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The Honorable John Boehner
Speaker of the House
H-232, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Democratic Leader
H-204, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Boehner and Leader Pelosi,

I write to you today to urge swift action on several critical priorities that will restore growth, spur job creation and speed economic recovery for border communities and our nation as a whole.

Border commerce is vital to our entire national economy. U.S.-Mexico trade is a vital economic lifeline not only for border states but for companies all over the country. Mexico is America's third largest trading partner behind Canada and China. At the same time, Mexico is the second largest export market for U.S. businesses, and some states—such as Arizona—depend on Mexico as their largest or second largest export market. Last year, U.S.-Mexico trade totaled \$397 billion.

Trade between the United States and Mexico creates and supports jobs for millions of Americans and Mexicans. Last year in Arizona, Mexican shoppers purchased over \$2.4 billion in goods and services, accounting for approximately 60,000 jobs in the retail sector alone. According to a June 2011 overview by the Department of Commerce's International Trade Administration, Mexico is the second largest export target for Speaker Boehner's home state of Ohio, accounting for more than \$3.5 billion in state exports. In the city of Nogales in my own district, the sales tax generated by Mexican shoppers is almost \$450 million a year, or about 80 percent of the city's total sales tax revenue.

These economic benefits are threatened today by a severe lack of manpower and infrastructure at our ports of entry. A 2008 draft study by the Department of Commerce found the following: "Today, border wait times at the five busiest southern border [ports of entry] average over one hour, which result in an average economic output loss of \$116 million per minute of delay. In 2008, these delays cost the U.S. economy nearly 26,000 jobs and \$6 billion in output, \$1.4 billion in wages, and \$600 million in tax revenue *annually*. By 2017, average wait times could increase to nearly 100 minutes, costing U.S. more than 54,000 jobs and \$12 billion in output, \$3 billion in wages, and \$1.2 billion in tax revenue *annually*. The *cumulative* loss in output due to border delays over the next ten years is estimated to be \$86 billion."



The growth of international trade has outpaced our ports' workload capacity, resulting in congestion and delays. This increased congestion hurts businesses that rely on safe and efficient cross-border traffic.

To reverse these alarming economic trends, a comprehensive set of options must be explored:

- **Expand Physical Infrastructure:** Widen bridges and U.S. and Mexican access roads, expand primary and secondary facilities, and lengthen dedicated cargo and FAST lanes. For example, the San Luis Port of Entry (San Luis I) has long been one of the most congested ports of entry along the entire U.S.-Mexico border. As early as 2006, I wrote to the president and the General Services Administration stressing the need to fund this project because of the tremendous growth on both sides of the border and the increasing congestion that exists at this port of entry. Now, some five years later, the situation is worse. In 2009, the outdated and overburdened San Luis I crossing processed more than 39,644 trucks, 2.25 million cars and close to 7 million people (including 2.5 million pedestrians). Increased border commerce, low staffing levels and aging infrastructure have meant our border crossers now routinely face waits of 2 to 3 hours in both directions. The situation at San Luis I has become untenable.
- **Increase Staffing and Operating Hours:** We need to increase the number of officers, agriculture specialists and support staff along the border in tandem with infrastructure improvements. To take just one example, although the Nogales West (Mariposa) Port of Entry is undergoing a \$200 million reconfiguration program, Customs and Border Patrol (CBP) does not have the staff to operate the existing facility properly, much less when it expands by 50 percent later this year and again in 2013. According to a 2007 study by the Government Accountability Office, the CBP model estimates a need of up to several thousand more officers and agricultural specialist to operate its ports of entry nationwide.

Strengthening our land ports of entry should be a national priority. At this critical moment, we cannot afford to slide backwards just as our recovery is taking hold. I know you share my sense of urgency and look forward to working closely with you as we continue our job creation efforts.

Sincerely,



Raúl Grijalva
Member of Congress