

CSG West's Border Legislative Conference Program Launches Report Titled "The U.S.-Mexico Border Economy in Transition."

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Earlier this month, CSG West's Border Legislative Conference (BLC) program was in Washington D.C. to launch a report titled "*The U.S.-Mexico Border Economy in Transition.*" The report was a collaboration between the BLC, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars; Mexico Institute, along with the North American Research Partnership and with the financial backing of USAID Mexico.

The report was a compilation of the findings of four regional economic competitiveness forums organized by the BLC and in close collaboration with members of the Congressional Border Caucus. The forums centered on key U.S.-Mexico trading corridors located within California – Baja California; Arizona – Sonora; Texas -Chihuahua- New Mexico; and Texas– Coahuila- Nuevo Leon- Tamaulipas. The purpose of the forums was to convene key regional stakeholders, to promote the exchange of information on strategies to improve the border region's competitiveness, and develop local, state legislative and executive branch recommendations to achieve the objectives outlined during the events and captured in the report.

The 141 pg. report is composed of five chapters that focus on U.S.-Mexico cross-border economic cooperation, binational economic development along the border region, ports of entry, human capital, and energy. Twenty seven specific recommendations are outlined in detail within the report; certain ideas are familiar such as expanding and promoting trusted traveler and shipper programs, and increasing the use of pre-inspection sites away from congested ports of entry. Other ideas are more novel, such as developing inclusive binational mega regions, such as the CaliBaja Binational Mega Region Initiative, in San Diego and Tijuana, and building binational public transportation options, such as trolleys or dedicated bus lines.

Another particular area of interest and importance outlined in the report is energy. The current administration of Mexican President Enrique Peña Nieto recently passed a series of constitutional reforms that radically transform Mexico's hydrocarbon and electricity sectors and make it possible for private investors to partake in Mexico's oil and gas sector for the first time in 76 years. As noted in the report there is massive upside to this development, particularly along the Texas portion of the U.S.-Mexico border. The report lists a number of recommendations for increasing competitiveness and expanding economic development, such building workforce skills and other human capital needs through increased educational opportunities, but also stressed the need to mitigate the environmental impacts of energy exploration by protecting water resources, and expanding on the southern borders renewable energy potential.

The report comes at a particularly relevant time, as much emphasis has been placed on the U.S.-Mexico bi-national relationship. Last year the two countries including Canada celebrated the 20th anniversary of the North American Free Trade Agreement, and have been meeting regularly since the creation of the U.S.-Mexico High Level Economic Dialogue (HLED). HLED was created to advance strategic economic and commercial priorities central to promoting mutual economic growth, job creation, and global competitiveness. In many ways the release of "*The U.S.-Mexico Border Economy in Transition*" report directly compliments the federal efforts by providing a local voice, and ideas to the dialogue.

The launch was held at the Woodrow Wilson Institute and included the participation of U.S. Representative Henry Cuellar (TX-28), U.S. Representative Beto O'Rourke (TX-16), and U.S. Representative Juan Vargas (CA-51).

To view the full report and for more information on CSG West's Border Legislative Conference program please visit www.borderlegislators.com.