

May 5, 2015

The Honorable Ron Johnson
Chairman, Homeland Security Governmental Affairs Committee

The Honorable Thomas Carper
Ranking Member, Homeland Security Governmental Affairs Committee

Dear Chairman Johnson and Ranking Member Carper:

We write as border, immigration, faith, labor, environmental, civil rights, and human rights experts and advocates to urge you to oppose S. 750, the misleadingly titled “Arizona Borderlands Protection and Preservation Act,” scheduled for markup on May 6th. S. 750 is a profoundly harmful bill that would subordinate *every* existing legal protection applicable to federal public lands in a vast, 10-million-acre area of Arizona to its unattainable objective of entirely sealing the southwest border. Committee Chairman Johnson and his House counterpart Rep. McCaul have disavowed the goal of stopping every illegal border crosser as unachievable. Earlier this year, Department of Homeland Security Secretary Jeh Johnson described such high apprehension rates as unworkable. A February 2015 report by the Bipartisan Policy Center stresses that “achieving 100 percent enforcement is an unrealistic expectation in any border security effort,” noting that even the former East Germany’s “kill zone” stopped only 95% of crossers.¹

S. 750 sacrifices federal lands by making their primary purpose to facilitate patrols, surveillance, and communications by Customs and Border Protection. The bill marginalizes Native American and environmental interests and would worsen the already massive militarized buildup on the southwest border. S. 750 sweeps aside clean air and water laws, as well as those that protect parks and other public lands, to address a nonexistent problem.

There is simply no need for S. 750. DHS has repeatedly disclaimed the idea that such legislation is required to further border security. Moreover, the HSGAC Committee has not held a single hearing to examine impacts on the environment and Native American communities or build a record justifying such a drastic measure. What any border bill should include are reforms to CBP to ensure greater oversight and accountability, none of which are included in S. 750.

Finally, a vote for S. 750 is a vote against comprehensive immigration reform. Senators should reject the bill’s enforcement-only approach that offers no workable solutions to the immigration system. Senators must not acquiesce to the mirage of a “border-security first” piecemeal approach to immigration reform that comes with no commitment to pass common-sense solutions that would actually benefit America.

¹ *Measuring the Metrics: Grading the Government on Immigration Enforcement*, 44,
http://bipartisanpolicy.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/BPC_Immigration_MeasuringEnforcement.pdf

We urge you to oppose S. 750 and thank you for your consideration. Please contact Greg Chen, Director of Advocacy of the American Immigration Lawyers Association, gchen@aila.org, 202/507-7615.

Yours sincerely,

Aguilas Del Desierto

American Civil Liberties Union

American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME)

American Friends Service Committee

American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA)

America's Voice

Arkansas United Community Coalition (AUCC)

Asian Americans Advancing Justice-Asian Law Caucus

Asian Americans Advancing Justice-AAJC

Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance, AFL-CIO

Border Action Network

Colibrí Center for Human Rights

Equality New Mexico

End Streamline Coalition

Farmworker Justice

Franciscan Action Network

Friends of Friendship Park, San Diego

Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights

Immigrant Law Center of Minnesota

Immigrant Legal Resource Center

Jesuit Conference

The Latin America Working Group

Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns

NAFSA: Association of International Educators

National Council of La Raza

National Employment Law Project

National Immigrant Justice Center

National Immigration Law Center

National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health
National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights
Nebraska Appleseed Center for Law in the Public Interest
NETWORK, A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby
Northern Borders Coalition
OneAmerica (Washington State)
Refugee and Immigration Ministries, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
SEIU – Service Employees International Union
Sisters of Mercy of the Americas
South Asian Americans Leading Together (SAALT)
Southern Border Communities Coalition
United We Dream
Voz Hispana Cambio Comunitario