

Additional Fiscal Year 2016 Appropriations Provisions Congressman Cuellar Obtained to Increase U.S. Engagement with Mexico and Central America

1. Microenterprise and Microfinance: Includes Mexico and Central America in microenterprise and microfinance programs.

“The Committee recommendation includes \$265,000,000...for microenterprise and microfinance development programs... The Committee supports microenterprise and microfinance programs to promote economic development in Mexico and Central America.”

2. Economic Support Fund –Mexico: \$39 million for Mexico.

“The Committee does not provide funds requested for Mexico under Development Assistance and instead includes \$39,000,000 under this heading [Economic Support Fund] to be used only for programs for rule of law and human rights justice and security, good governance, civil society, education, private sector competitiveness and economic growth, including to improve United States-Mexico trade and investment. The Committee supports USAID’s Mexico border development programs to address the root causes of violence and instability.

The Committee recognizes that the United States and Mexico face difficult challenges in securing our shared border, while also facilitating the efficient flow of commerce and trade. The Committee notes that efforts of the Department of State and other United States Government agencies to engage with their Mexican counterparts on issues of common concern, such as efforts to improve port of entry infrastructure, equipment, and technology. The Committee believes that efforts to address these challenges could be strengthened through more engagement to develop common or complementary approaches in areas of mutual interest, including border infrastructure; immigration enforcement; facilitating the flow of trade and passengers; and cross-border violence and criminal networks. The Committee encourages the Department of State, in cooperation with other United States Government agencies, to explore new opportunities for cooperation with Mexican authorities.

The Committee supports judicial reform efforts in Mexico and notes the positive outcomes in states that have already implemented reforms. The Committee notes that United States supported programs have trained thousands of federal justice sector personnel, including attorneys, judges, and law students in Mexico.”

3. Academic Exchanges with Mexico: To encourage expansion of and increases to US-Mexico academic exchange programs.

“The Committee supports expansion of programs to increase U.S.-Mexico academic exchanges at the high school, college, and post graduate level. Such initiatives should be supported through existing Department of State programs, funds, and transfers, subject to the regular notification procedures of the Committees on Appropriations.”

4. Educational and Cultural Exchanges with Mexico and Central America: Encourages educational and cultural exchange programs with Mexico and Central and South America.

“The Committee encourages the Department of State to continue support of educational and cultural exchange programs with Mexico and countries in Central and South America and to increase opportunities for students from disadvantaged backgrounds or historically underserved populations to participate.”

5. US-Mexico Agricultural Cooperation: Establishing a working group between the US and Mexico to help facilitate and ease cross border commerce.

“U.S.-Mexico Cooperation.-- The Committee directs the Secretary of Agriculture to work with his Mexican counterpart to develop a U.S.-Mexico working group to increase cooperation between the two countries in a similar manner as the “Beyond the Borders Initiative” between the United States and Canada. The working group shall develop proposals and create potential solutions aimed at facilitating commerce through improvements in the efficiency of the inspection process on both sides of the border, integrating small and large producers into the trade supply chain, and improving border wait times and transportation costs, among others.”

6. U.S. – Mexico Passenger Rail: Study high-speed rail issues.

“Passenger Rail between Mexico & United States.--The Committee understands that standards or protocols for passenger rail between the United States and Mexico do not currently exist. The Committee encourages FRA to work with all relevant state and federal agencies and their Mexican counterparts to study what standards and protocols are needed to facilitate a passenger and freight rail line between the U.S. and Mexico, in Texas, and other international land crossings.”

7. International Military Education and Training: Includes funding for Military Education and Training in Mexico at “not less” than the budget request of \$1.5 million.

“The Committee recommendation provides not less than the request for Mexico...”

8. International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement: Inclusion of \$100 million to Mexico.

“Mexico.--The Committee recommendation includes funding to combat organized crime and drug trafficking in Mexico and to help Mexico secure its borders. The Committee intends that the resources provided will assist the Government of Mexico to strengthen civilian and judicial institutions, anti-corruption efforts, and rule of law activities at the federal, state, and local level. The Committee supports close and sustained coordination of law enforcement efforts and intelligence-sharing between the United States and Mexico to combat the activities of drug trafficking organizations along our shared border. The Committee continues to direct the Department of State to work with all appropriate federal, state, and local entities to share best practices to address drug trafficking, gun-running, illegal alien smuggling, human trafficking, violence, and kidnapping along and across the border between the United States and Mexico.

The Committee notes the efforts of the Government of Mexico to address the migration of unaccompanied, undocumented minors from Central America to the United States. The Committee recommendation includes funding to continue to support efforts to secure Mexico's borders. The Committee encourages a continued focus on Mexico's southern border with Guatemala and Belize. The Committee directs the Secretary of State to include information on these activities in the strategy required by section 7045(a).

The Committee continues to be concerned with the pace of delivery of assistance to Mexico and directs the Department of State, in consultation with other relevant agencies, to provide a report to the Committees on Appropriations, not later than 45 days after enactment of this Act, describing the implementation of assistance for Mexico since fiscal year 2008 and to use all appropriate means necessary to ensure the prompt delivery of equipment and training. Such report should also include information about transnational criminal organizations operating in Mexico, including an assessment of the income-generating activities of these organizations and recommendations on how to combat the operations, financial networks, and money laundering techniques of such organizations. This report, or a portion thereof, may be submitted in classified form if necessary.

The Committee notes the ongoing collaboration between the United States and the Government of Mexico on strengthening Mexico's judicial system. The Committee directs the Secretary of State to submit a report to the Committees on Appropriations, not later than 60 days after enactment of this Act, on the progress achieved by the Government of Mexico to do the following: (1) investigate and prosecute violations of human rights in civilian courts; (2) enforce prohibitions against torture and the use of testimony obtained through torture; (3) promptly transfer detainees to the custody of civilian judicial authorities, in accordance with Mexican law, and cooperate with such authorities in such cases; and (4) search for the victims of forced disappearances and investigate and prosecute those responsible for such crimes. The Committee notes the recent changes made to the Code of Military Justice and the enactment of a new National Penal Procedures Code in Mexico and expects the report to include an analysis of the impact of such changes."

9. Foreign Military Financing: \$7 million in foreign military grant assistance.

"\$7,000,000 for Mexico"