



THE OFFICE OF CONGRESSMAN
JOE GARCIA

April 4, 2013

Chairman Hal Rogers
House Appropriations Committee
H-307, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Ranking Member Nita Lowey
House Appropriations Committee, Democrats
1016 Longworth HOB
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Rogers and Ranking Member Lowey,

As the Appropriations Committee begins its work for fiscal year 2014, I respectfully urge you to support strong funding levels for Customs and Border Protection (CBP) staffing at our nation's airports. With America's economy showing signs of recovery, we need to make sure that we are doing everything we can to increase commerce and tourism in order to create jobs and strengthen the middle class.

I was greatly concerned by reports that CBP had significantly reduced overtime pay and planned to furlough its workers for up to 14 days this fiscal year in response to sequestration. Not only do these brave men and women help keep our country safe, they are also vital to our economic security. CBP officers inspect cargo containing products that American companies sell to consumers and help create and support jobs here in the United States. In addition, they screen travelers (both foreign and domestic) who wish to enter our country via our air and sea ports. I am pleased, that in light of the continuing resolution that the Committee helped craft, both issues are now on hold as CBP officials reexamine their original plans.

One community significantly impacted by these issues is Miami-Dade County, which I am honored to represent. I am extremely troubled by the increases in wait times at Miami International Airport (MIA), which has been the hardest hit airport in the nation due to cuts in CBP overtime staffing. According to airport officials, hundreds of travelers a day miss their connecting flights at MIA due to long lines at customs and several hundred people had to spend the night at the airport. Just last month, the average peak customs line at MIA was over 1 hour and 20 minutes. On its worst day, passengers waited 3 hours and 20 minutes for processing. Such



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a poor experience by travelers at MIA is detrimental to Miami Dade County's economy and deters future tourism to our community.

Furthermore, I am deeply troubled by the economic impact on trade and commerce to the United States caused by the shortage of CBP officers inspecting cargo shipments. I recently met with a group of business leaders from the floral industry, which employs or supports 7,000 jobs in my community alone, to address their concerns regarding delays in inbound shipping inspections. As you can understand, flowers, like any other perishable item, are extremely time-sensitive; therefore, having perishable products wait for inspection for several hours can potentially cost local small businesses thousands of dollars in losses. This hurts the pockets of middle class families and kills jobs in my community.

In the coming weeks, I will continue to work in a bipartisan manner and make my case to my colleagues that while America certainly needs to work toward a balanced budget, we need to do so in a smart way that grows our economy and strengthens the middle class through job creation. Arbitrary CBP cuts at our air and sea ports, in communities like Miami-Dade County, will only weaken our economy and destroy middle class jobs. If you wish to discuss this matter further, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joe Garcia". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Joe Garcia
Member of Congress