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| **For Immediate Release:** | **Contact:**Megan Taylor |
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**Heller, Nevada Delegation Members Push Federal Agency To Address Staffing Shortage at McCarran That Threatens Nevada Economy, Local Jobs**

**WASHINGTON** – U.S. Senator Dean Heller (R-NV) today led members of the Nevada congressional delegation in urging the United States Customs and Border Protection (CBP) to immediately address a staffing shortage at McCarran International Airport located in Las Vegas, Nevada that threatens Nevada’s tourism economy and 500 local jobs.

Currently, a LATAM flight from Sao Paulo, Brazil is flying into McCarran three times per week. While this flight lands outside of CBP standard working hours, a temporary agreement was arranged between the airport authority and the agency to provide a limited amount of CBP overtime hours to allow inspectors to process visitors from that flight. The overwhelming success of the LATAM flight led to the airline moving to add a winter service from mid-December through February and express interest in a year-round service.  Unfortunately, CBP officials at McCarran have indicated that they will not provide the staffing necessary to clear this early-morning flight.

“*Without CBP’s immediate assistance, LATAM will cancel and move this flight. The cost to the Las Vegas economy would be instantaneous -- $15 million in economic development and up to 100 jobs. The loss of year-round LATAM service would likely cost the region $70 million and nearly 500 jobs. Making matters worse, additional carriers from Asia, Australia, and South America are also interested in scheduling new flights to Las Vegas with early morning arrival times*,” **the members of the Nevada delegation wrote.** “*Without a solution to the near-term problem, this growth will be stifled and the associated economic loses will be dramatically compounded. We request that CBP work with local airport and tourism officials to resolve this matter as soon as possible*.”

Southern Nevada welcomes nearly one million tourists from across the United States and abroad during any given week, and Las Vegas hosts more than 40 million visitors each year.

 U.S. Senator Cortez Masto (D-NV) and U.S. Representatives Dina Titus (D-NV), Ruben J. Kihuen (D-NV), and Jacky Rosen (D-NV) signed the letter.

**The full text of the letter is available HERE  and can also be found below:**

*The Honorable Kevin McAleenan
Commissioner
U.S. Customs and Border Patrol
1300 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC  20229*

*Dear Commissioner McAleenan:*

*We write to you today regarding a Customs and Border Patrol (CBP) Inspector staffing shortage at McCarran International Airport with serious economic implications for Nevada. Our hope is that you will be able to address this concern quickly before it results in the loss of up to 500 local jobs.*

*As you know, Las Vegas is one of the most popular destinations in the U.S. for international travelers. In that regard, tourism, and specifically air-travel, is critical to the economy of the city, the region, and the state. We have a deep appreciation for CBP’s important role ensuring those entering the U.S. at airports are doing so lawfully. We also recognize that CBP faces competing demands for its inspectors and that these limited resources can create staffing challenges. Nonetheless, McCarran is facing an urgent CBP staffing problem that threatens millions of dollars in economic activity and hundreds of jobs.*

*Currently, a LATAM flight from Sao Paulo, Brazil is flying into McCarran three times a week, landing at 6:30 AM PT. Although CBP generally does not begin working until 10:00 AM PT at McCarran, a temporary agreement was arranged between the airport authority and the agency providing a limited amount of CBP overtime hours to allow inspectors to process visitors from that flight. The cost for these inspectors is covered by LATAM and McCarran.*

*The LATAM flight at issue has been very successful, typically operating at nearly 100 percent capacity. Based on this overwhelming response, LATAM moved to add a winter service from mid-December through February and have indicated they are interested in year-round service.  Unfortunately, CBP officials at McCarran have indicated they will not provide the staffing necessary to clear this early-morning flight, even though there are funds to cover the required staffing. Needless to say, this is deeply concerning to us as members of the Nevada Congressional Delegation.*

*Without CBP’s immediate assistance, LATAM will cancel and move this flight. The cost to the Las Vegas economy would be instantaneous -- $15 million in economic development and up to 100 jobs. The loss of year-round LATAM service would likely cost the region $70 million and nearly 500 jobs.*

*Making matters worse, additional carriers from Asia, Australia, and South America are also interested in scheduling new flights to Las Vegas with early morning arrival times. Without a solution to the near-term problem, this growth will be stifled and the associated economic loses will be dramatically compounded.*

*We request that CBP work with local airport and tourism officials to resolve this matter as soon as possible. In that regard we are committed to working with you, your agency, and the Department of Homeland Security to find a timely interim solution to allow the aforementioned LATAM flight the ability to operate through the winter season and into 2019. We also want to work with you to resolve long term CBP staffing issue at McCarran that will continue to allow for strong economic growth.*

*Thank you for your immediate attention to this problem. We look forward to your response within the next two weeks with a solution to this matter.*

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