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Sen. Rodríguez statement on Senate's vote for unaccountable "border security" spending

AUSTIN – The Texas Senate today voted to approve HB 11, the "border security" bill that expands DPS' staffing and mission with little oversight or accountability, adding not only to the billion-dollar tab already credited to state with no clear purpose but now creating an obligation for future Legislatures. Sen. José Rodríguez voted no on the bill and issued the following statement:

This bill creates a huge expansion of government with little to no oversight, and no clear mission or rationale, while containing potentially unconstitutional provisions. It is based on inaccurate perceptions of communities like mine, which in reality have a lower crime rate than the state as a whole, and represent an opportunity, not a threat, to Texas and the nation. But the political campaigns based on these misrepresentations unfortunately, and unconscionably, have worked, hurting Texas border cities and towns. I'm sure we'll see more of the same as we head into the 2016 election cycle.

Meanwhile, as a result, the Legislature is liberally appropriating funds in a way that obligates future legislatures and that should be going for true border needs such as port-of-entry infrastructure or overall state needs such as education funding. And, instead of a common sense cost-benefit evaluation, which actually was in the first version of the bill but was stripped by the Senate, we are on the verge of institutionalizing through the budget and through agency expansion a new mission for DPS. I submitted several amendments, including to examine the cost-benefit of this action, as well as the impact on constitutional rights for border communities, but those were not accepted.

This vote for an unprecedented expansion of government at huge cost that commits future Legislatures, with no accountability and authorizing potentially unconstitutional enforcement actions, was anything but conservative.

José Rodríguez represents Texas Senate District 29, which includes the counties of El Paso, Hudspeth, Culberson, Jeff Davis, and Presidio. He represents both urban and rural constituencies, and more than 350 miles of the Texas-Mexico border. Senator Rodríguez currently serves as the Chairman of the Senate Hispanic Caucus, and is a member of the Senate Committees on Education; Health and Human Services; Veteran Affairs and Military Installations; Nominations; and Agriculture, Water, and Rural Affairs.

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