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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0308

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THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE

March 12, 2009

Secretary Janet Napolitano
Department of Homeland Security
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20528

Dear Secretary Napolitano,

I am writing to urge you to prioritize the U.S.-Mexico partnership by immediately tackling increased border violence and drug-trafficking. As one of only ten members with a district on the U.S.-Mexico border and a member of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, I acutely understand the need to reduce the movement of fugitives, drugs and guns in and out of our neighboring countries.

As you know, a large portion of the Tucson Sector is located in my district; this sector is the most porous area of the entire U.S.-Mexico Border. In 2008, U.S. Customs and Border Protection agents seized over 30,000 pounds of marijuana and arrested more than 317,000 people trying to enter our country illegally through southern Arizona.

So far this year, over 1,000 homicides have occurred in Mexico due to fighting among competing drug cartels and the Mexican government compared to 6,000 homicides in 2008. In addition, Phoenix now ranks second in the world—after Mexico City—in kidnappings. This is unacceptable and it is clear that bold and collaborative action by the U.S. and Mexican governments is needed.

In November, I participated in a ceremony sponsored by the U.S. Marshal's office in Tucson to honor Mexican law enforcement officials who have been particularly cooperative and effective in working with our federal agencies in critically important anti-crime operations. Sonora police director Juan Manuel Pavon Felix was among the few distinguished Mexican officials who received this recognition. Tragically, a few days later he was assassinated by members of a drug cartel as he entered a hotel near the border in Nogales, Mexico. I was honored to have met this honorable police chief and join Mexican and U.S. officials in mourning his loss. This incident highlights the dramatic need to strengthen our international partnership with Mexico against the current increase in border violence impacting both of our countries.

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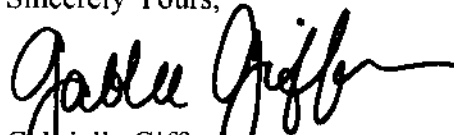
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Last year, I voiced concerns about the Bush Administration's funding request to Congress for the Merida Initiative, a program aimed at reducing drug trafficking across the U.S.-Mexico border. The proposal lacked clear coordination among federal agencies, as well as transparent or measurable benchmarks and metrics for determining the initiative's success. I remain dismayed that this plan has not produced any clear results in stemming the flood of drugs, guns, fugitives and violence that continues to spill into our country, and my district.

As a result, I am planning on hosting a closed door summit in southern Arizona on April 8th for U.S. and Mexican law enforcement officials on the frontlines of this battle to address this national security emergency. I would greatly appreciate your participation and invite you or a representative from your Department to attend. Please contact Liz Berry in my Washington, DC office for further details.

A comprehensive approach to addressing the crisis on our southern border is imperative and I stand committed to working with you to make the U.S.-Mexico relationship a top priority in the Obama Administration. Thank you for your continued leadership on this matter.

Sincerely Yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gabrielle Giffords", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Gabrielle Giffords
Member of Congress