

Cattlemen Working to Secure Arizona's Border

An exclusive interview with Patrick Bray, executive vice president of the Arizona Cattle Grower's Association

Patrick Bray, appointed executive vice president of the Arizona Cattle Grower's Association (ACGA) on April 21, 2010, is a native of Laveen, Arizona, a farming community eight miles southwest of Phoenix. He is a graduate of the University of Arizona (B.A. in Agricultural and Resource Economics, 2006) and became active in Future Farmers of America. In October 2010, Bray summarized the dangers that Arizonans face on a daily basis in first-hand testimony at the TSC-sponsored Writers' Workshop in Rosslyn, Virginia. The deaths of Border Patrol agent Brian A. Terry in December and Arizona rancher Rob Krentz in March 2010 underscore the life-threatening risks posed by illegal aliens. Arizona ranchers have put forth a proposal to "Restore Our Border" (Known as ROB's plan, named after Rob Krentz). Recently, Bray sat down with TSC to discuss border security issues and the dangers Arizonans face on a daily basis.

TSC: *How did you become involved in ACGA?*

Bray: My family has been involved in ranching and farming and I was fortunate enough to grow up in the agriculture industry. The family's current operation is mostly farming west of Phoenix and feeding some dairy cattle from time to time. After attending the University of Arizona, [I was hired by] the ACGA upon graduation to assist as Deputy Director of Government Affairs. I had worked with the organization on several issues campaigns in 2006 and then was hired in 2007. In 2010 I was promoted to the Executive Vice President position.

TSC: *What prompted ACGA to take an active role in the issue of border security?*

Bray: I still remember Sunday morning March 27, 2010 as if it were yesterday. The first correspondence I received was via e-mail from Sue Krentz herself that Rob had been murdered. Prior to this event some ranchers had expressed concern over the border situation. We (ACGA) had done some work talking with congressional officials, but nothing as organized and committed as we have been over the course of the last year. It is unfortunate that it took the death of an individual to prompt such outrage and a wake-up call to all about how dangerous our Southern Border is. ACGA is fully committed to our members in Southern

Arizona so that they can live and work in peace without fear for their life.

TSC: *How many Cattlemen (members of your organization) have property that extends to the Mexican border?*

Bray: I would estimate that we have about 20 members that have private property that touches the international border. Land ownership is what makes securing the border a challenge in Arizona. You have Indian Tribes, U.S. Forest Service, BLM, National Parks, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife that all have land along the border. Many of our members may lease land from these agencies to graze (USFS, BLM) but do not own land. Only 17 percent of the land in Arizona is private, the rest is under control of the State or Federal Government.

TSC: *How many ranchers have you heard from or contacted ACGA, raising concerns over the lack of border security and looming likelihood of lawlessness, instability, and violence?*

Bray: We travel around the state quite frequently to attend local producer meetings. When we travel into Santa Cruz, Pinal, and Cochise Counties the number one issue is border security and the threat to life and property. You would be hard pressed to find a rancher in Southern Arizona that would not express border

security as an issue in the cattle industry.

TSC: *Arizona Rancher Jim Chilton, who has 4 miles of property that borders Mexico, said recently when interviewed on FOX that he's had 30,000 to 40,000 illegal aliens cross through his property and has personally witnessed up to 120 at a time on his ranch hunkering down to avoid detection. How pervasive is this problem for these ranchers and the surrounding Arizona communities near the border and how disruptive is this for ranchers to carry out their work and daily routines?*



ACGA Executive Vice President Patrick Bray highlighted the problem of illegal-alien violence during a presentation at the 2010 "Writer's Workshop."

Bray: The porous border situation can be visualized by our membership on a daily basis. An individual ranch may not see it every day, but someone along the border in Arizona will see the issue first hand every day. The traffic is very migratory, it may be heavy in one area for a period of time and then move to another area along the border. We may get calls from people from Douglas for a while and then a few weeks go by and will hear more reports from people in the Nogales area. Our membership will avoid interaction with the drug cartels as much as possible. The may

be gathering cattle and if they run into a drug mule train they will avoid work in that area until they have passed to avoid any interaction.

