

Northern Border Security Review Act

Sponsored by: Sen. Heidi Heitkamp (D-ND). Co-sponsored by: Sens. Kelly Ayotte (R-NH), Gary Peters (D-MI) and Ron Johnson (R-WI).

The border between the United States and Canada is the longest common border in the world. At over 5,500 miles in length, the Northern Border includes both land and maritime domains, and includes 1,500 miles between Alaska and Canada. The terrain and characteristics of the Northern Border is diverse – dense forests, rugged mountains, tribal lands, nearby major metropolitan centers, and vast regions which are sparsely populated. Our nation has an enduring partnership with Canada, working to protect and secure this border. However, to maintain border security, it is critical that we understand the present threats and vulnerabilities.

The Northern Border Security Review Act meets that goal by requiring the Department of Homeland Security to conduct a detailed threat analysis of the Northern Border Region. The United States and Canada completed a joint border and threat risk assessment in 2011.

Subsequently, the DHS published its Northern Border Strategy in 2012. Given the constant changes along the Northern Border, it is critical that our nation update its threat assessment so we can respond to today's challenges, not outdated ones.

The Northern Border Threat Analysis required by the bill would examine:

- Terrorism and criminal threats posed by individuals and organized groups seeking to operate or already operating along the Northern Border;
- Improvements needed at ports of entry, between ports of entry, and along the maritime border between the United States and Canada to reduce criminal activity and the threat of terrorism; and
- Cooperation between federal, state, tribal, and local law enforcement along the Northern Border and any vulnerabilities caused by international agreements.

While conducting this analysis, DHS is required to consider several key factors to make sure it determines the full scope of challenges on the Northern Border. These factors include:

- Technology needs and challenges;
- Personnel needs and challenges;
- The proper role of State, tribal, and local law enforcement in general border security activities;
- The need for cooperation among Federal, State, tribal, local, and Canadian law enforcement entities relating to border security;
- The geographical challenges of the Northern Border.