



# **Durbin: A border wall will not reduce cartel violence or stop fentanyl from flooding into our country**

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WASHINGTON — During a Judiciary Subcommittee hearing on Mexican cartels, U.S. Senate Democratic Whip Dick Durbin (D-IL) today urged the Trump Administration to reduce brutal cartel violence and drug, gun, and human smuggling by deploying more technology and personnel at ports of entry, working to address the drug epidemic at home, stopping the weapons and cash that flow south to cartels, and collaborating more effectively with regional nations to strengthen their economies and decrease the cartel violence – not by building an expensive and ineffective border wall or punishing innocent victims of cartel violence who are seeking safety.

“Instead what the President is telling us now is we have to shut down our government if he doesn’t get \$5 billion for a wasteful and ineffective wall. We need modern technology to stop the drug cartels from importing the poison that is killing our kids, not a medieval solution like a wall from sea to shining sea,” Durbin said.

During the hearing, Durbin stressed that the government should be allocating resources to modern technology, such as drive-through inspection systems, known as Z-portals. According to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), these drive-through inspection systems examine 98 percent of rail cars but only 18 percent of cargo, passenger vehicles, and sea containers combined. Yet the Fiscal Year 2019 President’s Budget request includes just \$44 million for these systems.

Durbin also called for Congress to finally prohibit straw purchasing and gun trafficking under federal law. Right now, U.S. Attorney offices have to prosecute those crimes as paperwork violations. Durbin has joined with Senator Patrick Leahy (D-VT) and Senator Susan Collins (R-ME) on a bill that would create federal offenses for this conduct.

In 2017, drug overdoses killed a record 70,237 Americans. Last year 28,466 overdose deaths involved fentanyl – an increase of more than 45 percent over the previous year. Much of this fentanyl comes from China through the mail. But fentanyl is also being shipped from China to Mexico before being trafficked across the U.S. border. The DEA has found that the cartels transport the bulk of their illicit goods over the Southwest Border through legal ports of entry using passenger vehicles or tractor trailers.