

United States Senate

July 15, 2014

R. Gil Kerlikowske
Commissioner
U.S. Customs and Border Protection
1300 Pennsylvania Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20229

Dear Commissioner Kerlikowske:

Last Wednesday, during a Senate committee hearing on border security, I expressed concerns about the provisions of a policy by Customs and Border Protection (CBP) that effectively prevent Members of Congress and media from obtaining relevant information about the conditions under which large numbers of unaccompanied children are being held at federal facilities in Arizona and other border states. Those provisions prohibit Members of Congress and news media from, among other things, (1) taking photographs of how the federal government is caring for unaccompanied children detained at their facilities; (2) bringing their cell phones into those facilities; (3) speaking with the children detained there; and (4) talking with staff on-location there. They are, in my view, unprecedented and unacceptable.

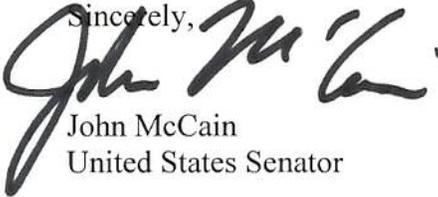
Your letter of July 11, 2014, fails to respond to my concerns. Instead of taking the action I urgently requested to reverse that policy, your letter simply recites the Administration's protocol for tours and visits to CBP facilities housing the unaccompanied children recently detained after they illegally crossed our southern border. In doing so, your letter fails to alleviate my dissatisfaction about how the Administration has addressed congressional and media access to those facilities.

It is clearly in the public's interest to know, and Congress' responsibility to ascertain, exactly how this Administration is addressing the humanitarian crisis that is happening in Arizona and other southern border states. The American people have a right to know the conditions under which unaccompanied minors at those facilities in their respective states are being detained and how they arrived in the United States. And, it is my responsibility as an elected representative from Arizona—and the responsibility of the elected officials of every state affected by this unprecedented crisis—to get the truth about how the Administration is addressing it.

Unreasonable restrictions placed by your office on Members of Congress and the news media, who have a shared responsibility to obtain information on how the Administration is addressing this humanitarian crisis in order to inform the public adequately, undermine fundamental

principles of transparency and democracy. It is, therefore, urgent that the Administration reverse those restrictions immediately.

I look forward to your reply soon.

Sincerely,

John McCain
United States Senator