

<b>Question#:</b>	32
<b>Topic:</b>	Arizona's ports of entry
<b>Hearing:</b>	Oversight of the Department of Homeland Security
<b>Primary:</b>	The Honorable Jeff Flake
<b>Committee:</b>	JUDICIARY (SENATE)

**Question:** 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. According to the Arizona-Mexico Commission, Arizona's ports of entry serve as gateways for \$41.6 billion in U.S.-Mexican trade annually, of which nearly \$16 billion is attributed to Arizona's bilateral trade with Mexico. Given the importance of cross border trade to Arizona's economy, adequate staffing at our ports of entry is critical. It is my understanding that, despite the Department's recruitment practices already in place, the hiring process has been moving forward at a pace slower than anticipated with challenges related to the administration of polygraph tests and background checks.

Specifically, what is the Department doing to make certain that the critical staffing needs of our ports of entry are being met?

**Response:** Thanks to Congress' support, CBP is addressing a critical shortfall of personnel at ports of entry by funding an additional 2,000 CBP officers.

CBP has experienced a number of unanticipated factors that significantly delayed our hiring capabilities. These factors include a background investigation contractor's data breach, low polygraph clearance rates among applicants, and difficulty securing the services of certified federal polygraph examiners.

CBP has taken specific action to ensure that we make steady progress toward our hiring goals. Specifically, we have added suitability questions to the application process to screen out unsuitable candidates before they enter the hiring process, posted multiple job opportunity announcements throughout the year to more timely attract and replenish applicant pools, increased the number of sites where applicants can complete a required cognitive test, and significantly increased the Agency's polygraph examination capacity.

As of April 18, 2015, CBP has achieved a net increase of 838 CBP officers toward the additional 2,000 CBP officers funded by Congress.

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**Question:** Will you state clearly that you will meet the 2,000 hiring goal by the end of this fiscal year?

**Response:** As of April 18, 2015, CBP has experienced a net gain of 838 Customs and Border Protection Officers (CBPOs) toward the targeted staffing level of 23,775 CBPOs, which includes the 2,000 new positions funded in the *Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2014*. While CBP continues to make important progress in meeting the CBPO staffing target, modeling based on historic applicant processing time and assessment outcome trends indicates that CBP will not achieve the staffing target by the end of FY 2015. The hiring required to complete the appointment of all of the new CBPOs (begun in FY 2014) and to replace annual CBPO attrition losses presents a significant hiring challenge. CBP has re-engineered its frontline hiring process and continues to implement process improvements to streamline and expedite CBPO hiring. The changes will have a positive impact on current hiring and will allow CBP to more quickly complete hiring for the new positions in FY 2016.