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November 4, 2015

MEDIA CONTACTS

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**Statement of Subcommittee Chairman Candice Miller (R-MI)
Border and Maritime Security Subcommittee
House Homeland Security Committee**

A New Approach to Increase Trade and Security: An Examination of CBP's Public Private Partnerships.

Remarks as Prepared

The commerce that moves through the nation's ports of entry powers our economy, drives job creation and is fundamental to our way of life. If ports of entry shut down, or traffic is backed up – millions of dollars may be lost, economic growth comes to an abrupt halt, travelers find other destinations to visit, and would-be customs revenue destined for the U.S. Treasury goes away.

Despite the importance of ports of entry to the nation's economic health, port of entry modernization efforts have been significantly underfunded, and Customs and Border Protection staffing has not kept pace with growing demand.

While CBP is frequently asked to provide new or additional service at ports of entry across the country, CBP is often unable to accommodate these requests due to staffing shortages and other resource constraints.

Over the past few years this Congress has appropriated more than \$2 billion dollars for port of entry construction, but that is dwarfed by the estimated \$ 4-6 billion dollars needed to fully modernize our ports of entry.

Air passenger volumes are growing at a rate of 4 to 5 percent a year, the nation has experienced a 24% increase in cargo containers since the dark days of the Great Recession, and more cars and trucks transit the land ports of entry than ever before.

We are falling further behind every year to match the demands placed on our CBP officers and infrastructure.

In 2014, Congress appropriated hundreds of millions of dollars for an additional 2,000 CBP officers nationwide. However, according to CBP's workflow staffing model, the current need is more than 2,500 additional officers —with projections to grow even further as travel volume increases.

In today's current budget environment, CBP and GSA are hard pressed to find the billions of dollars needed to fix our failing infrastructure and fund additional officers, so we must be creative and explore new approaches to fund the great need across the nation.

The private sector is often a willing partner who can work with CBP, on a mutually beneficial basis, to pay for additional overtime staffing, or donate real or personal property to make ports of entry run more efficiently at peak times.

Congress provided such authority to CBP and GSA in section 559 of the fiscal year 2014 Appropriations Act. This authority established a pilot program, allowing them to enter into public private partnerships to pay for additional officer hours, and to accept donations of real and personal property such as new inspection booths, computers and scanning equipment.

From everything that this committee has heard, those pilots are working well to meet the immediate needs of land, air and sea ports of entry across the nation and I look forward to hearing from our witnesses today on how these can be improved.

Today, 19 ports of entry have entered into reimbursable service agreements with CBP that will pay for additional officer hours when those air, land, and seaports need it most. The need for this type of agreement has been clearly and convincingly demonstrated – so far CBP has been reimbursed for over 12.9 million dollars in expanded overtime. In one case study, it was found that, despite increases in travel volumes at Dallas Fort Worth Airport, DFW has experienced an estimated 45% decrease on its average wait time as a result of the partnership they entered into with CBP.

In addition, three localities in Texas are poised to take advantage of donation authority at land ports of entry to provide CBP with additional booths, new scanning equipment, and renovations to an agricultural lab.

This is why the full Committee, through a thoughtful amendment offered by the gentleman from Texas, Mr. Hurd, unanimously voted to permanently authorize CBP's Public Private Partnership program, which is characterized by its Reimbursable Services Program and its Donation Acceptance Program.

But the donation authority is limited, and is not designed to pay for an entire port of entry, or significant expansion. Congressional appropriations alone are appropriate for such large scale projects of national importance.

As our economic and security requirements grow, our ports of entry must be able to accommodate more trucks, passengers and cargo, while at the same time providing convenient and secure travel for the people who cross the border each day.

That is why I fully support concepts like public-private-partnerships and other innovative ways to fund infrastructure improvements. Our authorization language makes sure CBP can leverage this important tool well into the future.

And with the second busiest port of entry along the Northern Tier, the Blue Water Bridge, in my district, and the busiest along the Northern border, the Ambassador Bridge just 60 mins to the south, I am keenly interested in the application of public private partnerships to meet the infrastructure and staffing challenges close to home.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses on how the GSA works collaboratively with CBP on both the Reimbursable Service Agreements and Donation authority provided by this Congress to improve the flow of travel and cargo through the air, land and sea ports.

CBP and GSA owned and leased ports of entry across the nation are in dire need of modernization and expansion. I believe we need to tap into the expertise and willingness of the private sector, and partner with them to come up with better, more cost effective approaches for new port of entry construction, modernization and staffing needs.

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