

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

December 5, 2023

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20006

The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas
Secretary
Department of Homeland Security
Washington, D.C. 20528

Dear President Biden and Secretary Mayorkas,

I write once again requesting an immediate surge of resources to address the humanitarian crisis and an update on the Southwest Border Coordination Center's (SBCC) work in response to the current migrant increase in Arizona. While this issue ultimately needs a coordinated and long-term federal and Congressional response, local governments and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) should not shoulder the responsibility to ensure migrants are not left to the wayside as they move through their immigration proceedings. The current situation is both unsustainable and a dereliction of federal responsibility.

As cities and counties across the nation manage their influxes of migrants, I am acutely aware of the unfair shift in federal dollars to other parts of the country resulting in less funding and resources for border states like Arizona on the frontlines of the humanitarian crisis. Pima County is spending close to \$4 million a month in federal funds and is due to run out within the next few months despite assisting and processing more migrants than before. Several southern Arizona municipalities I represent remain increasingly concerned that once funding runs dry, they will no longer be able to provide asylum seekers with critical resources like temporary housing or transportation. These localities deserve answers.

We require an immediate surge in resources and staffing in southern Arizona but recent actions including closing the Lukeville Port of Entry (POE) are unnecessary and inclusively force migrants to even more dangerous areas as they attempt to exercise their international right to seek asylum. In addition, the small number of agents from Lukeville reassigned to respond will only make a marginal impact. The indefinite closure of Lukeville is a major disruption to the borderland communities I represent and many across the state of Arizona. I urge you to reconsider this closure and consult with local stakeholders including the Tohono O'odham Nation.

Lastly, I am calling upon the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to use all available resources and direct the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to support the response to the recent migrant surges. As you may recall, in 2021 DHS directed FEMA to support a government-wide effort to safely receive, shelter, and transfer unaccompanied children

who made the dangerous journey to the U.S. southwest border. I believe the current situation deserves a humane emergency response from all sectors of DHS, including FEMA.

I request formal responses from your administration on several items, including:


1. What is the status of the letter I sent dated September 15, 2023, regarding the influx of migrants and much needed resources for Arizona? I request a formal response no later than December 19, 2023.
2. Southern Arizona communities are worried about the disproportionate distribution of federal funding to other areas of the country. What is being done to address this disparity and to ensure federal funding remains available for those on the frontlines of the humanitarian crisis?
3. As the Member of Congress that represents all Ports of Entry in the state, I request that the Lukeville Port of Entry be immediately re-opened and affirmation that no other POEs along the Arizona border will be impacted moving forward. What is the formal timeline for the reopening of Lukeville port-of-entry? When will it become operational again for general border crossings to resume?
4. In February 2022, DHS formally [established](#) the SBCC, which leads the planning and coordinating of a whole-of-government response to the anticipated increase in border encounters. I would like to request a briefing on the current work SBCC is conducting.
5. What are the prospects of directing FEMA to assist in the response to recent migrant surges as has occurred in the past?

I recognize more and more migrants will continue to make their way to our southern border to claim their international and domestic right to seek asylum and refugee status. A supplemental package that brings resources to manage the crisis and meaningful comprehensive immigration reform is the only path forward. Congress must make concerted efforts to deal with the root causes of migration. As it stands, the hateful and sabotaging tactics of the Republicans in Congress will not solve or lessen the crisis.

Moving forward, I stand ready to work with your administration on ways to alleviate pressure on frontline Arizona communities impacted by the ongoing humanitarian crisis and pass the critical legislation necessary to reform our broken immigration system.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Raúl M. Grijalva". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Raúl M. Grijalva
Member of Congress