



# The Senate of the State of Texas

## COMMITTEES:

Finance  
Veterans Affairs & Military Installations  
Subcommittee on Base Realignment  
and Closure - Chair  
International Relations and Trade - Vice Chair  
Infrastructure Development and Security

**Senator Eliot Shapleigh**

District 29

October 30, 2001

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The Honorable George W. Bush  
President of the United States  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Bush:

The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) has fundamentally reoriented our economy. Following World War II, trade in the United States flowed along an east-west axis. That trade resulted from heavy U.S. investment in Germany and Japan through the Marshall Plan. We set up a national highway to support east-west trade and created trust funds at the Congressional level to fund investment in the national highway system and ports on the West and East Coasts.

Since the ratification of NAFTA in November 1993, trade has shifted to a north-south orientation. Port cities such as Detroit, Laredo, El Paso, and Brownsville have joined the ranks of Houston, Boston, Los Angeles, and Seattle as critical junctures in U.S. overland trade. This shift has had a profound effect on infrastructure needs along the Texas Border, now a key player in new NAFTA trade. Today, Texas trade corridors move approximately 80% of all U.S. northbound traffic through Texas' ports-of-entry. Clearly, these ports-of-entry have become the ports of our future.

The events of September 11, 2001, have significantly increased congestion along Texas trade corridors, compounded by the increased suspicion and fear that holds our entire nation hostage as a result of the terrorist attacks. This congestion-- six-hour waits for commercial vehicle crossings and two hours for pedestrian crossings -- at key ports-of-entry has taxed the Texas/Mexico Border as never before.

Just this week, Erika Valenzuela, age 13 and her brother, Daniel, age 6, died of carbon monoxide inhalation while waiting more than an hour and forty five minutes to cross the Bridge of the Americas. In El Paso, with 62 million legal crossings each year, the congestion has imposed an enormous strain on an already over-burdened infrastructure. Ultimately, congestion will move trade to other competitors eager to take advantage of an economy governed by fear.



Our nation is understandably focused on security - how to safeguard our people from further barbaric acts of terrorism. We must never let this war that undermines our confidence dictate our destiny. If we allow congestion at Border ports-of-entry to obstruct free trade with our second largest trading partner only the terrorists will win.

With the words "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself", Franklin Delano Roosevelt moved a whole nation to test the character of its people in a time of uncertainty and trouble. I respect your actions in boldly addressing our nation, enjoining Americans to return to the skies, to get back to their daily lives and resume their business. I now ask you to respond to the crisis at our Border ports-of-entry - so vital to unimpeded north-south trade - with equal authority and courage.

With two "frontier governors" now in their respective nation's highest offices, we have an historic opportunity. We must now act boldly to redefine our relationships and to enhance trade. Open markets, trade, and increasingly close relationships, not isolationism are what terrorists fear most. In the words of Mexican President Fox, "hoy" is the time to act.

We urge you to set out a firm agenda of cross-Border trade now by:

- Investing in a "one-stop" model at Border ports of entry to cross commercial vehicles in twelve minutes, not six hours;
- Issuing thousands of "smart cards" to Border citizens who present no health risk and who are the most frequent travelers across Border points-of-entry;
- Authorizing Border Mass Transit projects at key Border Metroplex communities to cross frequent travelers and shoppers in and out of Border communities;
- Investing in Border rail routes to shift cargo from commercial vehicles and lines to rapid rail and just in time markets;
- Increasing personnel at Border crossings to allow 24 hour port access; and,
- Investing in Border infrastructure to move the goods upon which our prosperity depends.

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We ask that you not deploy National Guard Troops at Border ports-of-entry. Troops will make us feel better but do not make the system work better. In our nation's history we have met adversity and won. In these difficult times, let us define our destiny with the bold actions that have so often guided America through hard times. Now is the time for our country to act. We will follow your lead.

Very truly yours,



Eliot Shapleigh

ES/eh  
Enclosure

cc:    Señor Presidente Vicente Fox  
      The Honorable Collin Powell  
      The Honorable Donald L. Evans  
      The Honorable Tommy G. Thompson  
      The Honorable Gray Davis  
      The Honorable Jane D. Hull  
      The Honorable Gary E. Johnson  
      Señor Gobernador Patricio Martinez  
      The Honorable Rick Perry  
      The Honorable Tom Ridge  
      US Border Senators  
      Texas Border Congressmen  
      Texas Border Senators  
      The Honorable Florence Shapiro  
      Texas Border Representatives  
      The Honorable Bob Hunter  
      Texas Border Mayors  
      Texas Border County Judges  
      Mr. Geoffrey Connor