TSC: *Arizona Rancher Jim Chilton also mentioned that some ranchers have moved and that others live within reach of a firearm (next to their bed stands at night). Is the situation worse now than say a year ago?*

Bray: The movement of drugs, including the involvement of more violent individuals, has increased on the southern border, which is our biggest concern for our members. Our members see very little migrant traffic, in other words, people coming here for a better way of life.

TSC: *In March 2010, Rancher Rob Krentz was murdered by a suspected illegal alien. The family issued a statement urging "the President of the United States to step forward and immediately order deployment of the active U.S. military to the Arizona, New Mexico border." Over the past year, how has this tragic and preventable murder galvanized ranchers, Arizona citizens, and elected officials to act (beyond issuing statements) and finally resolve the menace of Arizona's porous border?*

Bray: ACGA and its membership are committed to working towards solutions that will secure our border. We have spent hundreds of hours meeting with community leaders, media, elected officials, and government agencies to advance our policy. We understand solving this issue is like running a marathon, not a sprint. We are so grateful to our Governor and legislature for their continued support and help on the matter. Our state officials are working hard to help solve the issue, however, border security is so complex with so many moving parts that it will take action from our federal government to accomplish the goal. When the Yuma Sector BP in Arizona was facing the same issues, it took them 5 years to obtain operational security.

TSC: *Has Gov. Brewer been responsive to the concerns of ranchers (and others) in securing the Arizona border? Specifically, what measures should local law enforcement and federal agencies implement to improve border security? Should states deploy National Guard troops to seal the border and prevent illegal border crossings in the future?*

Bray: ACGA and I cannot thank Gov. Brewer enough for the work that she has done. She understands the issue well and we work very closely with her and staff as we work together to secure the border. The National Guard was deployed in June of 2010 and just recently finished their mission on the border and has returned home. The National Guard plays a vital support role for the Border Patrol. They are able to help build infrastructure, act as transports, and are eyes and ears for the Border Patrol. By doing this they allow more agents to be out in the field, and once they apprehend someone the BP agents do not have to leave their post to transport criminals to headquarters. We are asking that the Fed's put the Guard back on the border, approx. 3,000.

TSC: *Congress has been holding hearings recently on the escalating problem of enforcing border security (House Oversight and Government Reform Committee) and the deaths late last year of two Border Patrol agents. How optimistic are you and other ranchers that federal authorities will act to secure our borders and repel the illegal invasion at our southern border?*

Bray: We have to be optimistic!! The ranching community has a can-do attitude and we will not rest until we solve the problem. When we have a hole in the fence we fix it, we don't sit around and wait until someone else fixes it. We will stay committed and focused on the issue. We have to! We owe it to Rob Krentz, his family, and all the other ranchers along the southern border. What is tough is that this issue may take several years to solve, but we will get it done.

TSC: *Critics of border security invoke the mantra of "comprehensive immigration reform" and frequently recite the "necessity" of a pathway to citizenship for millions of illegal aliens in the country. What is your view of this argument? Do you agree? Is this argument a way to dodge the core issue of border security and public safety? Are advocates of "comprehensive immigration reform" more interested in the "rights" and "interests" of aliens and creating a borderless society than protecting the interests and well-being of U.S. citizens?*

Bray: Comprehensive immigration reform has several moving parts, and more importantly it focuses on how people get to this country legally, how to get a work visa, green card, etc. The people crossing through the ranches in Southern Arizona could care less how

you get to this country legally, in fact, they probably could never get here legally because of the records they have. Immigration reform comes after border security and it has to! When you remodel a kitchen you can get the nicest counter tops and fancy new appliances, but if you don't fix the hole in the roof you're going to be back at square one again. The hole in the roof is border security; you have to fix that first so the only legal way to enter the country is through the designated ports of entry. This situation also has a human rights element to it as well. The cartels have taken over human trafficking, and the only way people that may be looking for a better life can come across is by carrying a load of drugs on their back. They are forced to do so. If you have ever spent some time in the Arizona desert it is not pleasant in the summer.

