

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

October 14, 2014

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

Dear Secretary Johnson:

We write regarding the assignment of new Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officers at ports of entry in Arizona.

As you are aware, the fiscal year 2014 consolidated appropriations legislation (P.L. 113-76) provided funding to hire 2,000 new officers by the end of fiscal year 2015. Toward enhancing security and improving service levels at ports of entry, CBP announced the allocation of the new officers in March of this year and we are pleased that Arizona ports are among the 44 ports in 18 states that will receive additional staffing. While this is a good start, we believe that additional officers will have to be hired in the coming years to fully staff ports of entry in Arizona and throughout the United States.

This news is particularly welcome given the completion of the renovation and expansion of the Mariposa port of entry. The port will support twelve car lanes, a bus lane, and have the capacity to process more than 4,000 trucks per day. It has been suggested that Mariposa could see as much as \$35 billion in trade goods move through it this year, with that number likely to increase given the benefits of the expansion. Arizona benefits directly from vibrant cross-border trade. With four years of record setting exports nationally, the U.S. economy does as well.

It will be difficult to fully realize all the benefits cross-border trade offers if the busiest ports of entry are not adequately staffed. Unfortunately, stakeholders report that the Tucson field office, which includes the port facilities in Nogales, Arizona, is understaffed and suffering from a high percentage of vacant positions as compared to other districts. We believe that the shortfalls those stakeholders have identified are urgent needs that must be fully addressed in order for the ports to function at their optimum capacity. CBP has indicated that it will work aggressively to recruit and train applicants to meet the hiring mandate by the end of fiscal year 2015. As CBP moves forward in that process and makes decisions on the assignment of newly trained officers, we request answers to the following questions:

- 1) What is CBP's plan for assigning newly trained officers, including the relative priority of the ports of entry slated to receive additional staffing and the number of CBP academy graduates they will be assigned by a given date?
- 2) What criteria is CBP using to determine the relative priority of the ports in being assigned new officers and the number of officers likely to be assigned over time?
- 3) Can you provide the five field offices with the highest percentage of vacant positions as well as the five field offices with the highest rates of attrition?

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Page 2

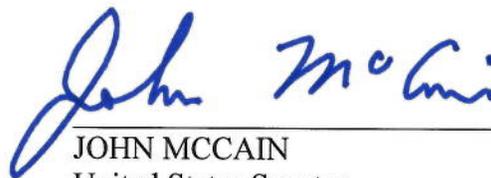
- 4) Is the collective bargaining agreement between CBP and its workforce a factor when determining where officers are assigned? If so, please explain how those considerations are met while considering CBP's plan for assigning officers and overall homeland security priorities.

We appreciate your consistent attention to Congressional requests for information and issues associated with ports staffing. We request your assistance in ensuring a transparent process in the allocation of these critical resources and 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.

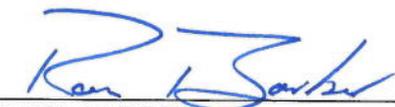
Sincerely,



JEFF FLAKE
United States Senator



JOHN MCCAIN
United States Senator



RON BARBER
Member of Congress



TRENT FRANKS
Member of Congress



PAUL GOSAR
Member of Congress



RAUL GRIJALVA
Member of Congress



ANN KIRKPATRICK
Member of Congress



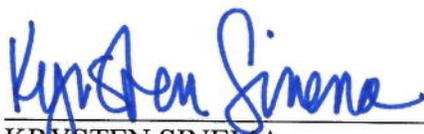
ED PASTOR
Member of Congress



MATT SALMON
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DAVID SCHWEIKERT
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KRYSTEN SINEMA
Member of Congress