



April 7, 2020

VIA E-MAIL AND FIRST-CLASS MAIL

The Honorable Chad F. Wolf
Acting Secretary of Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20528

The Honorable Mark A. Morgan
Acting Commissioner
U.S. Customs and Border Protection
1300 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20229

Dear Acting Secretary Wolf and Acting Commissioner Morgan:

Yesterday, CBP began informing CBP Officers along the northern and southern borders that the temporary weather and safety leave schedules established to promote their individual health, and the overall health of the entire CBP Office of Field Operations (OFO) workforce along the border, were immediately canceled. The announcement comes at a time when experts predict that infections and deaths are beginning to peak in various parts of the country and will continue to do so over the next month. In fact, according to the most recent information we've seen, the infection rate among CBP personnel is at 160 employees and climbing. COVID-19 positive tests have already been confirmed at many large land border ports of entry, including Brownsville, El Paso, Laredo, Nogales and Rio Grande City on the southern border and Buffalo, Detroit, and Sweetgrass on the northern border.

It is now widely accepted in the medical and scientific communities that the spread of the COVID-19 virus is significantly inhibited by maintaining safe social distances of six feet or more and by limiting human interactions, because of how the virus is spread. As you know, the pandemic and related restrictions on cross-border travel have reduced border crossings by as much as 75 percent, if not more in some locations, resulting in greatly reduced activity at the ports. This provided the opportunity for CBP to adjust work schedules and use weather and safety leave to reduce current staffing, thereby creating more distance between employees at work, while reducing the number of employees interacting with each other and the public. This concept of preserving bench strength, not sending all of one's troops into battle in the first wave, or whatever metaphor you want to use, has been widely adopted by other law enforcement and first responder organizations during the current pandemic, including the New York Police Department.

The Honorable Chad F. Wolf
The Honorable Mark A. Morgan
April 7, 2020
Page Two

The temporarily revised work schedules in CBP's OFO that enabled more time off for Officers represented CBP at its best, responding to a crisis. The adjustments were the product of urgent discussions between employee representatives and management, with the twin goals of delivering the mission while promoting the health of the Officers. Indeed, those two goals merge, because effective mission delivery isn't possible without a healthy workforce. A secondary goal of the adjusted schedules was to free up some time for Officers to deal with unanticipated family care responsibilities resulting from the pandemic's forced closure of schools and day care centers.

Field Office and Port Directors working collaboratively with employee representatives towards these objectives sent an encouraging and strong message to CBP employees; that CBP cares about their wellbeing and that of their families. It boosted morale. The cancellation announcement is crushing it at a time when CBP can least afford it.

Officers are being told that Border Patrol needs support. We have seen no objective data to support that claim. I am asking that you provide any to that effect.

I am asking you to do right by the CBP Officers serving our country at our nation's land borders and reverse this short-sighted decision. I also welcome the opportunity to discuss this matter with either or both of you as soon as possible. Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Anthony M. Reardon". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being the most prominent.

Anthony M. Reardon
National President