

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 17, 2015

The Honorable Jeh Johnson
Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20528

Dear Secretary Johnson:

On October 14, 2014, we wrote to you regarding the assignment of new Customs and Border Protection officers (CBPOs) at ports of entry in Arizona following the increased funding to hire 2,000 new CBPOs nationwide by the end of fiscal year 2015. Our concern at the time, and today, is how those officers would be assigned to ports within Arizona and under what time frame. Of particular concern is the Mariposa port of entry, which has seen increased vehicular traffic following the completion of the renovation and expansion of the port.

In your November 6, 2014, response to our letter, you stated that, "Based on the Workload Staffing Model's finding, 44 of CBP's 328 ports of entry will receive the new authorized officers. The Port of Nogales will receive more officers than all but three ports." This was welcomed news, however, as the end of the fiscal year nears, stakeholders in Arizona report that not only has there not been an increase in overall staffing of CBPOs, but that attrition has outpaced the hiring of new officers.

CBP has assured Congress and those that depend on the ports of entry for their livelihood that hiring these officers is a top priority, however, it appears that these assurances have not resulted in the full staffing at the ports of entry located within Arizona. Per your response to questions related to a recent oversight hearing in the Judiciary Committee, as of April of 2015, CBP has only gained a net of 838 CBP officers toward the 2,000 additional officers that were funded by Congress. To help us better understand the staffing shortage and the challenges in hiring additional officers, please provide answers to the following questions:

1. Given that CBP will fail to meet the congressionally mandated staffing level of 23,775 CBPOs by the end of FY2015, what is the end of fiscal year delta for CBPO hiring?
2. How many CBPOs have been hired and placed at the Tucson Field Operation Office within the last fiscal year, in excess to those officers replaced due to attrition or relocation in the last fiscal year?
3. How many CBPOs have been lost to attrition or relocation from the Tucson Field Operation Office in the last fiscal year? How does that compare to attrition rates at other offices along the southern border with Mexico?

4. What has CBP done to make the process of recruiting, screening, and hiring new officers more efficient and effective? What improvements, if any, have been made to accelerate the turnaround time for polygraph tests and background examinations of applicants?

We appreciate your consistent attention to Congressional requests for information and issues associated with ports staffing, including the assistance of your staff in moving forward with legislation to ensure that the Department of Defense and your department work cooperatively toward ensuring that separating service members are aware of CBP officer openings. We request your assistance in ensuring a transparent process in the allocation of these critical new officers and thank you for your attention to this matter, in accordance with all existing agency rules, regulations, and ethical guidelines. We look forward to a timely response.

Sincerely,


John McCain
United States Senator


Jeff Flake
United States Senator