



Immigration Task Force

ISSUE BRIEF:

Border Security by the Numbers

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The Border Security, Economic Opportunity, and Immigration Modernization Act (S.744, or the Gang of Eight bill) establishes a 90 percent “effectiveness rate” as a goal for each of the nine separate sectors along the southern border. Originally, the bill only required this to be achieved in high-risk sectors, or one “in which more than 30,000 individuals were apprehended during the most recent fiscal year.” At Senate Judiciary Committee Markup, the [first amendment](#) Senator Grassley filed struck all references to high-risk sectors. This amendment passed by voice vote, meaning these changes will be incorporated into the legislation as it moves to the Senate floor.

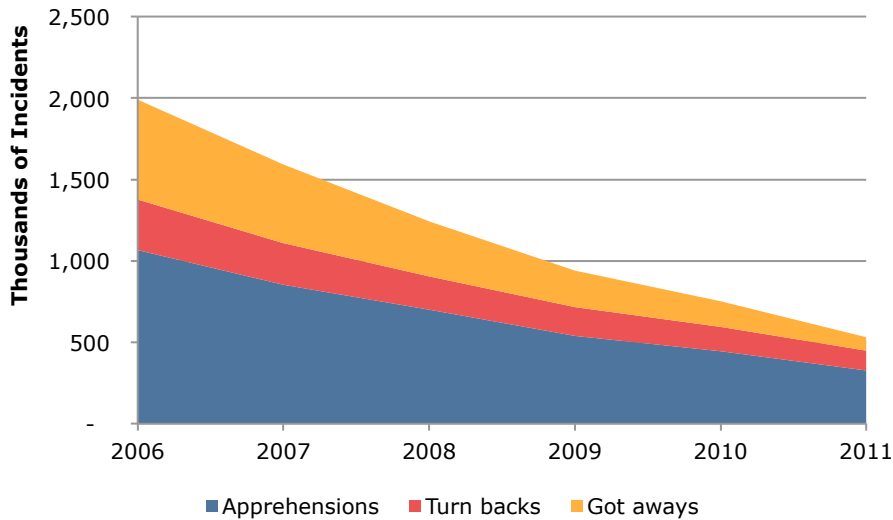
The bill defines the effectiveness rate as follows:

The “effectiveness rate,” in the case of a border sector, is the percent-age calculated by dividing the number of apprehensions and turn backs in the sector during a fiscal year by the total number of illegal entries in the sector during such fiscal year.

Typically, the Border Patrol only releases one component of this metric: the total number of apprehensions. This makes long-term effectiveness trends impossible to calculate, at least for the public. However, a [2012 Government Accountability Office \(GAO\) report](#) contains all of the information needed to calculate the effectiveness rate for fiscal years 2006 through 2011.



Figure 1. Apprehensions, turn backs, and got aways for all southwest border sectors, FY2006–2011



The unauthorized immigrant population has [declined since 2007](#), which many attribute to the struggling economy. This decline is reflected in the numbers at the border. Total border incidents recorded by Border Patrol declined from nearly two million in FY2006 to just over 500,000 in FY2011. Eight of the nine border sectors improved. None of the nine border sectors had achieved 90 percent effectiveness in FY2006, but four did in FY2011 (El Centro, El Paso, San Diego, and Yuma), with three coming in at 83 percent or more (Del Rio, Laredo, and Tucson). Big Bend and Rio Grande Valley lagged behind at around 70 percent each.

Figure 2. Map of southwest border sectors



Source: U.S. Customs and Border Protection.

Effectiveness rates are clearly improving, but the same GAO report noted that effectiveness rates among sectors are not strictly comparable because data-collection practices were only standardized recently:

Until recently sectors have differed in how they collect and report data that Border Patrol used to assess its overall effectiveness in using resources to secure the border, precluding comparison across sectors. In September 2012, Border Patrol issued new guidance on standardizing data collection and reporting practices that could increase data reliability and allow comparison across locations.

It appears that between FY2006 and FY2011, Border Patrol made progress toward the Gang of Eight's border-security targets. However, it is not clear whether that improvement was due to increased investments in security or due to the fact that there were many fewer attempted border crossers to deal with. Newly standardized guidance on data collection and reporting could also alter the picture.

The tables below present the full underlying data, compiled from figures contained in the same [2012 GAO report](#). Totals should be treated as weighted averages, not overall effectiveness rates.

Table 1. Percent of apprehensions, turn backs, got aways, and effectiveness for all southwest border sectors, FY2006–2011

