RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, the topics of immigration reform, border security, and state and federal cooperation on immigration are concerns that are of great importance to state and local government entities of both sides of the United States-Mexico border; and,

WHEREAS, border security is critical to the safety, quality of life and economic prosperity of the United States-Mexico border region; and,

WHEREAS, though today's immigrants, like yesterday's, may arrive in the United States with no money and speaking foreign languages, they come with an entrepreneurial spirit and desire to live the American Dream; and,

WHEREAS, across the world, walls erected to divide peoples and nations are symbols of failed and repressive efforts to thwart human freedom and prosperity; and,

WHEREAS, the El Paso/Juarez Community embraces the international nature of our community and believes that our border joins us and does not divide us; and,

WHEREAS, the Secure Border Fence Act of 2006 calls for 700 miles of fencing that will only divide the El Paso/Juarez community and do nothing to advance a comprehensive approach to immigration reform; and,

WHEREAS, the fence is estimated to cost $7.5 million per mile, the El Paso/Juarez community could better use those funds to improve conditions at the region's ports of entry; and,

WHEREAS, such investment in border infrastructure would allow for enhanced commerce flow; and,

WHEREAS, the Putting Our Resources Together ("PORTS") Act provides for additional Customs & Border Protection officers and additional funding for construction at our international bridges; and,

WHEREAS, in 2003, trade through the land ports along the U.S.-Mexico Border represented about 83 percent of the trade between the countries. Together, the top 10 ports of entry account for 98 percent of trade passing through the border. El Paso had approximately 20.2 percent of the exports, which put the City only behind Laredo in volume. As to numbers of overall inspections of people, El Paso surpasses all ports of entry in Texas. With $152 billion in land trade with Mexico, Texas surpassed other states by far: California ($30 billion), Arizona ($12 billion) and New Mexico ($1.1 billion); and,

WHEREAS, the balance of the facilitation of trade with the need to make our community secure has long been of principle importance; and,

WHEREAS, the El Paso community has worked with representatives and agencies in Mexico and the United States for many years to create secure trade and traffic programs, including the first Dedicated Commuter Lane ("DCL") AND Free and Secure Trade ("FAST") in Texas; and,

WHEREAS, current immigration law does not have timely legal alternatives to allow companies or individuals to employ such essential workers as those needed in the construction, healthcare, restaurant, transportation, hotel, elder care, and child care job sectors, among others; and,

WHEREAS, on December 15, 2005, the U.S. House of Representatives passed H.R. 4437, which fundamentally proposes an enforcement only approach to the complex issue of the control of illegal immigration and the improvement of border security.

THEREFORE, BE IT HEREBY:

RESOLVED, that the complex issues of illegal immigration and a porous border cannot be fixed by an enforcement only approach. Any solutions must take a multi-layered approach to multi-layered issues created over decades of neglect.

RESOLVED, that when addressing issues of border security, the emphasis should be on the use of new and emerging technologies that will facilitate legitimate trade and border crossings.

RESOLVED, that the construction of a fence along the entire southern border is not a reasonable solution.

RESOLVED, that a solution must address allowing the undocumented in the United States who are filling legitimate employment needs a means to obtain legal status without placing them ahead of those who applied to enter the U.S. legally.

RESOLVED, that immigration processing backlogs must be reduced for those with valid pending applications.

RESOLVED, that new legislation must address document fraud and include severe penalties for those who prey upon undocumented aliens.

RESOLVED, that people offering to "assist" an undocumented person in the U.S. by providing food, shelter, counseling, or transportation must not be exposed to criminal penalties if they are not engaged knowingly in smuggling or aiding said individuals to enter into the United States.

RESOLVED, that the City of El Paso will continue to work in a collaborative manner with our Sister City, Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua, and other governmental entities in the El Paso/Juarez Borderplex to address issues that are unique to the bi-national, multi-cultural community in which we live.

RESOLVED, that the City of El Paso will provide input and seek legislation regarding border security and immigration reform that is effective, responsible, humanitarian and not an encumbrance to international commerce.

ADOPTED this the 13th day of January 2009 by the City Council of the City of El Paso.

CITY OF EL PASO:

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John F. Cook
Mayor

ATTEST:

_____
Richarda Duffy Momsen
City Clerk

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

Elaine S. Hengen
Senior Assistant City Attorney

CITY CLERK DEPT.
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