



One Hundred Sixteenth Congress
Committee on Homeland Security
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

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

Mark A. Morgan
Acting Commissioner
U.S. Customs and Border Protection
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20528

Dear Acting Secretary Wolf and Acting Commissioner Morgan:

I am writing to urge you to immediately reinstate weather and safety leave for U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Office of Field Operations (OFO) employees at our land, air, and seaports of entry.

As you know, CBP officers continue to facilitate legitimate trade and travel, keeping vital supply lines open for the American people, our cities, states, and hospitals during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. However, cross-border travel has declined dramatically over the past month as a result of travel restrictions and stay-at-home orders. As of April 1, 2020, privately owned vehicle traffic was down 72 percent and pedestrian crossings were down 83 percent at our land borders.

Unfortunately, 160 CBP personnel have already tested positive for COVID-19 and an additional 310 OFO employees are currently quarantined. To protect the health of the workforce while still meeting operational demands, OFO had been using weather and safety leave to temporarily revise work schedules and reduce staffing at ports of entry when and where allowable. This created opportunities for social distancing at ports of entry in accordance with Centers for Disease Control recommendations while maintaining full operational capacity and ensuring there would be a cadre of healthy CBP officers available as necessary. In addition, CBP personnel placed on weather and safety leave had been required to remain ready to report to work at any time.

On April 6, 2020, CBP implemented reduced hours of operations at 45 ports of entry along the northern and southern borders due to diminished cross-border traffic. Inexplicably, that same day CBP announced it was immediately cancelling weather and safety leave for CBP officers. This decision unnecessarily puts the health and safety of CBP officers at risk, potentially undermining

their mission and exacerbating community spread of COVID-19 at our borders. I urge you to immediately reinstate weather and safety leave for CBP officers.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bennie G. Thompson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "B".

Bennie G. Thompson