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TSC: *The U.S. Commission on Immigration Reform, chaired by the late Barbara Jordan, offered "comprehensive" reforms in 1995 — measures that were reasonable and comprehensively stressed enforcement, better border management to secure our borders, and urged deportation proceedings for illegal aliens — that, although supported by the Clinton Administration, were never followed up and acted upon. Jordan, in testimony before Congress, noted: "Credibility in immigration policy can be summed up in one sentence: those who should get in, get in; those who should be kept out are kept out; and those who should not be here will be required to leave." Why do we suspect the federal government has ignored the commission's work? Is it unreasonable or "extreme" for the federal government to secure our borders and deport those who are here illegally?*

Bray: Unfortunately the immigration issue is a huge political pond and it works for both parties in ways

they see fit. We have seen several immigration reform attempts over the years, but when it comes to border security they always fail to fund it and no one is there to hold their feet to the fire. This is exactly why you have to have border security first. Many people here don't believe it can be done, and if it can the Fed's better do it before immigration reform.

TSC: *The nation's media elite, often referred to as the "Mainstream Media," routinely portray Arizona's public officials (including Gov. Brewer) as "extreme". Recently (April 23, 2011), the Louisville Courier-Journal in "Forum Flashes" on the op-ed page published a four-paragraph item, titled "Sanity outbreak in Arizona," that applauded Gov. Brewer's decision to veto two bills (bills that were passed, as I understand it, by a comfortable margin in the legislature), one that would require presidential candidates to prove they are American citizens and the other would "permit weapons in public 'rights of way' on campuses." How do you view this press coverage? Why are practical solutions aimed at fixing the problems with border security either dismissed as untenable or ridiculed as "extreme" by the mass media?*

Bray: It is hard to comment on the media because in my position I take everything from media outlets with a grain of salt. For the most part the media have been very sympathetic to our issue, and we focus on telling people the truth about what is happening and we never try to exaggerate it either. Despite what the media may say or other people, if you want to know the truth, just spend a day with our folks and you can get a taste of what life is like on the border.

TSC: *Arizona's new immigration law has been the focus of much scrutiny by legal pundits. What do you think the future holds for the legal status and eventual implementation of SB1070? If fully enacted, will 1070 go far enough to secure Arizona's border?*

Bray: The Governor and AG (Attorney General) in Arizona are pursuing implementation of this law very aggressively. After the ruling on employer sanction came down favoring the state being able to enforce the federal law, I think it is favorable for SB1070. This particular law will work across Arizona, Phoenix, Flagstaff, Kingman, Tucson, and other areas. If you want to solve the problem and truly stop illegal immigration in its tracks, it has to be done at the border, at the international line where all the traffic crosses. If the Federal Government wants to solve the problem, they would stop people at the border before they crossed. Then we wouldn't even need laws like SB1070 because illegal traffic and the criminals would not be reaching Phoenix!!

TSC: *The ACGA put forth 18 action items that would achieve border security. The detailed proposals would address various shortcomings that make our border less secure and would most certainly secure our borders. What has been the response to the ROB (Restore our Border) plan? Do you have any support from Arizona public officials? Is there any reasonable chance that these measures will be implemented? Does the current immigration law, passed a year ago, address the various points in ROB?*

Bray: I would say that we have been successful in rolling out our plan and working with officials in Arizona. Our Arizona elected officials have been supportive and helpful. It is just such a difficult problem that the responsibility lies with the Federal Government and they have to act. I have high hopes for our plan and we will see it through to the end.

TSC: *Any final thoughts you care to add?*

Bray: I appreciate the opportunity to reach out to your readership and talk about the issue. I truly enjoyed presenting at your conference and would be happy to discuss the issue with any of your readers. ■