

## **Other voices: Mexico plays a new tune on border security**

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### **Body**

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For too long, the official attitude south of the **border** toward illegal immigration has been that this is America's problem, not **Mexico's**.

As President Felipe Calderon and his predecessors have noted, Mexicans have a right under their constitution to travel where they please, including across the U.S. **border** to look for work. If Americans have a problem with that, don't come crying to **Mexico**.

It's time for a **new** approach, Mexican Ambassador Arturo Sarukhan told the Dallas Morning News last week. **Mexico's** best interests aren't always served by **playing** cheerleader for an estimated 5 million Mexican illegal immigrants here, especially when their presence helps harden attitudes in Congress toward comprehensive immigration reform, which **Mexico** supports.

"Regardless of what happens on this side of the **border**, **Mexico** has got to be able to do two things it has either been unable or unwilling to do in the past," he said. First, it must boost economic growth and job creation "to anchor those women and men with well-paying jobs in **Mexico**." Second, it must "ensure that every single Mexican that crosses the **border** into the United States does so with papers, through a designated port of entry, and legally."

These are powerful words that U.S. legislators need to hear -- provided that action follows. Sustaining the economic conditions and high growth rates to anchor Mexican citizens at home will be difficult. But Sarukhan says the second part -- **border** enforcement -- can be done under existing law.

Until now, Mexican authorities have not enforced laws requiring citizens to use only legal ports of entry and departure. The consequences of lax enforcement are evident. At \$3,000 to \$5,000 a person, smuggling rings reap big profits, and drug cartels have begun a violent campaign to seize control of the business. Criminality feeds on itself, and **Mexico** pays an ever-steeper social price.

For decades, Sarukhan noted, Mexican deportees have been loaded into buses and released at nearby Mexican **border** towns, where they congregated by the thousands without jobs or money to return home. Their only choice was to head back north. Now, **Mexico** is working with the U.S. to repatriate immigrants directly to their home states, dramatically reducing their likelihood of becoming repeat offenders or falling victim to **border** criminal organizations.

These are smart steps politically. And **Mexico** can only benefit from a more aggressive approach to address the causes of **border** criminality at their source.

-- The Dallas Morning News

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