

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

December 19, 2022

Shalanda Young
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United States Office of Management and Budget
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Washington, DC 20503

Director Young:

Each fiscal year, the president submits a budget to Congress, highlighting their priorities and how their administration believes we should invest in our Nation. Securing our border must continue to be a top priority. As senators representing states along the U.S.-Canada border, we write to express our support for including the resources necessary to properly staff and secure our northern border as part of the Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 President's Budget Request for the U.S. Department of Homeland Security

We support ensuring that our border professionals have the personnel, technology, and tools necessary to secure our nation's borders. In doing so, it is important that the Federal government effectively carry out its responsibility to safely and effectively secure both our northern and southern land borders. This is particularly important given the increased levels of activity at the southern border over the past several years which has necessitated the reallocation of personnel and resources, including technology, from our border with Canada.

U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officers and U.S. Border Patrol (USBP) agents have the critical mission of protecting the American people by securing our borders. Succeeding at this mission involves much sacrifice by these officers and agents as well as their families. The Federal government should ensure that border security professionals have the necessary resources to adequately staff the northern border. CBP officers and USBP agents continue to be transferred from the northern border to assist along the U.S.-Mexico border. These continual temporary duty assignments take a significant toll on officers and agents as well as the families of those assigned to northern border duties. We encourage the administration to include the necessary resources to ensure personnel can fulfil their mission without the constant need for temporary duty assignments in the FY24 budget request.

Additionally, recruitment and retention of CBP officers and USBP agents continues to prove challenging, in particular when attempting to fill posts along the northern border. We therefore urge that the FY2024 budget request include resources to recruit and retain personnel, including creative solutions to incentivize officers and agents to fill posts along the northern border.

Investments in technology along the northern border are critical, as such investments will help border professionals monitor our northern border in a way that will allow them to better prioritize staffing needs and provide more situational awareness. Technology plays a critical role in the security of our northern border, especially given the remoteness of many areas. A majority of the northern border is currently monitored with manually operated systems, requiring consistent staffing to ensure full situational awareness. Investing in technology that allows agents to patrol and more quickly respond to activity is a much-needed investment, particularly given the challenges that USBP face regarding recruitment and retention referenced above.

While Congress has previously provided additional funding to increase technology deployments, CBP has largely focused those resources along the southern border. We strongly support efforts to provide funding for the Autonomous Surveillance Tower (AST) program of record to increase deployments along the southern *and* northern border. ASTs increase CBP's situational awareness of remote parts of the border, thereby improving agents' ability to safely and timely assist people in distress as well as respond to dangerous activity. In addition to the southern border deployments, Cold Weather ASTs have been deployed along the northern border in the Swanton Sector (1), including Vermont and New York, and the Havre Sector (2), covering Montana. The two Cold Weather ASTs currently deployed leverage autonomy to identify items of interest, such as people and vehicles, which allows border professionals to more effectively and efficiently utilize its manpower to perform its critical security and humanitarian missions. In addition, the Cold Weather ASTs have demonstrated success of operation in very cold temperatures. We therefore urge the administration to provide continued funding for the AST program of record as part of the FY2024 budget request to increase AST deployments along the northern border.

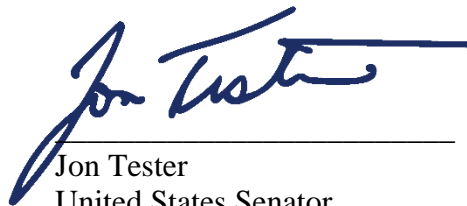
Finally, essential to both the security of our northern border and to ensuring the smooth flow of people and goods, is having ports of entry open to accommodate the lawful travel between the United States and Canada. Hours at northern border ports of entry were reduced with the dramatic decrease in travel seen at the height of the COVID-19 public health emergency. As we turn the corner on the pandemic, the administration should work with DHS to ensure the agency has the necessary resources to resume pre-pandemic operating hours at the northern border ports of entry and encourage the resumption of normal operating hours.

We appreciate your attention to these important issues along our northern border. Thank you for consideration of our request.

Sincerely,



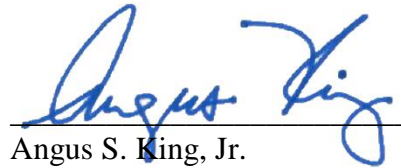
John Hoeven
United States Senator




Jon Tester
United States Senator



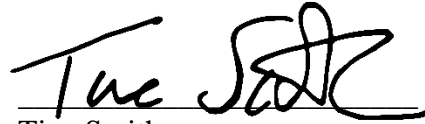
Kevin Cramer
United States Senator



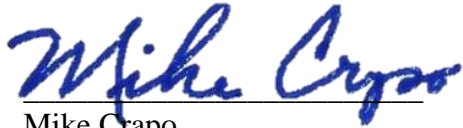
Angus S. King, Jr.
United States Senator



James E. Risch
United States Senator



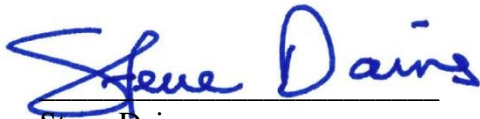
Tina Smith
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