

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

September 23, 2021

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg  
Secretary of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE  
Washington, D.C. 20590

The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas  
Secretary of Homeland Security  
2707 Martin Luther King Jr Avenue, SE  
Washington, D.C. 20528

Dear Secretary Buttigieg and Secretary Mayorkas:

We are gravely concerned by the Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA) order grounding private drones previously flying above our southern border<sup>1</sup>. It is undeniable we have a crisis at the border as more than 1.3 million migrants have been apprehended at our southwest border this year, a 386% increase over this time last year. The Department of Homeland Security has routinely denied Members of Congress and the media access to border facilities, especially those over capacity and facing the most significant challenges.<sup>2 3</sup>

Now the FAA has grounded privately owned drones from flying over the border to capture images of thousands of migrants sheltering under a bridge, waiting to be picked up by Border Patrol. According to the FAA's statement, "[t]he Border Patrol requested the temporary flight restriction due to drones interfering with law enforcement flights on the border".<sup>4</sup> However, the impacted media outlets claim they have flown drones over the border in this general location for months without any federal impediment. Although the FAA ultimately granted this media outlet a permit to resume drone flights in this area, the question of why these flights were denied in the first place remains. The common thread is that President Biden refuses to be honest with the American people about the nature of this crisis or work with Congress to supply the resources this Administration needs to bring the border situation under control.

If we don't understand the extent of the problem and the Administration continues to take proactive steps to obscure the crisis at our southern border, the crisis will only get worse. We need transparency and a concerted, whole-of-government effort to tackle this crisis head-on if we are to secure our borders. It is also concerning that many of these individuals, reportedly more than 9,000 migrants, may cross into the U.S., untested for COVID, with no more than an "Notice to Appear" at an immigration hearing.

If the Administration will not be honest with the American people about this crisis, we must at least allow the media to provide accurate reporting on the situation. We strongly urge the FAA to reverse this decision to ground these drones and, to the degree Border Patrol requested this order, for Border Patrol to rescind this request. Furthermore, please provide responses to the following:

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<sup>1</sup> <https://nypost.com/2021/09/17/faa-grounds-fox-news-drones-in-texas-near-sheltering-migrants/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/biden-administration-access-border-facility-capacity/story?id=76662203>

<sup>3</sup> <https://nypost.com/2021/03/26/gop-congress-members-rip-biden-for-blocking-border-media-access/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://nypost.com/2021/09/17/faa-grounds-fox-news-drones-in-texas-near-sheltering-migrants/>

- A detailed explanation from DHS on how they are processing these people, specifically if they are utilizing the Remain in Mexico Policy or if they are being released into the United States.
- Are individuals being tested for COVID or provided a vaccine? If so, how many positive tests have you recorded and are these people subsequently quarantined?
- How your Department plans to address the current surge and discourage people from trying to illegally coming into the U.S.?
- What actions and precautions DHS is taking to ensure children are not being trafficked by drug cartels along the border?

It is past time to address the problem and regain operational control of our borders. As Members of Congress, we stand ready to provide whatever resources necessary to secure our border.

We look forward to your prompt response.

Sincerely,



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Ken Calvert  
Member of Congress



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Charles J. "Chuck"  
Fleischmann  
Member of Congress



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Robert B. Aderholt  
Member of Congress



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Rick W. Allen  
Member of Congress



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Brian Babin, D.D.S.  
Member of Congress



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Mike Bost  
Member of Congress



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Tim Burchett  
Member of Congress



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Kat Cammack  
Member of Congress



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Madison Cawthorn  
Member of Congress



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Michael Cloud  
Member of Congress



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Andy Biggs  
Member of Congress



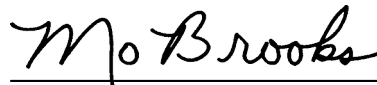
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Scott DesJarlais, M.D.  
Member of Congress



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Warren Davidson  
Member of Congress



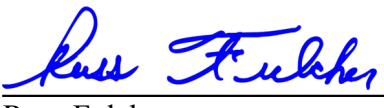
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Mo Brooks  
Member of Congress




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Mario Diaz-Balart  
Member of Congress




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Russ Fulcher  
Member of Congress



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Kay Granger  
Member of Congress



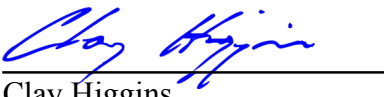
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Lance Gooden  
Member of Congress




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Louie Gohmert  
Member of Congress



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Clay Higgins  
Member of Congress



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Michael Guest  
Member of Congress



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Mike Kelly  
Member of Congress



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Debbie Lesko  
Member of Congress



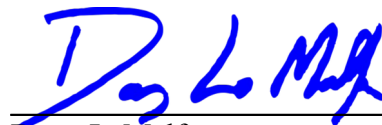
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Julia Letlow  
Member of Congress




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Doug Lamborn  
Member of Congress



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Doug LaMalfa  
Member of Congress



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Jake LaTurner  
Member of Congress



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Tom McClintock  
Member of Congress



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John R. Moolenaar  
Member of Congress



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Alexander X. Mooney  
Member of Congress



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Ralph Norman  
Member of Congress



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Roger Williams  
Member of Congress



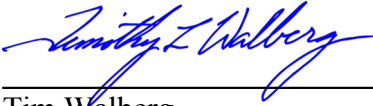
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Bill Posey  
Member of Congress



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Randy K. Weber, Sr.  
Member of Congress



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Tim Walberg  
Member of Congress



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Jefferson Van Drew  
Member of Congress



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Harold Rogers  
Member of Congress



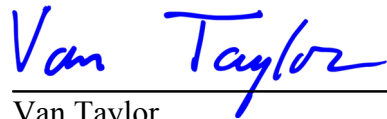
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John H. Rutherford  
Member of Congress



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David Schweikert  
Member of Congress



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Van Taylor  
Member of Congress