



Annual National Defense Authorization Act should include amendment to boost CBP officer staffing levels

BTA supports proposed amendment to include Securing America's Ports of Entry Act in NDAA

Background

The Senate Homeland Security Committee has passed with bipartisan support S. 1253, the Securing America's Ports of Entry Act.

Sponsored by Sen. Gary Peters (D-MI) and Sens. John Cornyn (R-TX), Kyrsten Sinema (I-AZ), and James Lankford (D-OK), the bill increases the authorized number of CBP officers by 600 annually to help the agency meet its current and future staffing needs. The bill also would provide better information about CBP's infrastructure needs at its ports of entry, as well as greater transparency over the extent to which CBP relies on reimbursable services agreements and TDY assignments to cover its staffing shortfalls.

Sens. Peters and Lankford have submitted the bill as an amendment (SA 706) to the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA).

Adequate staffing levels required to keep pace with trade and travel volumes

International travel and trade continue to rebound but wait times to process travelers and cargo at our ports-of-entry are growing. CBP needs additional personnel to alleviate critical staffing shortages throughout the system.

The agency's most recent workload staffing model, completed in July 2022, shows a need to hire at least 1,750 CBP officers, 250 agriculture specialists, and 100 non-uniformed trade specialists to address current staffing shortfalls at the ports-of-entry. We anticipate the next workload staffing model, slated to be released later this summer, will identify a much higher number of officers and specialists needed to handle the increased volume of international travel and trade we are seeing at air, land, and sea ports-of entry.

Complicating the nationwide shortfall is the agency's now-routine decision to reassign CBP officers from air, sea, and northern border ports temporarily to land ports-of-entry along the Southwest border to assist with processing activities.

Recommendation

The Border Trade Alliance is part of a broad trade community coalition urging the U.S. Senate to include the Securing America's Ports of Entry Act in the NDAA.