



August 4, 2015

The Honorable John McCain
United States Senate
218 Russell
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Jeff Flake
United States Senate
413 Russell
Washington, D.C. 20510

RE: Staffing at Arizona's Ports of Entry

Dear Senators McCain and Flake,

The Greater Nogales Santa Cruz County Port Authority writes to you once again urging you to work with your colleagues in the Senate and the House of Representatives to ensure that our ports of entry are staffed to appropriate levels to ensure both our national security and our economic wellbeing.

We have contacted you on multiple occasions with regards to the need to fully staff our ports of entry on the Arizona border. We are seriously concerned that very recent wait times at our ports are lulling people into a false sense of success. Yes, our waits are currently down but that is because this is traditionally the slowest period for cross border traffic. But our traffic will soon be reaching its peak periods as soon as October, only three months away. Without immediate action on staffing our ports will go understaffed during the upcoming peak season and potentially for next year's peaks as well.

With the summer slow down of commercial traffic our ports of entry play a game of saving up staffing hours and overtime for when they will desperately need it later on in the year. This is simply not the way our ports of entry should be managed. They need to be staffed-to-need and modernized to meet XXI century demands for securing the Homeland and facilitating legal trade and tourism.

I want to particularly highlight the impact attrition has on our ports. Every time we hear that new positions have been allocated we see a short-term bump in staffing but gradually our ports are losing more staffing than they receive due to transfers and attrition. In essence, Nogales is hemorrhaging staffing rather than gaining. We strongly urge you work with the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to establish a base staffing number for each sector, and based on that number future staffing allocations should be defined. Staffing for Field Operations for Customs and Border Protection (CBP) has grown nationally yet our staffing numbers at Nogales and the Tucson Sector have remained

essentially stagnant in recent memory while demand continues to grow. In fact, we estimate that based on current crossing volumes that the Tucson Field Office (which covers all of the Arizona border) is currently operating at a 20% staffing deficit!

Our traffic volumes have been on an upward trend since 2010 and all indications are that this trend will continue for the foreseeable future. Without the necessary staffing at our ports of entry our border communities and Arizona will be negatively impacted at a time when our nation is emerging from one of the worst economic recessions in modern history.

Finally, we are strong advocates for your legislation to partner with the Department of Defense (DOD) on recruitment of veterans to the ranks at DHS. This is a creative and novel approach to meeting staffing needs. We hope that DHS and DOD will work out programs with due haste as veteran populations is growing and our ports of entry are in desperate need of the quality personnel that are leaving military ranks. What we find most exciting about this venture is that it has the potential to shorten the time from recruitment to deployment within Field Operations – a process that typically takes up to 18 months.

The Port Authority is a 501(c)(6) with a 10-year track record of efforts dedicated to the improvement of the port of entry system at Nogales and to the improvement of the quality of life for the residents of the Ambos Nogales region. The Board of Directors includes the principle stakeholder entities in the region including The City of Nogales, Santa Cruz County, Nogales Customs House Brokers Association, Nogales-Santa Cruz Economic Development Foundation, Nogales Community Development Corporation, Fresh Produce Association of the Americas, and the Asociacion de Maquiladoras de Sonora,

On behalf of the Port Authority I ask that you work with your colleagues in Congress and with the Departments of Homeland Security and Defense to ensure that our ports of entry get the necessary staffing to ensure our national security and foster our economic growth.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'BB', with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Bruce Bracker
Chairman

CC: The Honorable Doug Ducey, Governor
John Halikowski, Director, Arizona Department of Transportation