

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 26, 2014

The Honorable Jeh Johnson
Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Washington, D.C. 20528

Dear Secretary Johnson:

We write regarding the importance of additional staffing at land ports of entry along our southern border.

As you are aware, the fiscal year 2014 consolidated appropriations legislation (P.L. 113-76) provided funding to hire a minimum of 2,000 new Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officers by the end of fiscal year 2015. The joint explanatory statement accompanying the Act very clearly directs Customs and Border Protection “to be mindful of the critical importance of adequately supporting operations in the cargo environment” when assigning new officers.

As the Department of Homeland Security considers how to allocate staff to most effectively enhance cargo operations, we wish to highlight the significance of cross-border trade at land ports of entry. It is difficult to overstate the importance of Mexican trade to the U.S. economy and states in the border region. As we are sure you are aware, the U.S. remains Mexico’s largest trading partner. Total trade in goods and services with Mexico in 2011 exceeded \$500 billion, supporting an estimated 6 million jobs in the U.S. In 2012, Texas benefited from nearly \$180 billion and Arizona nearly \$12 billion in trade with Mexico. In addition, cross-border visitors from Mexico add an estimated \$5.0 billion in annual economic activity in Arizona and Texas alone. Over the past two decades, trade between Mexico and the U.S. has continued to grow substantially. In 2012, imports from Mexico reached \$277.7 billion – representing a more than 100 percent increase from 2002. Mirroring that growth, a Texas A&M study found that surface trade between the U.S. and Mexico rose from roughly \$100 billion to \$400 billion between 1995 and 2012.

Without adequate staffing, our land ports of entry are at risk of commercial traffic delays and bottlenecks that jeopardize our opportunity to further economic activity between our two countries. This concern is echoed by the findings of a recent University of Southern California study that indicates “adding one CBP officer at each of the 17 passenger land crossings is projected to lead to an increase in [gross domestic product] of \$61.8 million and employment gains of 1,053 jobs in the U.S. as a whole.” That same study found that the Mariposa Port of Entry in Nogales, Arizona, which is undergoing a soon to be completed expansion including additional cargo lanes, and the World Trade Bridge in Laredo, Texas, were among the ports with the longest peak congestion wait times.

Given that estimates of the adequate level of staffing for port of entry exceed the 2,000 officers expected to be hired, we understand that the Department is faced with competing priorities. We would request that you give every due consideration to the significant staffing needs of our

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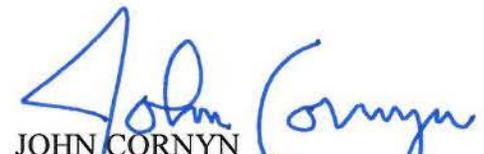
nation's land border ports of entry. In addition, we ask that you keep us informed as to the development of the criteria by which CBP will make decisions on officer allocations.

Thank you for your attention to this matter, in accordance with all existing agency rules, regulations, and ethical guidelines. We look forward to a timely response.

Sincerely,



JEFF FLAKE
United States Senator



JOHN CORNYN
United States Senator