



May 26, 2023

**VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL**

The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas  
Secretary of Homeland Security  
U.S. Department of Homeland Security  
3801 Nebraska Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20016

Dear Mr. Secretary:

I recently returned from a meeting with NTEU chapter leaders from CBP's Office of Field Operations and heard deeply troubling reports of the significant negative effects of severe understaffing at our ports of entry. Excessive overtime, scheduling challenges, details and overcrowding at some ports of entry have created unacceptable working conditions for NTEU members.

The recent DHS Office of Inspector General report regarding staffing on the Southwest Border (SWB) found that CBP's current method of managing law enforcement staffing is "unsustainable." The report underscores what NTEU has been saying for some time: CBP's Office of Field Operations is seriously understaffed and the ripple effects of that understaffing harm employees and the mission of the agency.

The report took issue with CBP's practice of addressing staffing needs with details and overtime, concluding that it is unsustainable and contributes to low morale. It found that CBP workloads have increased dramatically due to "increasing border encounters and travel volume." Yet, CBP's solution has been to use details and overtime to address the increased workloads, while keeping staff levels the same, negatively impacting the health and morale of the front-line employees. Employees feel overworked and unable to perform their primary law enforcement duties. While there may not be a need to contract with an independent, federally funded research and development center, we agree with the first bullet of the first recommendation that CBP must "review existing staffing models and methodology for deploying personnel at the SWB and across the country and the impact of continuously relying on details and overtime to temporarily fill staffing gaps."

Last month, CBP again found it necessary to solicit CBP Officers for TDYs to the SWB land ports of entry. This TDY has been renewed every 60 days and now has been going on for one year. Wave 7 commenced on April 16, 2023, with over 400 CBP Officers deployed to ports of entry within the San Diego, Tucson, El Paso, and Laredo Field Offices. These TDYs will be

The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas  
May 26, 2023  
Page Two

filled by CBP Officers currently assigned to air and seaport locations, exacerbating staffing shortages at those ports. These details have separated nearly 1,900 employees from their families this last year and put additional pressure on CBPOs over and above the already stressful nature of their work. To add to this, CBP's response was to hire 42 contractors to perform data entry for our CBP Officers. According to our chapters that have these contractors in place, they are not helpful and have created more work in contractor oversight than they have saved in processing times. This money would be better spent hiring additional federal employees.

The President's FY 2024 budget requests \$22.1 million to hire 150 CBP Officers to serve at Southwest Border ports of entry. According to agency staffing models, CBP needs to hire at least 1,750 CBP Officers, 250 Agriculture Specialists and 100 non-uniformed Trade Specialists to address current staffing needs at the ports of entry.

I am asking that DHS take immediate steps to address the staffing problems with long-term solutions rather than short-term fixes that harm dedicated employees. I would like to invite you to attend a virtual meeting with our NTEU chapter presidents to hear firsthand the challenges they are facing as they strive to perform their all-important mission and protect our nation.

Thank you for your consideration and support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Anthony M. Reardon". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent initial "A".

Anthony M. Reardon  
National President