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The Honorable Barack Obama
President of the United States
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Obama,

I write to express my deep concerns about the Administration's comprehensive plan to secure our borders.

As the Representative of a district that includes a significant portion of our nation's southern border, I have seen firsthand the need to enforce our immigration and citizenship laws fairly, provide adequate support and guidance to the Border Patrol and customs officials, and combat organized international criminal groups. As we seek to improve our border regulations, an integral and often overlooked component of national and economic security – our ports of entry – must be given consideration by your supplemental border security funding request. I urge you to provide our ports of entry with the resources needed to secure our borders.

As you are aware, U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) is responsible for preventing terrorists and other unwelcome individuals from entering the country as well as facilitating the cross-border movement of millions of travelers and goods each year. Along the nearly 2,000-mile border with Mexico, CBP carries out this responsibility at 42 land ports of entry located in Texas, California, Arizona and New Mexico.

Since 1993, the U.S. has engaged in a long-term effort to increase enforcement across the southwest. It has invested heavily in manpower, technology, transportation and infrastructure, but to date, that investment has lacked balance. The number of Border Patrol agents has more than quintupled from 4,000 to a projected total of 22,800 in 2010. The agency's budget has exponentially increased over the same period from \$400 million to \$3.5 billion. However, the budget for Customs personnel has seen a relatively minimal boost. Funding for Customs increased from \$1.6 billion in 1993 to \$2.7 billion in 2010. Of that, 68 percent – nearly three quarters – was consumed by rising inflation. This imbalance severely compromises our national and economic security.

Land ports of entry on the U.S. southwestern border have become America's weakest link in border security. In response to a congressional request, a 2008 Government Accountability Office report concluded that despite progress, "weakness in traveler inspections exist at our nation's port of entry." According to the report, "field office managers said that staffing shortages affected their ability to carry out anti-terrorism programs and created other vulnerabilities in the inspections process."

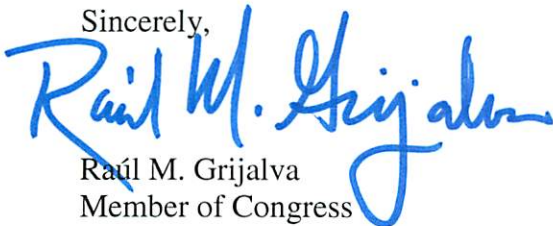
Lance Jungmeyer, President of the Fresh Produce Association of the Americas, has voiced similar concerns: "Lost in the whole debate about border security funding is the vital function played by Customs officers at our Arizona ports of entry. The more pressure that Border Patrol applies in rural areas, the more likely smugglers will direct their attention to the ports." A new U.S.-Mexico joint governmental study confirms Mr. Jungmeyer's concerns. According to the study, the annual southbound flow of smuggled cash is estimated at between \$19 billion and \$29 billion. The smuggled cash is brought into Mexico through our ports of entry in a wide range of amounts, some small enough for an individual to carry and others large enough to fill shipping containers.

That report highlighted Nogales as a significant crossing point for smuggled cash. It is alarming that not one new CBP officer was assigned to a port in Arizona out of the 400 officers allocated this year. The decision not to assign any new CBP officers to Arizona – even at the heavily trafficked crossings in Nogales, San Luis and Douglas – is exacerbating the serious legal and security issues we face. We must fully fund the ongoing upgrades at the Douglas and San Luis crossings if we intend to seriously tackle border security and customs enforcement.

The Greater Nogales Santa Cruz County Port Authority, comprising Nogales International Airport, Morley Pedestrian Gate, Dennis DeConcini Port of Entry and the Mariposa (Nogales West) Port of Entry, reports a current operational deficit of 100 full time officers for both commercial and non-commercial operations. Douglas needs an additional 30 officers and San Luis needs another 40, according to my staff's conversations with issue experts. It is well past time to provide our ports of entry with increased resources. In addition to the resources already committed by your administration, I request \$300 million for the CBP and the General Services Administration to upgrade technology and infrastructure and ensure adequate CBP staffing across our southwestern border.

Our border officials and agencies must be given the staff, technology and infrastructure they need. I fear that if we do not start training additional Customs officers now, we may lose a cost-effective opportunity to seal off the southwestern border to illegal activity and protect the cross-border economy vital to Arizona and the nation.

Sincerely,



Raúl M. Grijalva
Member of Congress