



# Senator Eliot Shapleigh

District 29

Texas Press Release



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## For Immediate Release

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# SENATOR SHAPLEIGH CALLS ON RICK PERRY TO STOP LYING ABOUT VIOLENCE IN EL PASO

*"Quit lying about El Paso; quit conflating drug dealers with Hispanics to whip up fear; quit the Tea Step tour and come home—get to work and fix DPS—that's one responsible thing you can do on your watch."*

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**EL PASO** - Today, Senator Eliot Shapleigh called on Rick Perry to quit lying about El Paso. [He also called on Jan Brewer who claims beheadings happen in Arizona to quit lying about the facts.](#)

Here is what Senator Shapleigh had to say:

"Right wing extremists like Rick Perry use fear to drive people to the polls. Remember when George Bush and Dick Cheney used 'weapons of mass destruction' to whip people up about Iraq? [We now know it never happened. Same thing here—car bombs never went off in El Paso. In fact, El Paso is the second safest city in America—and so far this year, we have had one murder. Beheadings never happened in Arizona. The only bombs we have to deal with in El Paso are the political bombs Rick Perry uses on Fox News.](#)"

"What Rick Perry is doing is the same thing that Bush and Cheney did—tell a lie, then tell it again; and sooner or later, people believe the lie. And be sure to tell it a few weeks before an election."

"Here's our message to Rick—Quit lying about El Paso; quit conflating drug dealers with Hispanics to whip up fear; quit the Tea Step tour and come home—get to work and fix DPS—that's one responsible thing you can do on your watch."

Senator Shapleigh urges Texans to call Department of Public Safety Regional Commander Skyler Hearn at 915-849-4000 to find out the facts.

Senator Shapleigh covered Rick Perry's real record on Border security:

- A. **Virtual Cameras:** On June 1, 2006, Perry announced a new three-part border security plan that included the expansion of Operation Rio Grande and requested \$100 million in the next legislative session to finance long term border security operations and create a virtual border

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watch program, wherein hundreds of hidden cameras would line the border along with private property at a cost of \$5 million.

Shortly after, Senator Shapleigh wrote Rick Perry telling him that the cameras would only exacerbate the very problem they were intended to solve and could result in civil rights violations. The program would further deplete scarce resources as the Border Patrol would be forced to check the reports often over a vast and rough terrain. Persons watching the border over the Internet don't have the training or the skills to recognize immigration or any other federal law violation. He also told him that he needed to consider that angry viewers could decide to take law into their own hands and confront immigrants or drug traffickers, which would be dangerous, or monitor the images for their own nefarious purposes.

An El Paso Times review of the Virtual Cameras program in November 2006 revealed that the program had resulted in the [apprehension of 10 undocumented immigrants and one drug bust](#).

In 2009, a review of the program revealed that it failed to meet nearly all of the law enforcement goals initially set out for the program. [Reports from the camera viewers led to 11 arrests and about 300 immigration referrals. Original goals for the program were about 1,200 arrests and 4,500 illegal immigrant referrals.](#)

- B. *Gutting the Department of Public Safety (DPS):*** DPS is spinning its wheels in the aftermath of a pileup that saw the Governor's Mansion burn, two directors fired, and an 18-month-old statewide reorganization plan that is still nowhere near completion. In the middle of all that, the state's top law enforcement agency has been tasked to keep Mexico's drug violence from rampaging across the border.

[Things started breaking down with the still unsolved June 2008 arson at the mansion guarded by DPS troopers and then Director Thomas Davis' resignation two months later. Successor Stanley Clark resigned in May last year amid sexual harassment allegations](#) and was replaced by former FBI Agent Steve McCraw, who cut the number of DPS regions from eight to six. Last September, McCraw announced the commissioning of Texas Rangers Company K at El Paso. [Today, El Paso is still waiting for a DPS headquarters building and the Rangers Company.](#)

According to DPS, short-term needs would include funding to lease additional office space in the area for an undetermined timeframe to accommodate the current overcrowded staff and anticipated additions to staffing in El Paso.

Long-term needs would include funding to purchase land and construction of a new regional headquarters to accommodate DPS' current staff and projected staff for 30 years.

According to DPS, a manpower study is currently under way to determine DPS' "body" needs in the El Paso area to address the gang/criminal enterprise/DTO threat. It is almost certain that DPS will have their manpower increased to some degree.

With the transition of the El Paso office from a district office to regional headquarters, according to DPS, they have inadequate space to accommodate their current staffing at all levels, much less additional personnel that is expected to be placed in El Paso investigative or otherwise. With the expectation of dramatically increasing the DPS footprint in El Paso, these infrastructure needs are already critical.

