

Congressman Cuellar's U.S.-Mexico language in FY 2016 government funding bill

Agriculture Title

1. US-Mexico Agricultural Cooperation: A provision 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.”

Defense Title

1. Highlighting Common Security Interest of Mexico and Central America: Expresses that the committee understands the important shared interest the US, Mexico and Central America have in combatting drug trafficking.

“The Committee recognizes that drug trafficking is a major source of funding for terrorist organizations, contributes to violence in parts of the United States, and creates instability in many other countries. The Committee understands the important role that the Department of Defense plays in the counter-drug mission and the benefits that the Department provides to the security of the United States and the entire region, including Mexico and Central America”

Homeland Security Title

1. Cooperation with Mexico: Requested language to encourage the Department to work with Mexican authorities.

“The Committee continues to believe that a more formal engagement between the Department and appropriate Mexican authorities could help facilitate the development of common or complementary approaches in areas of mutual interest, including border infrastructure; immigration enforcement; facilitating the flow of low-risk cargo and passengers; and cross-border violence and criminal networks. The Committee again encourages the Department, in cooperation with the Department of State, to explore new opportunities for cooperation with Mexican authorities, such as a cross-border working group.”

2. Cross-border Violence: To ensure ICE and the AG work jointly to address cross-border violence and brief the committee.

The Committee directs the ICE Director to work jointly with the Attorney General to assess cross-border violence and performance measures collected by inter-agency task forces, particularly along the Southwest Border. Not later than 60 days after the date of enactment of this Act, ICE is directed to brief the Committee on the findings of this assessment and provide recommendations for additional resources needed to track and investigate cross-border violence.

Interior & Environment Title

1. EPA State and Tribal Assistance Grants: \$10 million for environmental programs along the U.S. Mexico border.

“In the STAG account, EPA provides funding for infrastructure projects through two State Revolving Funds (Clean Water and Drinking Water), geographic specific projects in Alaskan Native Villages and on the United States-Mexico Border, Brownfields revitalization projects, diesel emission reduction grants, and other targeted infrastructure projects.”

2. Migrant Workers: Encouraging the update of worker protection standards for migrant farm workers.

“Worker Protection Standards.--The Committee recognizes the importance of agricultural worker protection standards, especially for migrant farm workers, children who work on farms, and pesticide handlers, and encourages the Agency to engage the U.S. Department of Agriculture, farmers, farm workers, industry, and other interested organizations as it updates its standards.”

State and Foreign Operations Title

1. Reference to Mexico: Under “Security Programs” in the Overview, it now specifically references Mexico -

“To address security concerns in Latin America, the Committee recommendation provides funding above the request for assistance to Columbia, Mexico, and the Caribbean Basin.”

2. 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.”

3. 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.”

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

“\$7,000,000 for Mexico”

5. 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.”

6. Economic Support Fund –Mexico: Requested continued support 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.”

7. International Military Education and Training (Inclusion of Mexico): 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, Morocco, Tunisia, and Ukraine. The Committee recommendation does not provide funding for Burma or Thailand.”

8. Contribution to the North American Development Bank

“The Act provides \$10,000,000 for Contribution to the North American Development Bank.”

Transportation, Housing, and Urban Development Title

1. U.S. – Mexico Passenger Rail:

“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.”