



Written by [James Murphy](#) on March 15, 2023

Texas Legislator Proposes New Border Protection Unit to Ease Illegal Immigration Issue

The way Texas Republican Representative Matt Schaefer sees it, if the federal government won't fulfill its obligation to secure the U.S. border with Mexico, the Lone Star State will take care of the issue itself. On March 10, Schaefer introduced HB20, a bill that would create Texas' own border protection unit.

Also known as the Border Protection Unit Act, [HB20](#) would amend the Texas Constitution and create a new law-enforcement department that would have the authority to "arrest, detain, and deter individuals crossing the border illegally, including with the use of non-deadly force."



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The new unit would also be able to "oversee the construction and maintenance of walls, fences, and other physical barriers along the border with Mexico in order to enhance the safety and security of Texans."

According to Schaefer, "The Texas Border Protection Unit will be an organization of professional men and women hired/trained under the authority of the Dept of Public Safety to protect Texans."

Texas House Speaker Dade Phelan was enthusiastic about the bill, tweeting, "Proud of these latest TX House priorities. Addressing our state's border crisis is a must-pass issue this session."

If passed, the bill would make it a state felony for a non-citizen to cross the border illegally. Individuals caught doing so could face up to 10 years in prison and fines of \$10,000 for each infraction.

Republicans see the plan as a way for Texas to pick up the ball that the Biden administration has obviously dropped on the border situation.

"We can certainly here in Texas, build our own militia, they can protect our own borders, because of those that failed to protect our homes," said Bexar County Republican Jeff McManus, "with this new division that would be used to fulfill a gap in safety and security that the federal government is failing to give us."

The state's Mexican American Legislative Caucus (MALC) see the proposal as nothing less than organized vigilantism, calling it a "Klan-like proposal."

"This dangerous, radical and unconstitutional proposal which empowers border vigilantes to hunt migrants and racially profile Latinos is going to result in the death of innocent people," said a [statement](#) from MALC Chairwoman Victoria Neave Criado.

Some local law-enforcement officials seem to be amenable to the idea of a new law-enforcement



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department to assist with the border crisis.

“Right now we can use all the help and any help at all that we can get, because we’re being overrun down here and on the borders. I’m sure there’s a lot of stuff that needs to be ironed out. Are we going to find enough bed space in our facilities to look lock them up? I have a 66-bed unit. I have 63 inmates currently in my facility,” said Zavala County Sheriff Eusevio Salinas.

Some groups believe that adding another layer of law enforcement may only lend further confusion to an already-chaotic situation.

“The more confusion there is, the less likely chance is of more order. This is not the wild west, this happened back then they would just deputize people and obviously that didn’t go well,” said Gavin Rogers of Corazon Ministries, a San Antonio-based organization that assists the homeless.

Texas Governor Greg Abbott has not yet weighed in on the prospect of creating a new Texas Border Protection Unit, but he has been willing to take state action to defend the border. In November, Abbott [invoked](#) the invasion clauses of the U.S. and Texas Constitutions and employed the National Guard to protect the border. In addition, Abbott planned to deploy gun boats at the border and designate Mexican drug cartels as foreign terrorist organizations.

Republicans hold strong majorities in both houses of the Texas legislature. Would Abbott get on board if the bill ultimately passes, or would he just rest on his laurels and consider his previous actions enough to address the situation?

And if the bill were passed and signed, the inevitable legal hassle would be sure to follow.

“I think it’s possible that the federal government, just like they did in Arizona will challenge this law. This is the ultimate show me your papers,” said Texas Democratic Party Chair Gilberto Hinojosa.

If the Biden administration would simply do its job when it comes to illegal immigration, such a measure would be moot. But because Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas has utterly failed at his job, Texans may feel led to address the porous southern border themselves.



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