

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

July 1, 2016

The Honorable Jeh Johnson
Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Washington, D.C. 20528

Dear Secretary Johnson:

Thank you for your service and your dedication to protecting and securing our country. We recognize and support your Department's ongoing efforts to improve security and alleviate passenger wait-times in our nation's airports. However, as you are well aware, our nation's security is a multi-faceted challenge. As DHS addresses the ongoing challenges associated with aviation security, we ask that you also focus long overdue resources to our maritime ports and resolve the Customs and Border Protection (CBP) staffing shortages facing the passenger and freight facilities that connect directly with our communities.

In Fiscal Year 2015, when CBP was funded to hire 2,000 staff, fewer than 20 officers were assigned to seaports. We cannot let this disproportionate approach to security continue. Our nation's seaports handle more than 11 million maritime containers and over 11 million international passengers each year. Annual increases in volume and periodic surges in ship traffic, paired with a muted response from the Department, have led to repeated dock-side delays in inspecting and clearing cargo, creating a ripple effect throughout our economy and supply chain.

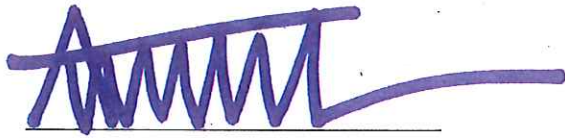
To address these shortages, port authorities have utilized an array of tools to keep cargo and passengers moving through their terminals. One such tool is the congressionally authorized pilot 559 program, which allows ports to pay the overtime costs of CBP personnel when additional hours of screening are required. While this flexibility was meant to serve as an avenue for relief, it is not a cost that our ports can afford to bear in the long-term. The need for a permanent solution remains.

Moreover, as Members of Congress we stand ready and willing to assist the Department in addressing CBP's current staffing issues. In April, the House unanimously approved legislation to help enhance the operational capacity of CBP services with the passage of the Border and Maritime Coordination Improvement Act, H.R. 3586. Language was also included in the Fiscal Year 2017 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) to enable CBP to expedite the hiring process for applicants with a military background. These are important steps in the right direction; however, more must be done to ensure that the staffing shortages at our seaports are addressed.

We, therefore, urge you to take this opportunity to address CBP staffing issues at our nation's seaports, in addition to our air and land ports of entry.

Thank you for your attention to this matter, and we look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Ted Poe
Member of Congress



J. Randy Forbes
Member of Congress



Janice Hahn
Member of Congress



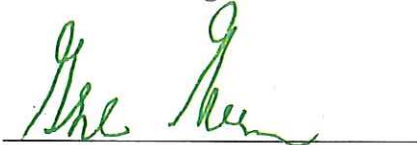
Kathy Castor
Member of Congress



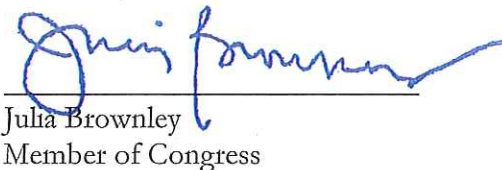
Grace Napolitano
Member of Congress



Corrine Brown
Member of Congress



Gene Green
Member of Congress



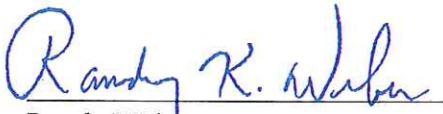
Julia Brownley
Member of Congress



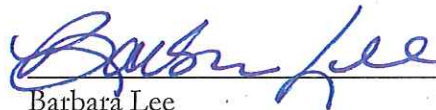
Alan Lowenthal
Member of Congress



Scott Peters
Member of Congress



Randy Weber
Member of Congress



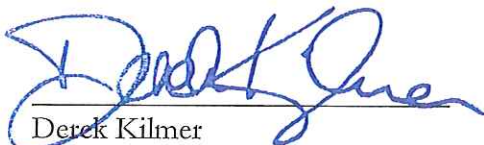
Barbara Lee
Member of Congress



Brenda L. Lawrence
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Earl L. "Buddy" Carter
Member of Congress



Derek Kilmer
Member of Congress



Stacey E. Plaskett
Member of Congress



Brian Babin
Member of Congress



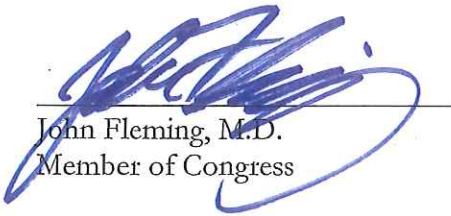
William R. Keating
Member of Congress



Eddie Bernice Johnson
Member of Congress



Pete Olson
Member of Congress



John Fleming, M.D.
Member of Congress



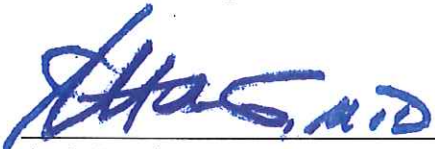
Scott Rigell
Member of Congress



Blake Farenthold
Member of Congress



Bradley Byrne
Member of Congress



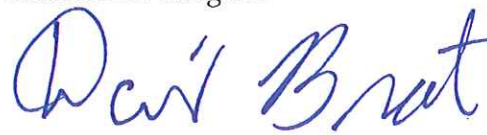
Andy Harris
Member of Congress



Rob Wittman
Member of Congress



Bobby Scott
Member of Congress



David Brat
Member of Congress



Barbara Comstock
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Robert Hurt
Member of Congress



H. Morgan Griffith
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Charles W. Boustany, Jr., M.D.
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John Garamendi
Member of Congress




Robert Goodlatte
Member of Congress



Cedric Richmond
Member of Congress



Albio Sires
Member of Congress



Al Green
Member of Congress




Bill Posey
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Patrick E. Murphy
Member of Congress



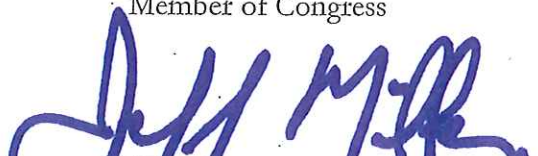
Judy Chu
Member of Congress




Frank C. Guinta
Member of Congress



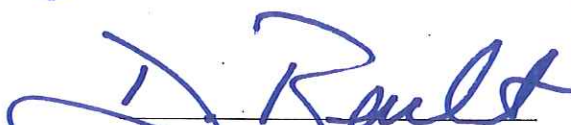
Bill Flores
Member of Congress



Jeff Miller
Member of Congress




Bob Gibbs
Member of Congress



Dave Reichert
Member of Congress



Paul Gosar
Member of Congress



John Culberson
Member of Congress

CC:

The Honorable John Carter, Chairman Homeland Security Appropriations Subcommittee

The Honorable Lucille Roybal-Allard, Ranking Member Homeland Security Appropriations Subcommittee

The Honorable John Hoeven Chairman Senate Committee on Appropriations Subcommittee on Homeland Security

The Honorable Jeanne Shaheen, Ranking Member, Senate Committee on Appropriation Subcommittee on Homeland Security