**C. *Sending State Border Money to Austin:*** According to a 2009 State Auditor's report, Perry spent more than \$79 million in state and federal Border security money from September 2005 through November 2008. According to the report, [not all of the money went to the Border, and DPS failed to build a \\$1 million Border security training center that legislators authorized for the Rio Grande Valley](#). The audit shows that [DPS used \\$15 million to buy four helicopters that were supposed to be stationed along the Border](#). Three of the new helicopters went directly to the Border, including one in El Paso County; the fourth helicopter, which cost \$7.4 million, remained in Austin while DPS sent an older aircraft to Laredo. In addition, DPS bought 105 new cars using about \$2.2 million in Border security money. But, instead of putting those vehicles on the Border, DPS sent 106 older cars to Border counties and assigned the new ones to other places across the state.

**D. *Sending Federal Border Money away from Border Counties:*** Recent reports indicate that Governor Perry has directed less than ten percent of Department of Homeland Security (DHS) grant funding to the Border region each year. Perry's own rhetoric indicates that he considers the Border a critical region, and he contends that the federal government has failed in its duty to fund sufficient resources and secure our homeland along the Texas-Mexico Border. As Governor, has discretion on how to spend some of those federal monies.

In April, a group of Border Congressmen called on Perry to send more of the federal funds given to Texas to Border communities. [The Congressmen noted that Texas has received an average of \\$125 million annually in DHS funding since 2006. And yet, Perry has consistently sent less than ten percent of those funds to Border law enforcement agencies where they are most needed.](#)

Senator Shapleigh then covered [six things that Rick Perry can do to help](#), not hurt Border communities:

1. Direct a much greater percentage of Department of Homeland Security grant funding to the Border region. Recent reports indicate that Governor Perry has directed less than ten percent of Department of Homeland Security (DHS) grant funding to the Border region each year. Perry's own rhetoric indicates that he considers the Border a critical region, and he contends that the federal government has failed in its duty to fund sufficient resources and secure our homeland along the Texas-Mexico Border. As Governor, has discretion on how to spend some of those federal monies.
2. Take the Texas border security appropriations that DPS and Perry's emergency management division have and apply it in the Texas counties adjoining Mexico. According to a 2009 State Auditor's report, Governor Perry spent more than \$79 million in state and federal border security money from September 2005 through November 2008. According to the State Auditor's report, DPS "generally" complied with expenditure guidelines for the more than \$33 million it spent to hire officers and buy helicopters, cars and other equipment for Border operations. [However, not all of the money went to the border, and DPS failed to build a \\$1 million Border security training center that legislators authorized for the Rio Grande Valley. According to the audit, DPS used \\$15 million to buy four helicopters that were supposed to be stationed along the Border. Three of the new helicopters went directly to the Border, including one in El Paso County. But, the fourth helicopter, which cost \\$7.4 million, remained in Austin](#) while DPS sent an older aircraft to Laredo. In addition, the audit shows that DPS bought 105 new cars using about \$2.2 million in Border security money. Instead of putting those vehicles on the Border, DPS sent 106 older cars to Border counties and assigned the new ones to other places across the state.

3. Turn DPS into a 21st century crime fighting agency. DPS is spinning its wheels in the aftermath of a pileup that saw the Governor's Mansion burn, two directors fired, and an 18-month-old statewide reorganization plan that is still nowhere near completion. In the middle of all that, the state's top law enforcement agency has been tasked to keep Mexico's drug violence from rampaging across the border.
4. Increase investigative staff in El Paso, McAllen, Brownsville, and related trade corridors based on objective analysis of cartel activities and threats. DPS should work closely with local law enforcement on affiliated street gang activities and kingpin investigations.
5. Strengthen DPS' forensic capacity in the nineteen Border counties immediately. What works best to take down cartels is capturing cartel leaders, forfeiting cartel assets, and sharing information across crime fighting teams. DPS does not have the resources to do this in Texas today. [According to DPS, the agency has experienced an increased turnover rate in specific critical staff and support positions, including research specialists/crime analysts.](#) But, on February 2010, DPS proposed slashing almost half the \$22 million set aside to fund overtime hours for local law enforcement agencies and recommended eliminating money to purchase 41 new squad cars for the Border region. [The suggestions come under a mandate from Perry for all state agencies to come up with ways to slash their budgets by five percent.](#) However, cutting back on Border spending could drastically impact the resources available to many of the region's rural police agencies that depend on state and federal grant money to fund their operations. Right now is not the time to cut DPS' Border budget.
6. Create a prison intelligence unit at DPS immediately. In recent years, criminal street gangs have become an increasing problem in Texas. Gang activity has grown in cities and rural areas, and cartel-style gangs, which were based along the border with Mexico in the past, have moved into Texas. Today, there are at least nine "well established" gangs in the U.S. that work from inside prisons, with operators in the streets and links with local and Border police who facilitate their drug trafficking.

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