1300 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20229

JAN 2 4 2014

U.S. Customs and
Border Protection

Commissioner

The Honorable Martin Heinrich
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Heinrich:

I write to thank you for your efforts to address border enforcement concerns in S. 1805, the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks Conservation Act. The provisions of this bill would significantly enhance the flexibility of U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) to operate in this border area.

As you know, the existing wilderness study area along the south boundary of the West Potrillo Mountains provides CBP with 1/3 of a mile in which to perform its activities. This bill would provide five miles between the U.S.-Mexico border and the area with full wilderness protections. Three miles of this zone would allow normal public access, and an additional two miles would allow restricted use by the public. Throughout the entire buffer zone, CBP could operate motor vehicles, build infrastructure, and carry out other activities as it would on any non-wilderness Bureau of Land Management land.

I also appreciate other security-focused portions of this bill, including:

- Explicit provision to allow the East-West way, which will be closed to the public, to be accessible to CBP and other law enforcement personnel;
- Clarification that no provision of the bill would restrict CBP from pursuit of suspects within the wilderness area, including the use of motorized vehicles in hot pursuit; and
- Clarification that nothing prevents CBP from conducting low-level overflights above the wilderness area.

I look forward to continuing to work with you on efforts to enhance border security.

Sincerely,

Thomas S. Winkowski
Acting Commissioner