



U.S. relationship with Mexico too important to go without ambassador

Issue:

Since the retirement of Tony Wayne in July 2015, the United States has been operating without an ambassador to Mexico, which is our country's third-largest trading partner. Ties between the U.S. and Mexico represent arguably the nation's most important bilateral relationship.



Background:

President Obama last June nominated Assistant Secretary Affairs Roberta Jacobson to serve as the next ambassador to Mexico. In a June 2015 letter to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, the Border Trade Alliance wrote in support of the Jacobson nomination:

Throughout the BTA's history, we have had the pleasure of working with a number of outstanding individuals in government service whose portfolio affects the U.S.-Mexico relationship. Ms. Jacobson, however,

is in a class unto herself. Her appreciation of the close economic and cultural ties that define the cross-border relationship is unmatched, and her confirmation as ambassador would be met with cheers in both countries.

The Foreign Relations Committee in November 2015 by a vote of 12-7 voted to advance Ms. Jacobson's nomination to the full Senate. Two border state members of the committee, Sen. John Cornyn of Texas and Sen. Jeff Flake of Arizona, both voted in favor of the Jacobson nomination.

Since the committee's action, however, Ms. Jacobson's nomination has not been acted on by the full Senate. Sen. Marco Rubio and Sen. Robert Menendez have placed on a hold on the nomination due to their disagreements over the administration's policy towards Cuba.

What others are saying:

Elected officials from both parties and U.S.-Mexico commentators and stakeholders share the BTA's disappointment that the post of ambassador has gone unfilled for so long.

"I just believe that the bilateral relationship with Mexico is so important to the United States and to Texas, and we simply need to fill that position." – Sen. John Cornyn, Texas

"U.S.-Mexico relations are critical to the nation as a whole and, with issues that arise in our bilateral ties hitting particularly close to home, are of paramount interest to border states. Without an ambassador in place, I am concerned that the leadership and prominence required to ensure the continued cooperation on issues that are vital to our interests are lacking." – Sen. Jeff Flake, Arizona, a letter to Senate Majority Leader McConnell

"The United States has not had an ambassador in Mexico since July. This post is far too critical to leave vacant for such a prolonged and indefinite period." -- The Dallas Morning News editorial from Dec. 17, 2015

"Jacobson is supremely qualified. She has worked on Latin American affairs for 30 years under both Democratic and Republican administrations. She has bipartisan support in Congress and her nomination six months ago was warmly received by Mexico." – The San Diego Union-Tribune editorial from Dec. 30, 2015

"But an ambassador vacancy in Mexico represents a particularly egregious lapse of responsibility. It is the U.S.' third largest trading partner and a country with which this nation has a long border and some nettlesome problems to solve." – The San Antonio Express-News editorial from Jan. 3, 2016

The Border Trade Alliance's Position:

The BTA believes strongly that the U.S.-Mexico relationship is far too important for the U.S. not to have a Senate-confirmed ambassador to Mexico.

We urge the Senate to move swiftly to confirm Ms. Jacobson to a post to which she is eminently qualified.

