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April 18, 2013

The Honorable Janet Napolitano  
Secretary of Homeland Security  
U.S. Department of Homeland Security  
Washington, D.C. 20528

Dear Secretary Napolitano,

I write you today to reiterate my strong opposition to a proposal in the Department of Homeland Security's Fiscal Year 2014 Budget. The proposal, which generally would authorize a study to determine whether additional fees should be assessed on passengers and pedestrians crossing into the United States, would set a disturbing precedent on an already burdened public. I urge you to reject the proposal.

My district in Western New York is home to 5 international border crossings – 3 for automobiles and 2 for rail. Traffic crossing the border is an enormous component of our economy. The economic integration of Western New York and Southern Ontario will define our region economically over the coming decades. Buffalo is able to maintain two major league sports teams because of the growing ticket-buying base of Greater Toronto. This is also the reason why we have low-cost air carriers, thriving shopping malls and stable cultural institutions. The list goes on and on. Clearly better economic integration with Canada and facilitating ease of access between the two countries should be a priority.

Given this, I was shocked to see that the Fiscal Year 2014 budget request proposed a study for a new toll on all passengers and pedestrians crossing the border from Canada into the United States. Putting up economic barriers to regional commerce is the absolute last thing we should be doing to grow the Western New York economy.

I actively oppose this proposal to study any new fees and I urge you to do so as well. At a time when we are looking to increase economic activity at our Northern Border, we should not be authorizing proposals that would do the reverse.

Thank you very much for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



BRIAN HIGGINS  
Member of Congress