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| |  |  | | --- | --- | | **For Immediate Release:** | **Contact:** [Megan Taylor](mailto:Megan_Taylor@heller.senate.gov) | | May 10, 2017 | 202-224-6244 |   **Heller Demands Answers from Customs and Border Protection**    **Washington, D.C.** – U.S. Senator Dean Heller (R-NV) is asking U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) for answers concerning short staffing at critical airports. McCarran and Reno-Tahoe international airports are essential to the state’s tourism economy, it’s crucial that enough CBP officers are in place to maintain safe and efficient travel. Both airports serve over 50 million passengers each year.  With over 200 weekly nonstop flights through Las Vegas alone, [Heller recently urged the Department of Homeland Security (DHS)](https://www.heller.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/2017/3/heller-urges-dhs-to-strengthen-travel-security-to-protect-nevada-tourism) to provide the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) and the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) with the resources it needs to support Nevada’s airports like McCarran and Reno.  **The letter reads in full:**  The Honorable Kevin McAleenan  Acting Commissioner  U.S. Customs and Border Protection  1300 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  Washington, DC. 20229-0002  *Dear Commissioner McAleenan,*    *As a member of the Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee, which oversees the effectiveness of our nation’s air travel, I write to you today regarding the importance of improving the hiring of U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officers.  Efficient air travel is a critical component of Nevada’s tourism economy, which is why I want to ensure there are enough CBP officers to meet Nevada’s growing demand for international flights into Las Vegas and Reno-Tahoe International Airports.*    *The impact of tourism on Nevada’s economy and employment cannot be understated, and my state is always working to expand that footprint both domestically and internationally.  To do that, the international airports in Nevada must have the resources needed to conduct efficient security screenings and continue to attract additional international flights into Reno and Las Vegas.  Better passenger processing creates a more enjoyable travel experience to Nevada, which will ensure our state remains a premier travel destination for the international community.*    *That is why I am concerned about reports that CBP is short-staffed, forcing the agency to reject requests for service from ports of entry, including airports. Furthermore, I am concerned that a shortage in CBP officers could result in a transfer of CBP officers away from Nevada or ongoing vacancies.  Given the impact of this issue on my state, I respectfully request that CBP identify similar federal agencies that have robust hiring processes—such as the Federal Bureau of Investigations, the Secret Service, or the Drug Enforcement Agency—and collaborate with those agencies to determine ways to improve and streamline CBP’s hiring process.  Furthermore, I ask that you provide a response to the following questions:*     * *What are the barriers that CBP faces when attempting to recruit and retain CBP officers?*      * *Are there flexibilities that Congress can provide to expedite the process, while also maintaining a robust vetting of any potential new hires?*      * *Which aspect of the hiring process is creating the most delay?*      * *After conducting a review of other agencies’ hiring processes, are there improvements that CBP will be making to increase the number of successful candidates?*     *Thank you again for your partnership in advancing important Nevada priorities. I look forward to continuing our work together and request a response by May 23, 2017.  Please do not hesitate to contact me should you have any further questions or if I can do anything to be helpful.*    *Sincerely,*  *DEAN HELLER*  *U.S. Senator*  ###  [cid:image005.png@01D15EA3.CEBDCB00](http://www.facebook.com/pages/US-Senator-Dean-Heller/325751330177)[cid:image006.png@01D15EA3.CEBDCB00](http://twitter.com/SenDeanHeller)[cid:image007.png@01D15EA3.CEBDCB00](http://www.youtube.com/user/SenDeanHeller) |