

March 27, 2006

The Honorable John Cornyn  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Cornyn,

You and your colleagues are beginning the arduous and challenging task of developing a policy for immigration reform and border security. On our recent legislative visit to Washington, we witnessed a sense of urgency to implement policies proposed by some of the congressional members that, in our view, will not yield long term, effective results. We all agree that immigration reform and more secure borders are desperately needed. We cannot continue to deal with these growing challenges in the same manner as we have in the past. Nowhere in America is the impact of illegal immigration felt more than along our southern border. El Paso, together with its sister city of Ciudad Juarez, Mexico, is the largest metropolitan community on an international border in the world. With more than 250,000 manufacturing workers-- our region represents North America's 3<sup>rd</sup> largest manufacturing community behind Chicago and Los Angeles. Despite our size of nearly 750,000 people, El Paso is the second safest large city in the United States. We are also home to the largest military installation (**by land area**) in the Department of the Army, Ft Bliss and White Sands Missile Range.

These statistics are important to note because any new legislation must consider the social and economic effects on our community and the many others along the southern border. The Greater El Paso Chamber of Commerce conducted a survey to understand what our more than 1,200 members think are acceptable measures to curtail the illegal flow of migrants and to make our borders more secure. We have enclosed a copy of the survey along with a resolution that our board adopted on March 21<sup>st</sup>. The survey results are clear: we are adamantly opposed to any form of barrier, **in the form of a fence or wall, however we do support a "technology barrier"** along the Texas – Mexico border. A physical barrier would be very costly, an additional burden to an already stressed national budget, and would only be a temporary solution. Those who want to cross our borders will no doubt find creative ways to circumvent physical deterrents. That is not to say that we should not consider improving border security. America possesses technology that is either in use already today, or is in development, that can aid in securing our borders. Much of the new technology has already proven invaluable in the work being done by Joint Task Force North. Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) **have** become common place in our region. **There are also other technologies that can be deployed and integrated such as unattended ground sensors, unmanned ground vehicles, aerostats, and airborne tunnel detection.** There may be other technology advancements that are being used by Customs and Border Protection that also have

potential application for border security. All of these ongoing initiatives can and should be infinitely less costly to the American taxpayer than the construction of a barrier.

The term “secure borders” has been overused. The reality is that **deployment of technology offers far superior detection and deterrence capability, at a much lower cost than erecting a physical wall.** We must measure what we can reasonably ask the American taxpayer to support, against what level of security we believe can be accomplished. To our disappointment, with few exceptions, the Department of Homeland Security has not engaged business, government and the El Paso community as a whole in any really meaningful way. We have also observed that departments within Homeland Security are working independent of each other to find security solutions. The urgency of the situation necessitates a unified effort to facilitate improved communications. **Specifically, if DHS has developed a clear strategy or policy for the acquisition and deployment of new technologies, such as the ones mentioned above, we are unaware. There is also a significant “cultural conflict” that has arisen (and may be still occurring) resulting from merging more than twenty (20) agencies into a single department of HLS. Strong, clear leadership is needed in order to resolve those conflicts.** This issue in particular, will not likely be resolved without intervention from members of Congress.

**In practical terms, the best border security solution(s) will only arise through an integrated, systematic approach to border surveillance and interdiction activities. We believe this means several things...**

- 1) **There needs to be a process whereby there is clear chain of command, and clear lines of communication between entities involved in protecting the homeland-- from federal agencies, to DoD, to state agencies to local law enforcement. This will necessitate policy changes at the federal level, and will require integrated training of personnel among the various entities—at all levels.**
- 2) **Given that many different types of solutions/technologies must be deployed to possess a truly effective detection and deterrent capability on our borders-- a “system of systems” approach is needed. We believe that DHS could benefit from a similar approach to that of the Department of Army’s Future Combat System (FCS). The FCS approach provides several fundamental advantages.....**
  - a. **The government has a single key industry partner, known as the Lead Systems Integrator (LSI) that assists the government in identifying, vetting and acquiring the most effective, and “best of class” technologies. The LSI jointly makes the final decisions as to the specific technologies to be acquired and deployed into the system of systems; and jointly decides with the government as to which companies will supply those technologies.**

- b. Independent government studies verify that this is a lower cost acquisition strategy. In the case of FCS, 18 different systems from four families of technology, are being integrated into a single system. Government analyses indicate that the LSI approach will minimally be 37% lower in cost than if each of the 18 systems were procured independently. This approach has probably contributed significantly to the fact that FCS is 99% on-time and is under budget by 1.5%.**
- c. Maintenance and operating costs can also be lower with the “system of systems” approach, because many of the new technologies (such as unmanned ground vehicles) can be more easily designed and built with common operating platforms.**
- d. With the LSI approach, technological capability can be delivered (spun out, or spiraled) to the front-line operator more quickly.**

Finally, Chamber leadership, our Mayor and other community leaders stand at the ready should you request that El Paso provide testimony during the upcoming hearings.

We thank you for your dedication and service to our country.

Sincerely,

Stephen C. Helbing  
Chairman of the Board

Richard E. Dayoub  
President

Cy: Honorable Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison  
Honorable Senator John McCain  
Honorable Senator Arlen Specter  
Honorable Senator Jeff Bingaman  
Honorable Senator Pete Dominici  
Honorable Congressman Silvestre Reyes  
Honorable Congressman Steve Pearce  
Honorable Congressman Henry Bonilla  
Honorable Congress Woman Nancy Pelosi  
Honorable Governor Rick Perry  
Honorable Mayor John Cook