

Congress of the United States  
House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515-4323

March 14, 2013

The Honorable John Boehner  
Speaker  
United States House of Representatives  
H-232, The Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Eric Cantor  
Majority Leader  
United States House of Representatives  
H-329, The Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Speaker Boehner and Majority Leader Cantor:

We write to express our concern over the effects of sequestration on Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and its dedicated public servants, including over 21,000 Border Patrol agents. Within our Congressional districts along the border, many men and women employed by CBP have received furlough notices in order to prevent a deficit of funds in fiscal year 2012 due to the five percent reduction in salaries and expenses funding.

CBP's primary mission is to secure our borders. CBP employees guard our land, air, and sea ports while keeping illicit goods, criminals, and dangerous individuals out of our homeland. In fiscal year 2012, CBP processed approximately 25 million cargo containers, seized more than \$100 million in unreported currency, and stopped 4.2 million pounds of illegal narcotics from endangering our communities, schools, and families. Furthermore, CBP's National Targeting Center and Immigration Advisory Program prevented over 4,000 high-risk individuals from boarding flights destined to the United States – a 32 percent increase from the previous year.

CBP's value to our country is not merely limited to tangible security threats; the agency also helps to protect our economy as well. CBP bottlenecks the flow of counterfeit and pirated goods that threaten the integrity and innovation of America's economy. In the previous fiscal year, CBP conducted 23,000 seizures of goods that violated intellectual property rights. Additionally, the flow of trade and commerce that supports American businesses, US jobs, and the American economy depends on the work done by the agency. In 2012, CBP processed more than \$2.3 trillion in international trade.

Senseless, across-the-board budget cuts that are part of sequestration will do monumental harm to CBP's critical role to protect our nation's core security needs and key economic competitive advantages.

As you are aware, sequestration prevents CBP agency leaders from adequately executing mission-critical programs. The amount of work hours reduced would be equivalent to the loss of 5,000 Border Patrol Agents and 2,500 CBP officers. In an age of austerity, reductions in program spending and efforts to find greater efficiencies are understandable, but the process of budget cuts in sequestration – particularly in the manner that these cuts affect CBP – is mindless, counterproductive, and harmful to our country.

CBP employees are committed public servants who have dedicated their professional lives to our country. Sequestration will make it extremely challenging – and in many cases impossible – for employees to meet their mortgage payments, pay their healthcare expenses, plan for retirement, or help their children attend college. To be blunt, these families are at risk. After years of dedicated service, CBP employees deserve more from their country’s leaders.

To idly stand by as the sequester causes tremendous damage to our country would be tantamount to turning our backs on promises that all lawmakers have made to their constituents: keep America safe, and keep our economy strong. A lawmaker cannot be pro-sequester while also purporting to be pro-national security or supportive of a strong economy. We must work for a solution to address the senseless cuts that hurt our border, our economy, and our country. Thank you for consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

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Pete. P. Gallego  
Member of Congress  
23rd Congressional District of Texas

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