United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

October 6, 2009

The Honorable Janet Napolitano
Secretary
Department of Homeland Security
Nebraska Avenue Complex
245 Murray Lane, Mailstop 0150
Washington, DC 20528-0150

Dear Secretary Napolitano:

On Thursday, September 24, there were published reports indicating that the Department of Homeland Security has decided to decrease the number of Border Patrol agents along the U.S.-Mexico border in fiscal year 2010. Recent statistics provided to our offices from your Department indicate that there are currently 17,415 agents assigned to the southern border. The Department stated in a press release from September 28 that it has no plans to reduce the current Border Patrol strength of "more than 17,000 along the southern border." Therefore, we would like you to confirm that the current strength of 17,415 agents will be maintained or increased in fiscal year 2010.

We understand the importance of sufficient manpower along both borders and have worked diligently for years to increase the number of Border Patrol agents assigned to both borders. Unfortunately, the most recent Government Accountability Office report on border issues (Secure Border Initiative, September 2009) acknowledges that both our southern and northern borders are still porous and easily breached. Such reports do not inspire confidence that the Obama administration or your Department can do an effective job managing our international borders with fewer agents on the front line. With drug trafficking, human smuggling, and cartel violence at an all-time high, we believe that we should be doing more – not less – to secure our southern border with Mexico.

Respectfully, we request a response, in writing, that addresses these published reports. We would also appreciate details about your plans for manpower at the southern and northern borders.

The American people demand more secure borders. We hope you'll agree and reassure Congress that agents will not be pulled off the U.S.-Mexico border.

Sincerely,

Chuck Grassley

Jeff Sessions

John McCain

Tom Coburn

Kay Bailey Hutchison

Jim DeMint

John Cornyn

Orrin Hatch