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Immigration & Border
Security

Mission:

**To make Legislative
recommendations to help
the Texas Border Region**



July 22, 2010

Dear Members of Congress:

The Texas Border Coalition has reviewed the Government Accountability Office report GAO-10-694 released this morning to Senator George Voinovich. It makes clear that the Department of Homeland Security's Customs and Border Protection inspector staffing of land ports of entry on the U.S.-Canadian border is sufficient. This stands in stark contrast with overwhelming CBP staffing shortages on the southern border. The discrepancy in staffing between the northern and southern borders cannot be allowed to stand.

The GAO reports that CBP inspection staffing on the U.S.-Canada border has increased by "47 percent from fiscal years 2003 through 2010" and that CBP managers at high-volume locations in Washington, New York and Michigan say that "their staffing needs are met." According to the report, CBP's staffing model shows a need for 4,207 CBP officers on the northern border and that CBP had 3,927 officers on board as of last September -- an unfilled need on the northern border of a mere 280 inspectors. When the author of the report, GAO's Richard Stana, was asked if he had similar data on southern border staffing this morning, he responded that he did not. As you know, the CBP does not release such data to the public based on its classification as law enforcement sensitive.

The Texas Border Coalition has consulted extensively with CBP land ports of entry managers and officers in Texas, and we can report that not one has indicated their staffing needs are met. In fact, they report significant staff shortages. Mr. Stana told the TBC at our November conference in Laredo that increased staffing is among the main needs at the land ports of entry. As you know, Mr. Stana's prior reports have indicated that the national CBP inspection force at land ports is understaffed at a rate of 4,000 to 5,000 officers (see GAO-08-329T and Mr. Stana's frequent testimony before the House and Senate Committees on Appropriations and Homeland Security).

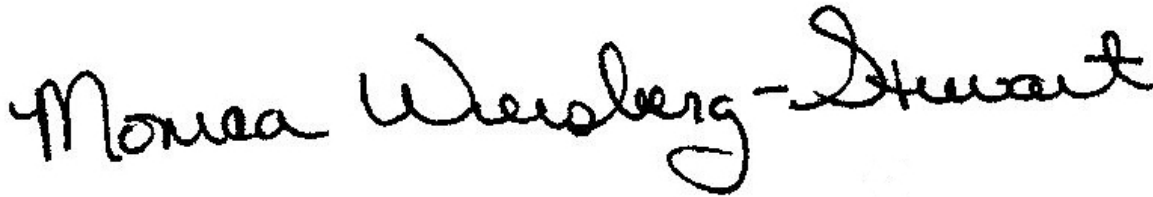
If the nation's land ports are short-staffed by up to 5,000 inspectors and only 280 of that shortfall is on the northern border, it should be obvious that the U.S.-Mexico land ports of entry have been shortchanged. The impact of this is to suffocate the U.S. economy, a result that is intolerable and must be changed.

Trade between the United States and Mexico totaled over \$300 billion in 2009. Mexico is the number one or number two export destination of 22 U.S. states.

Cross-border trade contributes enormously to the economic vitality of both countries, including our region. Any U.S. department or agency policy that would smother this economic engine is untenable.

We request your immediate action to alter the trajectory of the staffing decisions that are being made in Washington that would stifle U.S.-Mexican land ports of entry.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Monica Weisberg-Stewart". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Monica Weisberg-Stewart
Chairman, Texas Border Coalition
Committee on Immigration and Ports of Entry