

Coburn Amendment 1358 — Requiring Front Line Personnel Be Added to the DHS Border Security Oversight Task.

[Note: We have three related amendments aiming to add front-line personnel to the Oversight Task Force and Border Security Commission. The previous amendment would do both. But we also prepared this one to specifically focus on the DHS Border Security Oversight Task, in case you just wanted to focus on that and/or to avoid a potential procedural objections for amending the bill in two places.]

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.” It would require that Border Patrol officers be on the commission. But this amendment would ensure that CBP, US Citizenship and Immigration Services, and ICE employees are also included.

This would require that front lines representatives from Border Patrol, CBP, US CIS and ICE are included on the commission.

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 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 in the DHS Border Security Oversight Task Force.

It is important that we include these perspectives in the DHS Border Security Oversight Task Force 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 DHS Border Security Oversight Task Force Commission, 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 Commission to ensure that we can secure our borders and enforce our immigration laws.