

CONGRESSMAN HENRY CUELLAR

CBPO Relocation Press Conference

Date: Thursday, April 18, 2019

Location: Juárez–Lincoln International Bridge, Laredo, TX 78040

Time: 9:00am CST

Remarks

- **Two weeks ago, I expressed concerns to now Acting DHS Secretary Kevin McAleenan regarding CBP’s response to the addressing the surge in migrants at our southern border by re-assigning 750 CBP officers (CBPOs) from our Ports of Entry (POEs) to Border Patrol Sectors and away.**
- **In particular, I noted that a disproportionate number of CBPOs were reassigned from the Laredo Field Office.**
- **Moving CBPOs from the Laredo POEs was detrimental.**
- **I urged DHS to reassign all CBPOs to operations at ports of entry in order to**

prevent the crippling effects of increased wait times.

- **Increased wait times have grave repercussions for the industries whose supply chains are heavily integrated across North America.**
- **For years, I have made it a top priority to ensure that CBP has the capability and capacity to improve the efficiency of legitimate trade and travel at our nation's POEs, while maintaining the highest standards of security.**
- **In an email I sent Acting DHS Secretary McAleenan on April 5, 2019, I offered realistic strategies and resource solutions that mitigate the impact of the reassignment of 545 CBPOs, allowing CBP to maintain its ability to process trade and travel, while addressing the surge in migrants at our southern border.**

- *Sensible Reassignment of CBP Officers*
 - *Expand CBP's Transportation Capacity*
 - *Overtime Cap waivers*
 - *Deploy Volunteers*
 - *Hire Annuitants*
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- **On April 10, 2019, I convened a phone call with border members and CBP Deputy Commissioner Robert E. Perez to discuss the practical strategies and resource solutions I provided to mitigate the reassignment of CBP officers.**

 - **I was confident that CBP is taking the appropriate steps to secure our southern border, without needlessly impeding bilateral trade and travel, on which our national economy relies**

Suggested Solutions Offered to CBP

1. Reassignment of 545 CBPOs

- **100** have already been replaced
- **125** more by the end of the week

2. Expand Transportation Capacity

- **The USBP transportation contract with G4S is being expanded.**
- **USBP is purchasing 20 buses to increase transportation. Should see the first of them arrive to the field in 2-3 weeks.**
- **11 vans were transferred to EL Paso Sector and 19 new vans are being outfitted (Emergency Vehicle Equipment, i.e., radios/paint, etc.) at the Bastrop, TX Federal Prison Industries facility for deployment to the field in mid-May.**

3. Overtime Cap waivers

- **The bi-weekly OT cap waiver¹ was signed by the DHS Secretary on April 12, 2019.**
- **USBP has expended over \$7 million for overtime.**
- **Increased personnel reduce USBP OT requirement, but as the number of temporarily assigned personnel drops, USBP OT will increase.**

4. Volunteers

- **The advance teams of volunteers arrived at Rio Grande Valley Sector (RGV), El Paso Sector (EPT), and Yuma Sector (YUM) Wednesday, April**

¹Under this cap an employee can be paid premium pay only to the extent that, when combined, the premium pay and basic pay does not exceed the greater of:

- the maximum rate payable for GS-15 during any biweekly pay period; OR,
- the rate payable for Level V of the Executive Schedule during any biweekly pay period. (See 5 U.S.C. § 5547(a); and 5 C.F.R. § 550.105)

The forms of pay covered by this biweekly premium pay limitation include: the dollar value of earned hours of compensatory time off, and overtime pay earned under Title 5 provisions; premium pay for night, Sunday and holiday work; and premium pay for standby duty, administratively uncontrollable overtime work and availability duty.

17, 2019.

- **The first group of volunteers (the bulk) will be going to RGV – arrive on Monday, April 22, 2019. This may lead to the return of all Laredo Field Office CBPOs.**

5. Annuitants

- **National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) allows an Agency head to reemploy Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) and Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS) annuitants on a limited basis with a waiver of salary offset.**
- **CBP has taken no action on this**

6. U.S. Coast Guard

- **USCG personnel primarily do the biometric enrollment at sea but still have to arrive at a CBP facility to**

process.

- **Currently only USBP can process USBP apps and only OFO can process OFO inadmissibles.**

FY2019 Appropriations

- **\$58.7 million to hire 600 new CBP officers for ports of entry and language encouraging CBP to hire an additional 600 officers whose salaries will be paid for with custom fees;**
- **\$20 million for CBP officer retention;**
- **\$564 million for innovative non-intrusive imaging equipment;**
- **\$191 million for infrastructure improvements at ports of entry (POEs);**

- **\$113 million for additional air and marine assets, to include three multi-enforcement aircraft.**

FY20 Appropriations Requests

- **Funding for CBP to create and hire at least 1,200 new entry level CBP positions to perform duties related to detention, transportation, processing, and escort of detainees in CBP custody.**
- **Funding for USCIS to hire 500 new staff to process high numbers of new asylum applications.**
- **Language directing DHS to establish CBP-GSA Center of Excellence to prioritize efficient POE modernization and repairs.**
- **Language to establish a pilot one-stop processing and long-term holding center for asylum seekers.**

- **Language that helps speed up the acquisition of technology at POEs.**
- **\$25 million for increased CBP flight hours.**
- **\$630 million for non-intrusive inspection technology.**