

Hill Country View - Hill Country View

## Congressman decries drugs crossing the Texas border

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A border fence is a necessity along parts of the Texas-Mexico border, U.S. Rep. Ciro Rodriguez (D-TX-23) said Jan. 10 during a small business roundtable in Leon Springs.

Rodriguez said border patrol agents have told him that a fence buys valuable time in apprehending illegal immigrants crossing the border and said the proliferation of drugs coming into the United States is an urgent matter that calls for strict law enforcement.

"We do need some fencing in some areas, Presidio, Del Rio, Eagle Pass and parts of El Paso," Rodriguez said.

"We've actually seen a decrease in illegal immigrants in my district. What we do is capture them, hold them and take them to court. Drugs are a big problem."

Rodriguez's viewpoint resonated with Mike Taylor, president of Connect Communications and co-chairman of the Leon Springs Business Association, sponsor of the roundtable discussion.

"Actually that was the first reasonable explanation I've heard of a border fence," Taylor said. "My concern was building a wall with as little thought and planning as goes into our roadways and highways. (Rodriguez's) explanation was specific with regards to the cities and mayors' and property owners' input. He also identified its specific goal of allowing officers more time to capture illegals."

District 23 covers a horseshoe-shaped segment of South, West and Northwest San Antonio, north Bexar County and continues to the Big Bend area of West Texas down to the Rio Grande.

Rodriguez said it's an extremely diverse area, with some of the richest and some of the poorest areas in the state. The district includes five national parks, numerous sheep and goat ranches, and agricultural areas in South Texas heavily dependent on seasonal workers to harvest crops.



U.S. Rep. Ciro Rodriguez (center) of the 23rd Congressional District addressed the Leon Springs Business Association on Jan. 10. Co-chairing the event were Mike Taylor, president of Connect Communications, and Kam M. Emerson, financial advisor with Edward Jones' Fair Oaks Ranch Center. Photo by Linda Byrne



"My farmers in the 'Winter Garden' area are saying 'we're going to go broke' unless we get the workers. I'm hearing the same thing from landscapers, carpenters and others. There's a real need for a lot of workers."

Rodriguez believes Congress will make progress in the upcoming session on immigration and guest worker programs, education and other issues of interest to voters because 2008 is an election year.

Other highlights of his address to the business professionals included the following points:

- Every mayor in District 23 has expressed opposition to a border fence.
- Education, health care and crumbling infrastructure are important issues and the nation must invest resources in these areas to keep the country strong.
- The U.S. must work more closely with Canada and Mexico on drug problems.
- The energy bill passed by Congress last year was "a major piece of legislation" that will go a long way in-the process of becoming less dependent on foreign oil.
- San Antonio is fortunate that CPS Energy is diversified, using nuclear power and wind-generated electricity, in addition to conventional fuels, which will prevent high-energy costs being passed on to consumers.

Rodriguez commiserated with several business owners in the audience who believe high property taxes could stifle real estate sales and be otherwise detrimental to a healthy local economy, but said property taxes are not a federal issue and should be addressed at the local level.

Taylor believes the session was valuable for business professionals.

"I was impressed with the congressman. He listened very intently to all the attendee's questions, then answered them with great conviction. Most notably, he expressed his sincere concern that each issue was important and that steps were being taken in Washington to address them," Taylor said.