YEAR	TYPE	BIG BEND	DEL RIO	EL CENTRO	EL PASO	LAREDO	RIO GRANDE VALLEY	SAN DIEGO	TUCSON	YUMA	TOTAL
FY 2006	Apprehensions	83.42%	58.02%	58.40%	33.99%	62.60%	48.59%	52.54%	62.05%	56.99%	53.45%
	Turn backs	2.66%	4.94%	24.36%	38.95%	7.64%	6.84%	27.93%	4.88%	6.82%	15.66%
	Got aways	13.93%	37.03%	17.24%	27.07%	29.76%	44.56%	19.53%	33.07%	36.19%	30.89%
	Effectiveness	86.07%	62.97%	82.76%	72.93%	70.24%	55.44%	80.47%	66.93%	63.81%	69.11%
FY 2007	Apprehensions	86.24%	55.54%	59.00%	38.54%	50.58%	42.36%	57.16%	58.10%	67.81%	53.74%
	Turn backs	1.34%	13.10%	25.76%	48.26%	13.89%	10.24%	20.28%	5.81%	10.88%	15.99%
	Got aways	12.42%	31.36%	15.24%	13.20%	35.53%	47.40%	22.55%	36.09%	21.31%	30.27%
	Effectiveness	87.58%	68.64%	84.76%	86.80%	64.47%	52.60%	77.45%	63.91%	78.69%	69.73%
FY 2008	Apprehensions	79.51%	60.66%	66.45%	33.31%	53.84%	44.74%	64.26%	58.93%	64.12%	56.49%
	Turn backs	1.83%	11.59%	17.07%	59.37%	23.88%	12.47%	17.72%	9.00%	23.48%	16.42%
	Got aways	18.66%	27.74%	16.48%	7.32%	22.28%	42.79%	18.02%	32.08%	12.40%	27.09%
	Effectiveness	81.34%	72.26%	83.52%	92.68%	77.72%	57.21%	81.98%	67.92%	87.60%	72.91%
FY 2009	Apprehensions	71.44%	69.56%	68.63%	29.88%	48.70%	44.65%	69.19%	58.86%	65.71%	57.23%
	Turn backs	2.00%	12.23%	19.06%	64.51%	35.12%	15.94%	17.58%	12.44%	26.04%	18.96%
	Got aways	26.55%	18.21%	12.31%	5.62%	16.18%	39.41%	13.23%	28.70%	8.25%	23.81%
	Effectiveness	73.45%	81.79%	87.69%	94.38%	83.82%	60.59%	86.77%	71.30%	91.75%	76.19%
FY 2010	Apprehensions	69.45%	69.16%	73.42%	33.07%	53.71%	45.02%	71.66%	62.41%	74.40%	59.37%
	Turn backs	3.56%	16.77%	15.32%	62.64%	33.04%	18.11%	18.06%	15.38%	20.41%	19.95%
	Got aways	26.99%	14.08%	11.25%	4.28%	13.24%	36.87%	10.28%	22.21%	5.19%	20.69%
	Effectiveness	73.01%	85.92%	88.75%	95.72%	86.76%	63.13%	89.72%	77.79%	94.81%	79.31%
FY 2011	Apprehensions	62.28%	69.90%	79.01%	35.92%	59.78%	48.48%	75.78%	64.34%	74.36%	61.31%
	Turn backs	5.69%	16.56%	11.53%	60.45%	24.17%	22.36%	16.08%	22.53%	19.38%	22.67%
	Got aways	32.03%	13.54%	9.46%	3.63%	16.05%	29.16%	8.14%	13.13%	6.26%	16.02%
	Effectiveness	67.97%	86.46%	90.54%	96.37%	83.95%	70.84%	91.86%	86.87%	93.74%	83.98%

Table 2. Number of apprehensions, turn backs, got aways, and total incidents for each southwest border sector, FY 2006-2011

YEAR	TYPE	BIG BEND	DEL RIO	EL CENTRO	EL PASO	LAREDO	RIO GRANDE VALLEY	SAN DIEGO	TUCSON	YUMA	TOTAL
FY 2006	Apprehensions	7,505	42,598	57,408	122,029	74,759	110,032	140,459	389,326	120,356	1,064,472
	Turn backs	239	3,629	23,945	139,841	9,129	15,494	74,672	30,641	14,400	311,990
	Got aways	1,253	27,188	16,945	97,191	35,538	100,909	52,216	207,519	76,428	615,187
	Total	8,997	73,415	98,298	359,061	119,426	226,435	267,347	627,486	211,184	1,991,649
FY 2007	Apprehensions	5,533	22,903	56,098	75,022	56,673	73,340	151,051	378,141	36,780	855,541
	Turn backs	86	5,401	24,494	93,931	15,559	17,728	53,596	37,790	5,901	254,486
	Got aways	797	12,930	14,496	25,683	39,804	82,058	59,596	234,927	11,560	481,851
	Total	6,416	41,234	95,088	194,636	112,036	173,126	264,243	650,858	54,241	1,591,878
FY 2008	Apprehensions	5,393	20,714	41,223	29,916	43,619	75,470	161,931	316,341	7,711	702,318
	Turn backs	124	3,959	10,592	53,328	19,350	21,041	44,665	48,294	2,823	204,176
	Got aways	1,266	9,472	10,222	6,575	18,048	72,182	45,415	172,187	1,491	336,858
	Total	6,783	34,145	62,037	89,819	81,017	168,693	252,011	536,822	12,025	1,243,352
FY 2009	Apprehensions	6,345	17,046	33,515	14,662	40,412	61,092	118,415	242,016	5,631	539,134
	Turn backs	178	2,998	9,307	31,656	29,147	21,811	30,088	51,145	2,232	178,562
	Got aways	2,358	4,463	6,012	2,756	13,428	53,920	22,640	118,010	707	224,294
	Total	8,881	24,507	48,834	49,074	82,987	136,823	171,143	411,171	8,570	941,990
FY 2010	Apprehensions	5,270	14,941	32,623	12,002	34,030	60,591	68,263	212,783	5,961	446,464
	Turn backs	270	3,623	6,808	22,733	20,934	24,370	17,203	52,424	1,635	150,000
	Got aways	2,048	3,041	5,000	1,555	8,390	49,625	9,789	75,723	416	155,587
	Total	7,588	21,605	44,431	36,290	63,354	134,586	95,255	340,930	8,012	752,051
FY 2011	Apprehensions	4,027	16,661	30,172	9,994	35,201	59,450	42,389	124,363	4,861	327,118
	Turn backs	368	3,948	4,402	16,819	14,233	27,418	8,992	43,539	1,267	120,986
	Got aways	2,071	3,228	3,612	1,010	9,449	35,759	4,553	25,376	409	85,467
	Total	6,466	23,837	38,186	27,823	58,883	122,627	55,934	193,278	6,537	533,571