



**Gov. Jan Brewer's Remarks
AMC Plenary – Friday Plenary Session
Friday, June 05, 2009
3:30 p.m.**

Buenas Tardes a Todos. OK, enough of my Spanish!!

Governor Bours, Sub Secretary Heriberto Felix Guerra, Members of the Commissions welcome!

I am excited to be a part of this plenary session—my first as governor and chair of the Arizona-Mexico Commission.

I could not have wished for a more momentous occasion to be here than the 50th anniversary celebration of the Arizona-Mexico Commission and the Comisión Sonora-Arizona.

I would like to say special congratulations to Governor Bours for your six years of commitment and dedication to the Arizona-Sonora relationship. I know our region has benefited from your vision and leadership and we wish you continued success in your future endeavors.

Fifty years ago, two visionary leaders, governors Alvaro Obregon and Paul Fannin founded the two commissions based on a very simple creed:

“God made us neighbors, let us be good neighbors.”

Today these long standing organizations continue the vision to improve the quality of life for the region.

Congratulations to both commissions for all of the accomplishments that have made them the envy of nations as far away as Germany, Poland and the Czech Republic for our model of a successful bi-national border relationship.

Today, we are - *“Recognizing 50 Visionary Years of Mutual Prosperity.”*

Since the inception of the commissions, we've had many people leave their dynamic imprint on our history. It would be impossible to name the Presidents, Executive Directors, staff, and hundreds of committee chairs and the thousands of members who have been involved in the Commissions over the last 50 years. They are the heart and soul of our organizations.

When the AMC was being created in 1959, the president of Mexico, Adolfo Lopez Mateos invited the President of the United States, Dwight D. Eisenhower to meet in Acapulco.

It is reported that the topics for discussion among our Presidents included the construction of a 100 million dollar dam on the Rio Grande, zinc and lead issues, migration, and addressing screwworm problems.

In other words, back in 1959 the two nations were talking about water issues, mineral rights, immigration reform and agricultural pests. Sound familiar? Most of these same issues are the topics for discussion for several of our committees today!

But there is no doubt that the complexity of the relationship has grown significantly. This complexity can make things difficult for all of us. That is why I believe it's important to focus on some broad categories about which we have mutual interest and common ground.

First, with respect to security, I have made it clear that the U.S. federal government must continue to enhance its commitment to border security. While state governments including Arizona are willing to assist, border security is a primary role of the U.S. government.

The only way U.S. federal and state efforts will be successful, though, is when Mexico and the United States share additional common perspectives on travel, transportation, immigration and other matters.

We must work together to ensure that the tourism industry, lawful and appropriate trade and other legitimate interaction between Arizona and Mexico are not harmed and overcome by criminal activity whether it be north or south of our common border.

While border security is essential, I also believe that we need to work toward an appropriate and effective immigration policy. Included in this policy should be a focus on preventing and prosecuting human trafficking activities.

I recognize that the issues associated with immigration policy and illegal crossings are thorny ones but addressing these matters fairly but decisively are ultimately important to all of us.

In developing new border security and immigration policies, the United States must also carefully analyze our National Drug Policy.

We must admit that if it were not for our voracious appetite for illegal drugs the criminal activities in Mexico and other countries around the world would likely be quite different.

While I am not a fan of legalizing marijuana and other currently illegal drugs, I believe we must be honest in admitting we share blame in the violence created through illicit drug trafficking.

My nation must take a comprehensive national look at what works in terms of enforcement, prevention, and treatment.

I believe our national policy-makers must take this matter up and pursue it seriously and expeditiously. I encourage my colleagues and fellow officials from south of the border to continue your efforts to stop the drug trade.

I applaud the valiant efforts of your police, judges and other officials who fight the good fight against criminal elements, creating an environment of fear and violence to protect their ability to peddle these poisons.

Finally with respect to security, we must modernize our ports of entry. The ports of entry between Arizona and Mexico should be outfitted to balance traffic flow with the need for inspection and other security measures.

The competitiveness of our region depends on it. Ports are not just about security but also about the efficient movement of goods and people that will help our region become more competitive.

In studies conducted by the University of Arizona more than a decade ago it was demonstrated that the Arizona-Sonora region was losing its share of North American trade when compared to other parts of the border, primarily Texas and California.

Our number one obstacle was our outdated ports of entry and the long waits to cross the border.

The stakes are high. The Arizona-Sonora region is a critical component of the North American economy.

Our exports to Mexico from Arizona reached nearly \$6 billion in 2008, with total bilateral trade through our ports of entry in excess of \$20 billion.

And we must not forget our visitors from Mexico that come and spend money in our malls, hotels and restaurants, generating over \$2.6 billion in sales in Arizona.

That's an increase of more than 200% since 2001, a remarkable level of growth that indicates just how important Mexican visitors are to the Arizona economy.

For the past 4 years, the AMC has been working on creating a road map for the improvement of our ports of entry. The results have been stellar.

Today, a new port of entry at San Luis, called San Luis II, is close to 95% completed and should open in September. With all of the port and transportation infrastructure investments, the Yuma-San Luis area will be the beneficiary of close to \$170 million.

But we did not stop there. This year we received confirmation that \$200 million in federal stimulus funding will pay for the total reconfiguration of the Mariposa port of entry. This project will double if not triple the inspection capacity at our major gateway for trade in the entire region.

And the Arizona Mexico Commission continues to support efforts to make major improvements at Douglas and the San Luis I ports of entry.

When it is all said and done, by 2015 our border should have received over \$500 million of investment in our ports of entry and the connectivity to our state and federal highway system.

Much of the investment is from federal dollars, and as you all know federal money doesn't just drop from the sky. We have been successful in getting federal funds because we've gotten better at telling our story, and better at developing consensus priorities that all the border communities agree to.

We've also gotten better about coordinating with Sonora so that we are asking Washington and Mexico City for the same priorities at the same time. It has made a huge difference.

We've established the Manufacturing Initiative to bring manufacturing companies to the Arizona-Sonora region. Along similar lines, we've initiated the Maquila Development Supplier Program to source more goods and services for maquilas and from within the region.

The concept of sustainability is closely tied to both regional competitiveness and security. Regional sustainability empowers border communities to be economically self-sufficient.

One example of how the commissions brought a sense of community to the region is through the development of the National Geographic MapGuide.

The Arizona-Sonora region was the first bi-national region to participate in the National Geographic MapGuide program. This program helped increase knowledge about sustainable tourism.

By bringing ecologically and culturally responsible tourism dollars to remote areas in our region, this project financially benefits local communities on both sides of the border.

In an effort to continue to develop a more prosperous regional economy and enhanced quality of life, we also developed early response warning systems that work on an on-going, year-round basis.

This warning system has served us well, allowing for better and faster communication so that the two states could respond together during the recent spread of the H1N1 Influenza virus.

Our success is based on the simple understanding that our futures are tied to each other.

Much has been said of the need to enhance efforts to secure the border. And while this is certainly one of my top priorities, it is also important that we not forget the need to facilitate the effective, efficient and secure crossing of legal trade and people across our borders.

Each example I've shared with you today continues to build on a border region that works – one that is safe, accessible and sustainable.

We recognize there are many issues, but we have a track record of success for over 50 years because we work to resolve them together.

This will further our regional economic prosperity for decades to come. Governor Bours although our time working together has been very short I hope we will continue to see you often.

To the commissions and its members, I want to extend my heartfelt congratulations for 50 years of success. Now, let's get started on the next 50!

Thank you.