

Sarasota, Florida -- Congressman Vern Buchanan (FL-13), just back from a visit to the U.S. border with Mexico, said today more agents and additional resources are needed to stop illegal immigration and drug smuggling.

Buchanan was in El Paso, Texas on Friday to meet with border patrol and customs agents, inspect the border and view the technology they use in their efforts to secure the southern border.

“It’s clear we are making progress but more needs to be done,” Buchanan said. “Illegal immigration is one of the biggest challenges facing our country, costing us billions of dollars each year and putting an unacceptable burden on our hospitals, our schools, our jails and our communities.”

Buchanan toured detention facilities, examined security technology – including night vision technology, met with border patrol agents and K-9 units and visited several sections of the border where security needs differ. During his visit he witnessed the apprehension of individuals attempting to enter the country illegally and drug smugglers as well as the confiscation of illegal drugs.

“I was very impressed with the professionalism and dedication of the men and women patrolling the border,” said Buchanan. “They deal every day with the challenges of illegal immigration and I am grateful for their service.”

The 13th District Congressman noted that in Florida alone, we have more than half a million illegal immigrants costing the state’s taxpayers more than \$1.7 billion a year for education, emergency medical care, and incarceration when they break the law.

“We need to secure the borders first if we are ever going to stop the flow of illegals into our country,” said Buchanan. “That is why I went to the border and saw first-hand what we’re doing. I talked to the agents to find out what is and isn’t working.

The El Paso border patrol oversaw approximately 22,760,000 northbound crossings in fiscal year 2007. Additional fencing and agents have helped reduce apprehensions in there by 38% from fiscal years 2006 to 2007.

“This proves that if given the necessary resources we can reduce illegal immigration and smuggling,” said Buchanan. “I am even more convinced now than before that with more agents, secure fencing and new technologies we can secure the border.”

Specifically, Buchanan called for the following to help solve the problem of illegal immigration:

- Add more border patrol agents to monitor the crossings along the 2000 mile-long southern border;
- Require employers to verify workers are legal and take away the economic incentive for illegals to come here; and,
- Appropriate the necessary funding to finish building 365 miles of the 700-mile long security fence authorized in 2006 along the southern border.

The Congressman is a cosponsor of the Secure America through Verification and Enforcement (SAVE) Act. The bill would enhance border security, provide employers with the tools they need to ensure that their employees are here legally, and enhance the government’s ability to enforce existing federal laws and penalize offenders.