

Coburn Amendment 1360 — Requiring Front Line Personnel Be Added to the Southern Border Security Commission and the DHS Border Security Oversight Task Force.

Summary: S. 744 establishes a DHS Border Security Oversight Task Force that is given the responsibility of “reviewing and [making] recommendations regarding immigration and border enforcement policies, strategies, and programs that take into consideration their impact on border communities.” The bill also creates a “Southern Border Security Commission” if DHS fails to certify “operational control” of the Southern Border 5-years after the date of the enactment of the act.

This amendment would ensure that representatives from the front-lines of Border Patrol, CBP, US Citizenship and Immigration Services, and ICE are included on both the task force and the commission—chosen by a vote of their peers. Note: the oversight task force would have included several representatives of border patrol chosen by the President, but the task force would not have included other reps from CBP, ICE, or US CIS. The

One of the problems of S. 744 is that it was written by people here in Washington, DC without strong first-hand knowledge of the challenges that we face on our Southern border.

Anyone who has been to the Southern Border and has spoken with the people who are doing this hard work—and often putting their lives on the line in the process—knows that front-line personnel see what works and what doesn't.

Unfortunately, we often don't hear these perspectives in Washington, including even at our committee hearings, where we typically hear from the political leadership.

My office is has spoken with members of the front-line of Border Patrol, Customs and Border Protection, Immigration and Customs Enforcement,

and US Citizenship and Immigration Services—and their unions—and they have told us what is working and what isn't.

They have raised concerns that the authors of this legislation did not seek out or incorporate much of their feedback in the bill.

This amendment would address that problem—ensuring that front-line workers chosen by their peers—are included both in the Southern Border Security Commission and the DHS Border Security Oversight Task Force

It is important that we include these perspectives in the oversight task force and southern border security commission that would be created in this bill.

Importantly, this amendment would not just include Border Patrol officers.

While the Border Patrol is clearly important, and their perspective must be included in the Commission and Oversight Task Force, it is important that we do not forget the other front line workers:

We should include the CBP officers who are charged with enforcing our laws at the ports of entry.

We should include the US Citizenship and Immigration Service employees who are our last line of defense—charged with screening those who are applying for citizenship.

And we must include the ICE agents who have the responsibility of interior enforcement of our immigration laws.

By including all of these perspectives—and ensuring that they are independent and chosen by their peers—we can bring some real expertise to both the Commission and the Oversight Task Force from the front-lines.