



January 12, 2023

President Joseph R. Biden
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

The Border Trade Alliance wrote to you last May to express our concern about the increasing volume of asylum seekers at the United States-Mexico border and how the situation was becoming more untenable by the day, placing tremendous pressure on the very limited resources of city and county governments. In the ensuing months, the situation has only grown more dire.

Our organization acknowledges that the failures of our country's immigration system have been well documented and preceded your administration. Further, we share the frustration of communities from San Diego, California to Brownsville, Texas over Congress' inability and unwillingness to put forward durable policy solutions to address the humanitarian crisis, or the greatly diminished quality of life for border communities and states, or legitimate security concerns, or the U.S. economy's labor needs, or any of one of the several individual issues that make up the complicated subject of transboundary migration.

But absent federal solutions, border communities – elected leaders, social service providers, and citizens – continue to pay the price for a mismanaged border.

The unsustainable situation at the border has prompted some border state governors to pursue their own solutions. The BTA on two occasions has communicated our opposition to Texas Gov. Greg Abbott's truck inspection program that has resulted in increased congestion around ports of entry and shipping delays. We believe state agencies have an important role to play in truck safety and code enforcement, but such inspections near the ports are duplicative and, if truly necessary, should be conducted much further away from the border.

Still, without substantive federal policy reforms that attempt to address the nation's immigration challenges in a comprehensive way, we should anticipate continued state-level actions that will do very little to solve the immigration crisis and, as in the case of the Texas truck inspections, could make matters worse.

We appreciate that immigration was a major topic of your recent meeting with President López Obrador and that you visited El Paso to see the results of a broken border for yourself. During that El Paso trip, you were quoted as saying about Customs and Border Protection, "They need a lot of resources. We're going to get it for them." We agree. We strongly urge you to prioritize CBP in your Fiscal Year 2024 budget and work with Congress to ensure the agency is properly equipped to deter illegal crossings, as well as to facilitate the lawful trade that contributes to the economic health of the country.

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We reiterate a point we raised in our last letter to you: U.S. land border ports of entry are not equipped to process large volumes of undocumented migrants. Moreover, disruptions at the ports of entry risk interrupting legitimate trade and travel. The Department of Homeland Security must do all it can to reduce such interruptions and assure the trade community that there will be no closures of ports of entry, which we experienced in 2021 in the Del Rio Sector. Port closures are not just inconvenient – they put additional pressures on an already stretched U.S. supply chain and put upward pressure on consumer prices at a time of already high inflation.

Furthermore, as your administration prepares for the eventual lifting of Title 42, we encourage not only collaboration with Mexico to stem the tide of asylum seekers, but to engage more fully with the nations that are the sources of migrants, particularly Venezuela and Nicaragua.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, border communities are clamoring for an immigration policy from your administration that articulates your beliefs and proposals on managing irregular immigration, modernizing the nation's byzantine visa system, securing our borders, and promoting trade and travel. Your leadership is indispensable if we are going to address this crisis.

Immigration is one of the most difficult issues facing this country, and no organization has a monopoly on solutions. We extend to you once again, however, our commitment that you can count on the BTA's years of experience in cross-border affairs as a source to your administration and as a willing partner to ensure that the southern border and our immigration system is humane, secure, properly resourced, and well-managed.

Sincerely,



Britton Mullen
President



Lance Jungmeyer
Chairman