United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

October 29, 2015

The Honorable Jeh Johnson
Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20528

Dear Secretary Johnson:

We wish to raise a matter that has been brought to our attention (letter attached) concerning the living conditions at Forward Operating Bases (FOB) along the southwest border, specifically FOB Grip, located on the Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife Refuge in Arizona.

According to the National Border Patrol Council and agents stationed at the FOB, there has been four outbreaks of Legionnaires' disease at the FOB caused by contaminated water that is being transported to the FOB by truck. As we are sure you agree, this is unacceptable and should be remedied as quickly as possible. The use of FOB Grip in securing the border is critical but its use should not be at the expense of agents that are away from their homes and families for significant periods of time.

To help better understand the challenges in maintaining the health and safety conditions at FOBs and how DHS intends to remedy the specific health concerns at Forward Operating Base Grip, please provide answers to the following questions:

1. As of your receipt of this letter, how many Border Patrol agents stationed at FOBs along the southwest border have reported contracting or been treated for Legionaries' disease?

2. What steps have been taken by Customs and Border Protection (CBP) to guarantee the delivery of safe drinking water to FOBs and ensure that there is not another outbreak of the disease?

3. What rules or regulations have prevented CBP from drilling a well at FOB Grip to provide clean, safe drinking water to the agents?

4. Has CBP requested permission from Fish and Wildlife Service to drill a well to provide clean, safe drinking water for the Border Patrol agents stationed at Camp Grip? If no, please explain you decision to not make the request.

We appreciated your attention to this matter, in accordance with all existing rules, regulations and ethical guidelines, and look forward to a timely response.

Sincerely,

John McCain
United States Senator

Jeff Flake
United States Senator