

Testimony before:
The Committee on Homeland Security
Border and Maritime Security Subcommittee

Testimony by:
Jaime Chamberlain
President, JC Distributing Inc.

Chairwoman McSally and Members of the committee. My name is Jaime Chamberlain. I am president of JC Distributing Inc, a Nogales, Arizona based company with a 46-year history of importing and distributing fresh produce from Mexico throughout the United States and Canada. I appreciate the opportunity to speak about my community and my industry as it pertains to Border Security.

For the last 29 years I have worked alongside my family, our dedicated employees and our grower partners to feed North America. This is a bold statement, but this our mission and our passion. As a Nogales resident and as an American businessman I believe that I bring a background, and close to three decades of professional experience, that allows me to assure you that my comments before you today are based on the realities of the border and the realities of North American trade and investment.

I am a big proponent of efforts and initiatives to promote trade and tourism in Southern Arizona for the benefit of my State and my country. I am also an ardent proponent of enhanced security at our borders rural areas as well as at our border ports of entry. Let me assure you that these two positions are not contradictory but in fact they are essential and complimentary.

The more effective and efficient that our enforcement agencies are at the border, the faster our produce, our manufactured goods, our cattle, our mining equipment and our Mexican consumers can cross the border. With enhanced security our enforcement officials can, with greater certainty, secure our communities and bolster our economic productivity.

As a lifelong Border Citizen, I feel it is my responsibility to articulate the truth about life on the border. We have distinct and unique physical security challenges all along our state as many before me have testified to. But our businesses also require a safe and secure environment so that we may focus on the future of our economic viability. The stability of economic competitiveness strengthens our Homeland against those who may want to disrupt our way of life.

Nogales, a community of 24,000 people is the principal gateway for Arizona's trade and tourism with Mexico. As reported by the US Federal Government, in 2015 Nogales processed 319,000 trucks, 3.5 million cars and 10.5 million people. But I want to make sure that everyone understands that these are only northbound crossing statistics. When we add our southbound crossings, our numbers are staggering considering our small population. The reality is that our ports of entry at Nogales processed 640,000 trucks, 7 million cars and 21 million people this past year.

These numbers represent more than \$25 billion worth of imports and exports flowing through Nogales each year. And once you include Douglas and San Luis, these numbers easily exceed \$30 billion worth of cross border trade. It is also estimated that Mexican visitors spend over \$7.3 million **per day** in Arizona. What happens at Nogales is important to Arizona and the nation.

Thanks to the efforts of many stakeholders in our community, among them the Greater Nogales Santa Cruz County Port Authority and the Fresh Produce Association of the Americas, close to \$300 million have been invested in our community. Our commercial crossing has some of the shortest wait times of any comparable port of entry on the borders with Canada or Mexico. We have improved our situation in many ways in the past 10 years, but we still have much more that needs to be done.

These volumes can continue to grow but ONLY IF we provide Customs and Border Protection the necessary staffing, the newest technology for our equipment, and state of the art facilities in order to do their job effectively and efficiently. Currently CBP is doing the best they can protecting our interests with what they have. This is not acceptable for the Citizens of Arizona, nor for the United States of America. We can do better for those brave men and women in green and blue uniforms. We can do better for the businessmen and women working in our communities. And we certainly should be better for our future citizens. This is the paradigm that I am asking you to change. The US Government, combined with your leadership in Congress, needs to commit the necessary resources for our ports of entry. This is an urgent matter for our physical and our economic security.

Securing the border at the border should be the strategy for our country. Unfortunately, many times when we ask for resources for our border, we are seen as a cost burden to the nation. I don't know of a better use of our scarce federal funds than investing in our sea ports, our land ports and our air ports of entry. It needs to be seen, it must be seen as our best return on our investment for our nation. By ensuring that our ports of entry are of the highest service standards for our foreign and domestic consumers, we would assure a more prosperous economic future for North America. Efficient and well-staffed ports of entry mean foreign direct investment, it means job creation, it means higher paying export-related jobs, it means we can feel safe while conducting our business with our Northern, our Southern and our Global Trade Partners.

Madame Chair and members of the committee, I thank you for the opportunity to share some of my thoughts with you. Be assured of my personal commitment of working with you and the other stakeholders in this room to make our border a true asset for our economic and physical security.

I think you can tell how passionate I am about these issues. There is simply too much at stake to approach this in any other way. I look forward to your questions.

Thank you.

Jaime Chamberlain