Washington State Legislature

September 18, 2018

The Honorable Wilbur Ross
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Ave NW
Washington, D.C. 20230

Re: Urgent request of Washington State 7th District Legislators and Northeast Washington County Commissioners

Dear Secretary Ross,

We are writing to make you aware of the United States Customs and Border Protection (USCBP) actions to reduce port of entry hours slated for October 1, 2018 that may have negative consequences to both Ferry and Pend Oreille Counties. We believe USCBP's actions, in reducing the port hours for Danville and Metaline Falls run completely counter to President Trump's directives and his task force on rural prosperity. We are requesting your help in asking the CBP to cease and desist the October 1st, 2018 date in order for them to implement the proper procedure in making such a decision.

We are offended and beyond exasperated at the lack of regard USCBP has shown for the economy and quality of life in Ferry and Pend Oreille Counties and the hardship its decision to reduce border crossing hours will have on our citizens and small businesses, an area that consistently suffers double-digit unemployment. This decision may impact a $1 million USDA loan that was recently awarded to one of our small businesses in Ferry County along with the SBA business plan for another small business in Ferry County. It also has the potential to negatively impact a planned increase in production output of the Pend Oreille Mine in Metaline Falls. That increase in production has the potential to increase tax revenue to the local, state and federal governments beyond its 2018 tax estimate of $11,025,000! Our economy is under industrialized, based upon cross border commerce and natural resources. **While the proposed reduction in hours will affect .003% of the overall USCBP budget, it will come out of the pockets of businesses and families in our counties. USCBP may "work" worldwide for our nation but they do not seem to realize or care that the citizens in our counties and all counties with border ports are that nation which they serve.** In other words, does the USCBP have a mission to close rural crossings without regard to economic consequences to the taxpayers?

Border hours should not be limited to the tariff collected at the ports but also be measured by flow of cross border commerce. Having the ability to cross these ports from 8 AM to 12PM has allowed for locals and travelers to live and work and conduct commerce within our counties. Reducing these hours is counterproductive to local business and taxpayers.

Taking critical dollars away from local taxpayers and businesses in order to supplement the USCBP is no way to "Make America Great."

Public safety is another consideration. With reduced hours, any traffic sent on the "alternate route" will have to **needlessly travel an additional 30 to 70 miles over mountain passes in the wintertime**, putting those travelers in harm's way. How does that help "Make America Great"?

USCBP's impending decision lacks meaningful involvement with our citizens and local elected officials, lacks any desire to understand the unique economy and relationship we have with our neighbors to the north, and demonstrates an unwillingness to adjust border hours in a way that does not undermine our rural communities' economy. USCBP led its "purported community involvement" with a decision they had already made. Further, USCBP's involvement with our communities consisted of one public meeting in Colville (not in the affected communities of Ferry or Pend Oreille Counties). Its "public outreach" consisted of media releases stating their decision sent to weekly papers only 6 days (including Saturday and Sunday) ahead of the meeting.

As a result, we took the unprecedented step as local state legislators and local elected officials to seek USCBP's data and decision-making process through a formal freedom of information act (FOIA) request. That request was formally submitted to USCBP on July 10, 2018 and they have acknowledged receipt. With less than 13 days to go until the port of entry hours are changed to the detriment of our local economy, we have yet to receive a response to our FOIA.

To no avail, we have asked USCBP to temporarily suspend its decision to so we can all sit down together and look at options that will address USCBP's concerns in a way that will allow our local businesses and our neighbors to the north to thrive and prosper. We do not believe our request is unreasonable. To do so would preserve President Trump's principles and desire to make our country prosperous, regardless of where a person lives or works.

As a key member of President's Trump's cabinet, we ask for your help. Thank you for your immediate consideration, your commitment to rural economic development and the safety of our citizens and your service to the United States of America.

Cordially,

Shelly Short	Joel Kretz	Jacquelin Maycumber
State Senator	State Representative	State Representative
7th Legislative District	7th Legislative District	7th Legislative District

Johnna Exner
Commissioner District 1
Ferry County

Nathan Davis
Commissioner District 2
Ferry County

Mike Blankenship
Commissioner District 3
Ferry County

Karen Skoog
Commissioner District 1
Pend Oreille County

Mike Manus
Commissioner District 2
Pend Oreille County

Stephen Kiss
Commissioner District 3
Pend Oreille County

Wes McCart
Commissioner District 1
Stevens County

Donald Dashiell
Commissioner District 2
Stevens County

Steve Parker
Commissioner District 3
Stevens County

cc: Congresswoman Cathy McMorris Rodgers, 5th District, Washington
U.S. Senator Patty Murray, Washington
U.S. Senator Maria Cantwell, Washington
Linda McMahon, U.S. Small Business Administration