

## **Boots on the Border: Good for the Border**

Earlier this month, Senators Jeff Flake and John McCain of Arizona, along with Senator Ron Johnson, Chairman of the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, introduced the *Boots on the Border Act*. This legislation is designed to remove the onerous, and at times duplicative, polygraph testing that is currently imposed on applicants that are veterans, military service members and members of other law enforcement entities that are applying for positions with US Customs and Border Protection (CBP).

CBP has not been able to fill 1,100 positions that were funded in the 2014 budget because the overly burdensome polygraph process is eliminating many veterans and current military personnel that are considering a career protecting our nation and our borders. CBP is reporting that the Tucson sector alone has over 21% of its fulltime positions unfilled. This condition is perpetuated by the extremely low ratio of job applicants to actual hires at CBP.

Arizona and its federal partners, CBP and the General Services Administration have invested over \$400 million in port of entry infrastructure over the last 8 years but there is simply not enough staff to open-up every lane that is available. Port Directors have to play a constant game of taking from one to open up another in order to minimize the impacts to our ports of entry and to our border communities. Officers are forced to work extensive amounts of overtime and at times max out and cannot work anymore overtime. CBP needs to have the necessary staff to ensure the security of our nation along with facilitating trade and tourism that are critical to the Arizona and national economy.

Arizona's border communities report that at least 70% of the sales tax generated in each community is directly attributable to the Mexican visitor and shopper. But if visitors have long delays to cross the border then they simply will not come to our stores and our restaurants. Additionally, Arizona's trade relationship with Mexico totals over \$15 billion in imports and exports and without efficient ports of entry we cannot maximize the opportunities that exist for Arizona companies.

CBP has made great efforts to streamline the recruiting process but they still have a long way to go. The *Boots on the Border Act* offers a new tool and a tremendous opportunity for Customs and Border Protection to recruit and hire some of the most qualified individuals our nation has to offer. We urge the entire Arizona Congressional delegation to support this legislation.

Signed

The Honorable Gerardo Sanchez, Mayor, City of San Luis

The Honorable Doug Nicholls, Mayor, City of Yuma

The Honorable John Doyle, Mayor, City of Nogales

The Honorable Robert Uribe, Mayor, City of Douglas

John Halikowski, Chairman, Transportation and Trade Corridor Alliance

Jessica Pacheco, President, Arizona-Mexico Commission

Guillermo Valencia, Chairman, Chairman, Greater Nogales Santa Cruz County Port Authority

The Honorable Matias Rosales, Chairman, Greater Yuma Port Authority

Carlos Fernandez, Chairman, Douglas International Port Authority

Patrick Scherden, Chairman, Douglas Regional Economic Development Corporation

Gonzalo Avila, Chairman, Fresh Produce Association of the Americas