

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

February 12, 2013

President Barack Obama  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Obama:

We applaud your recent statements on the pressing need for comprehensive immigration reform and your continued leadership on this issue. As you stated in Nevada, “the time has come for common-sense, comprehensive immigration reform.” We couldn’t agree more.

As Co-Chairs of the Congressional Border Caucus, we write to urge you to adopt a reform plan that promotes economic prosperity by expediting legal trade and travel between the United States and Mexico. As border residents ourselves, we have seen security procedures implemented with little regard for legitimate trade and travel across our Southwestern border. U.S. citizens, legal residents, tourists, visitors and truckloads of perishable cargo wait for hours at the border each day, needlessly costing us jobs and money. Delays at land ports of entry have significant and long-term effects on our national and economic security.

We urge you to focus border security resources in the following areas:

**Increasing the Customs and Border Protection Workforce**

U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) oversees cross-border travel and law enforcement along our nearly 2,000-mile border with Mexico at 42 land ports of entry (POEs), including bridges and highways in Texas, California, Arizona and New Mexico. The federal government has invested heavily in manpower and technology to prevent illegal activity between these POEs. Since 2003, the U.S. Border Patrol has doubled in size and now employs more than 21,000 agents. The budget for CBP personnel has seen a very modest boost in comparison.

This imbalance compromises our national and economic security. Our POEs are severely understaffed. The San Luis Port of Entry remains at its 2010 staffing level despite opening a new port, two new SENTRI lanes and two new car lanes in the past two years. At the Mariposa Port of Entry in Nogales, \$200 million has been invested to expand the crossing without any new funding for staff. Wait times will continue to be unacceptably long, and the status quo is unsustainable if we want functioning ports of entry. We urge you to hire additional CBP officers at our ports of entry all along the U.S.-Mexico border.

### **Port of Entry Infrastructure Improvements**

Mexico is America's third largest trading partner – behind only Canada and China – and is the second largest export market for U.S. businesses. Some states, including our home states of Arizona and Texas, depend on Mexico as their largest or second largest export market. One in every 24 workers in the nation depends on U.S.-Mexico commerce.

While trade between the United States and Mexico has increased more than 600 percent since 1990, infrastructure improvements at our ports of entry have not kept pace with growing demand for modern facilities. With two-way trade reaching a record \$500 billion in 2011, inadequate infrastructure makes businesses less efficient, hurting job creation and stunting our economic recovery. Many POEs along the Southwest border have longstanding infrastructure needs that require significant investments to keep pace with growing demand and evolving criminal threats. We urge you to include POE modernization as a central component of any broader immigration and border security initiative.


The *Putting Our Resources Toward Security (PORTS) Act*, originally introduced in the House of Representatives in 2008, sets forth a plan to address infrastructure and staffing deficiencies at our ports of entry.

### **Streamline Administration of Border Investment**


Finally, in order to best utilize additional CBP personnel and new investments in infrastructure, our border policy must be streamlined. The *Border Infrastructure and Jobs Act*, first introduced in the 111<sup>th</sup> Congress, proposed the creation of a commission to review and examine cross-border trade policies, strategies, and federal programs. We feel this is a wise approach, and we strongly support establishing a “United States-Mexico Economic Partnership Commission” to study operations, technology, and infrastructure along the border and identify needed improvements.

Overall border security continues to improve and cities along the U.S.-Mexico border are some of the safest in the nation, but POEs have not experienced improvements on par with between-ports enforcement. We urge you to pursue a balanced approach to border security that provides for safer and more prosperous border

Sincerely,



Rep. Raúl Grijalva  
Co-Chair  
Congressional Border Caucus



Rep. Filemon Vela  
Co-Chair  
Congressional Border Caucus