

**United States House of Representatives**

**House Judiciary Committee Hearing on H.R. 2278 “The Strengthen And Fortify Enforcement Act” (S.A.F.E. ACT).**

**June 13, 2013**

**Statement By: The Honorable Sheriff Sam S. Page  
Rockingham County Sheriff’s Office, North Carolina**



**Mr. Chairman, Co-Chairman, and Distinguished members of this U.S. House of Representatives Judiciary Committee. I give greetings from the citizens of Rockingham County, North Carolina whom I represent.**

**Currently, I am serving in my fourth term as the elected Sheriff of Rockingham County, NC. I am the past President of the North Carolina Sheriffs' Association, and currently serve on the National Sheriffs' Association Border Security and Immigration Committee as Co-Vice Chair. I am a Veteran, and have served for more than thirty years in civilian law enforcement in North Carolina.**

**I believe that you all in our Congress have one of the toughest jobs in our Nation today. You are being asked to fix our broken immigration system in the U.S., and to make sure that your legislation will provide a solution that will last for many years to come. I come before you today not as an expert in immigration law or Border Security. I am just one of 3080 Sheriffs in America that is asking for your help in solving our Border Security and immigration problem that impacts all of our citizens across the U.S. in many ways.**

**In 1990 I had my first encounter with illegal immigration in my county. While on patrol we located six suspicious subjects hitchhiking along our bypass highway. It turned out they were all in the country illegally. When I.C.E. was contacted, I was told by the Agent on duty that if we had not charged the subjects, to release them; because they did not have the funds to provide transportation.**

**Fast forward between 2011 – 2012... While working with the Triad Drug Enforcement Agency (D.E.A.) Task Force, we have arrested twelve (12) Mexican Cartel associates within my county in North Carolina. During the investigative process, we located large amounts of marijuana, Kilos of cocaine, more than a million dollars in cash, five (5) AR-15 Assault Rifles and other assorted firearms in the possession of these persons that are not only affiliated with the Mexican Drug Cartels, but are committing criminal drug trafficking offenses within my county and state. The Sheriff in the county next to mine reported that they had two (2) drug related execution style murders in the past five years.**

**According to my last D.E.A. briefing, North Carolina is second place compared to the Atlanta Region in drug trafficking routes by the Mexican Drug Cartels. These Drug Cartels are also reported to be operating in approximately 1200 cities across the U.S.. As I have explained to the citizens of my county, it only takes two (2) or three (3) days travelling time for illegal drugs to travel from the border to anywhere in the United States, including rural Rockingham County, North Carolina.**

**In North Carolina, since October of 2012, I have participated in the Federal I.C.E. "Secure Community Program". Since we started, we have processed 151 persons that have been criminally charged and are residing in the U.S. illegally. Out of the ninety-three (93) of the detainees that been picked up by I.C.E., two (2) of the detainees have returned to be rearrested. The cost factor to my county for housing these criminally charged illegal aliens has amounted to \$329,490. Approximately 66% of those arrested that are illegal were charged with traffic related offenses.**

**I have personally travelled to the states of Arizona and Texas in the past three (3) years to observe firsthand what my fellow Sheriffs along the border are experiencing with regards to drug trafficking, human trafficking, and illegal immigrations, including O.T.M. crossings along our porous Southern Border with Mexico. This information has been shared with Sheriffs across NC and the U.S..**

**One month ago, while attending a White House briefing by five (5) federal officials, I had the opportunity to ask Department of Homeland Security (D.H.S.) Secretary Napolitano a question. I simply asked why have we not declared the Mexican Drug Cartel a terrorist organization, and what is the reluctance for this administration to place a regular military presence on our Southern border with Mexico? Her answer to me was "Sheriff, we are not at war with Mexico!" You can imagine how frustrating that answer was to me. I tend to differ with Secretary Napolitano since 58,000 Mexican citizens have been killed by Cartels in the past six (6) years in Mexico.**

**Today, I have this great honor to come before your committee as a Sheriff representing the folks in my county. My intentions for being here is to make sure that I live up to the primary responsibility of any government, which is to support public safety and to protect and serve its citizens.**

**I have read this proposed House Bill 2278 and these are a few of my comments:**

- 1. I think that your Bill empowers all law enforcement in America to cooperate in the process of making our communities safer as a force multiplier.**
- 2. This Bill gives our federal I.C.E. Agents the Congressional backing they need to carry out their duties to enforce our nation's immigration laws as they should be.**
- 3. This Bill allows for our Border Patrol Agents to cross federal land without fear of sanctions and legal roadblocks, thus allowing more effective use of their manpower to secure our borders from threats to the U.S.**
- 4. This Bill places oversight and accountability on the Secretary of D.H.S. for decisions being made regarding interior immigration enforcement.**
- 5. The House Bill provides much needed funded for immigration detention resources, and funding to localities that choose to participate in partnership.**
- 6. This Bill does not reward those municipalities which have chosen in the past to become Sanctuary Cities in violation of U.S. immigration law.**
- 7. This Bill reduces the chances of criminals of all types including gang members, aggravated felons, and sex offenders from receiving or benefiting from protected status. Why would you reward criminals?**
- 8. This Bill improves our Visa issuance process.**
- 9. Establishes an I.C.E. Advisory Council to advise Congress and I.C.E. on ways of improving enforcement, addressing the needs of I.C.E. personnel, and assesses the effectiveness of enforcement policies.**

**To the members of this committee – I have read the public safety provisions of Senate Bill 744 introduced by the Senate “Gang of Eight” committee. To date, this bill measures in length more than 1000 pages.**

**I have also recently reviewed your proposed “S.A.F.E. ACT” HR.2278 which measures about 174 pages. In those short amount of pages, your House Bill will restore the “Rule of Law” in immigration enforcement in America as well as the authority reserved for I.C.E. Agents to conduct proper interior immigration enforcement with those powers protected by Congressional legislation.**

**Senate Bill 744 fails to meet that standard in my opinion, and I believe that its’ provisions would not only provide Amnesty for criminal violators, but could endanger the public which I, as a Sheriff, have sworn to protect. I do not believe that SB.744 has any true intention of tracking Visa overstay violators, because if that was the intention, Biometric tracking would have been including in the Bill at ALL international ports of entry. Cost was stated as a reason in recent debates to decline the technology. In my opinion, you can’t place a cost too high on a single American’s life when it comes to Homeland Security.**

**Secretary Napolitano stated to me at a recent White House briefing that SB.744 wasn’t an immigration bill, but a public safety bill. My response to that comment would be that if that is true, why wasn’t law enforcement involved in the crafting of the Bill early on? Lastly, Border Security in the proposed SB.744 seems to be secondary to Amnesty.**

**Mr. Chairman, I personally think that this House Bill and the provisions that it covers is a tremendous step in the right direction in interior immigration enforcement. I look forward to assisting you all in this proposed legislation HR.2278. I believe it to be a promising piece of legislation in the bigger picture of immigration reform.**

**I look forward to any questions this committee might have.**

**Sheriff Sam Page—Rockingham County, North Carolina**