

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

December 4, 2019

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
H-232, U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi,

We appreciate your efforts to transform the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) into an enforceable agreement that works for all North Americans. As you continue working to reach an agreement, we ask that you help us to secure a formal commitment from the Mexican government to secure the highways that serve as conduits for North American trade and tourism.

From El Paso to Brownsville, the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) has been a boon for border communities in Texas. The pact's success can be measured by much more than an increase in reduced-tariff or tariff-free imports and exports. NAFTA brought us closer together in many ways. Mexican nationals shop in our malls, open accounts in our local banks, purchase second homes, and conduct business in our communities. A significant number of Americans also travel across the border frequently for business and pleasure. According to the McAllen Chamber of Commerce, Mexican nationals spend more than \$1 billion in the City of McAllen alone, demonstrating the vitality of binational business and the interconnectedness of border economies.¹ However, as transnational criminal organizations have tightened their grip on Mexican cities, towns, and roads, the costs of cross-border commercial activity have risen.

Violence in Mexico has spiked significantly with 2018 reported as the deadliest in the country's history. A report released by the Mexico's Secretariat of Security and Citizen Protection recorded 33,341 homicides in 2018, a 15% increase from 2017.² The Transported Asset Protection Association also reported more than 4,000 incidents of cargo theft during the second quarter of 2018, a 27% percent increase from 2017 and 107% increase compared to the same period in 2016.³ Additionally, the State Department recently issued travel advisories urging those traveling to Mexico to exercise extreme caution due to crime, kidnapping, violence and robbery in every Mexican state bordering the United States.⁴

In April 2019, Mexico's Secretary for Security and Civilian Protection, Alfonso Durazo Montaña, announced the Safe Highway Pilot Program, a multiagency program involving the Office of National Defense, Ministry of the Interior, Office of the Navy, National Intelligence Center, Ministry of Finance, the Administration of Foreign Trade and Customs, the Office of Tourism,

¹ <https://valleycentral.com/news/local/mexican-shoppers-spend-over-1-billion?fbclid=IwAR1Do92Dv0nqkzMSh-icCW7z-0RQuR69VqTrJGbkcePW9ZxttHVScwYuwqA>

² <https://www.npr.org/2019/01/23/687579971/mexico-reports-highest-ever-homicide-rate-in-2018-tops-33-000-investigations>

³ <https://amcham.org.mx/sites/default/files//publications/BusinessSecuritySurvey2018.pdf>

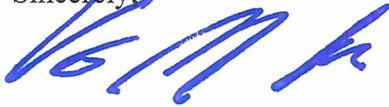
⁴ <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories/mexico-travel-advisory.html>

and Service of Tax Administration. This was a step in the right direction. However, cargo theft, robbery, and other violent acts continue to be perpetrated on major thoroughfares across Mexico. Mexico's National Chamber of Freight Transport (CANACAR) reported a 6 percent rise in cargo thefts between January and April of 2019.⁵ While businesses and individuals alike have taken steps to mitigate the risks, including paying a protection fee to criminal organizations, this should not and cannot be the status quo we allow to continue. As such, we respectfully request your assistance to obtain an assurance that Mexico will maintain the security measures associated with this program on designated highways and provide a timeline to expand such measures to all federal highways that connect to ports of entry along the U.S. – Mexico border.

Inaction and empty promises are a threat to the success of USMCA. In fact, it has left companies doing business across our southern border to invest resources in private security. We cannot stand aside and let this continue, particularly not along key North American trade routes. We can no longer afford to separate public security from trade as this faulty distinction will perpetuate severe economic and security implications. We believe these negotiations provide an opportunity to secure a pledge from Mexico that it will take concrete steps to break down this remaining barrier to secure American trade.

In closing we want to leave you with this thought. Our borders are complex ecosystems rather like a coral reef. We must treat our borders as holistically as we do a coral reef. It is not enough that we simply clean up the water so that tourists will enjoy the beach, we must eliminate the sources of pollution so that the beach endures. The future of U.S. – Mexico economic cooperation and our ability to reap the benefits of the USMCA hinge on Mexico taking bold steps to break the cycle of insecurity.

Sincerely,



Vicente Gonzalez
Member of Congress



Filemon Vela
Member of Congress

⁵ <https://www.freightwaves.com/news/in-mexico-officials-prioritize-safeguarding-high-crime-highways>