Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 4, 2014

The Honorable Jeh Johnson
Secretary of Homeland Security
Washington, DC, 20528

Dear Secretary Johnson,

On behalf of our constituents in Arizona, we write in regard to the recently enacted Public Law No: 113-76 which, in part, calls for more than 3,300 Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officers, including 2,000 for the busiest ports of entry.

We ask that Arizona receive an adequate share of Customs officers for its ports of entry, including the revamped Mariposa Port of Entry (POE) in Nogales. It is estimated that Arizona needs an additional 500 Customs officers to effectively run its ports of entry, and that the Mariposa POE alone requires an additional 250 Customs officers.

In recent years, the emphasis by Border Patrol on interdiction efforts between the ports of entry has caused cartels to look for weaker locations to conduct illicit activity. As you know, CBP recently seized a record 20,000 pounds of marijuana in a shipment of fresh produce sent through the Mariposa POE in Nogales. This brazen attempt of drug smuggling indicates just how weak the cartels consider the ports of entry.

Without adequate resources at Arizona's ports of entry, increased attention of cartels may result in lengthy delays of shipment inspections, thus causing economic damage to small businesses operating at the border. This threat would also likely increase wait times for legitimate tourists, whether crossing by foot or vehicle.

In 2012, Southwest U.S. ports of entry along the border of Mexico processed close to 314 million people, 18,000 trains, 10.2 million trucks and 125 million cars in two-way traffic. Trade indicators show these numbers to be on the rise well into the future. Indeed, U.S. ports of entry process more than $1 billion in trade every day of the year. Unfortunately, the allocation of staffing for CBP at our ports of entry has remained stagnant since 2009.

As you are aware, the Mariposa POE in Arizona is nearing the end of a massive $200 million expansion. With this increase of cargo lanes and passenger vehicle capacity, the need for increased personnel is acute. Currently, only 1,600 trucks enter the country each day through the POE. With full staffing in the expanded cargo lanes, CBP predicts capacity would be more than 4,000 trucks per day. This represents a huge opportunity to boost trade between Mexico and all of Arizona.

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In Santa Cruz County alone, the fresh produce import industry adds $430 million in annual economic impact and $40 million in state tax benefit, according to an economic impact study by the University of Arizona. (See the complete report at http://ebr.eller.arizona.edu/research/fresh_produce_and_production_sharing_Nogales_Santa_Cruz_County_Arizona_9_25_13.pdf.) This study also shows another $310 million in economic impact for manufacturing plants that import materials back and forth along the U.S.-Mexico border. Adding a sufficient number of Customs officers to the Arizona POEs would help double the economic impacts of this cross border trade for the benefit of both countries.

We understand that you have competing priorities along the border with limited resources. However, we firmly believe that an additional 500 Customs officers assigned to the Arizona ports of entry is the best use of these new officers for a secure and productive border that benefits both Arizona and entire United States.

Respectfully,

Matt Salmon
Member of Congress

Kyrsten Sinema
Member of Congress

Trent Franks
Member of Congress

Raul Grijalva
Member of Congress

David Schweikert
Member of Congress

Ron Barber
Member of Congress

Paul Gosar
Member of Congress

Anne Kirkpatrick
Member of Congress

Cc: The Honorable R. Gil Kerlikowske, Commissioner, CBP
The Honorable Janice K. Brewer, Governor of Arizona
Margie Emmermann, Office of the Governor, Arizona