICE's work is more clandestine, but we hope to get a grasp on issues they face.