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Conference of Major Superiors of Men * Defenders of Wildlife * Earthjustice * Endangered
Species Coalition * Friends of Friendship Park (San Diego) * Guadalupe Ranch Corporation
* International League of Conservation Photographers * Klamath Forest Alliance * League
of Conservation Voters * Northern Jaguar Project * Public Employees for Environmental
Responsibility * Sierra Club * Sky Island Alliance * Texas Border Coalition * The
Wilderness Society * The Wildlife Society * United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness
Ministries * United Methodist Church, General Board of Church and Society * Wilderness
Watch**

PLEASE OPPOSE THE CORKER-HOEVEN AMENDMENT TO S. 744

Dear Senator:

We are writing to express our strong objections to the Corker-Hoeven amendment to S. 744. The amendment contains measures intended to provide the illusion of security at a high cost to the nation.

The Corker-Hoeven amendment would unnecessarily mandate the construction of hundreds of miles of additional double layered walls along the Southwest border. Secretary Napolitano testified before the Senate Judiciary Committee that the Border Patrol had already constructed fencing where it was needed. She explained at the first day of the Judiciary Committee's hearings that the Department of Homeland Security's preference was for technology that would provide for more efficient and effective security: "We would prefer having money not so designated so that we can look at technology, air-based, ground-based, manpower, and other needs that may be more fitting to prevent illegal flows across the Southwest border."

There is no security rationale for the mandate for hundreds of more miles of border wall. The provision to transform vehicle barriers to pedestrian wall is a direct refutation of the Border Patrol's own decision that in those particular areas, vehicle barriers are better than walls. This provision appears to ignore previous reports, including several produced by both the Congressional Research Service and the General Accountability Office, that have failed to find any evidence that the existing border wall has made a significant contribution to border security.¹ Further, the maintenance and repair costs for border walls are, as National Guard representatives have been quoted as saying, "a bottomless pit".² The walls constructed to date have been built at an average cost of \$6.5 million per mile. Hundreds of more miles mean billions of more wasted taxpayers' dollars and a landscape doomed to be strewn with rusting metal across America's public lands.

More wall will cause more tremendous damage to the land, wildlife and communities. While border walls are easily circumvented by smugglers going over, under or through the wall, the barriers stop the flow of water. Already, border communities and public lands have experienced serious flooding

¹ See, for example, Congressional Research Report: Border Security: Barriers Along the U.S. International Border, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/homsec/RL33659.pdf>

² <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/homsec/RL33659.pdf>

as the result of the current walls. Roads, commercial stores and public lands have been damaged by this flooding. The wall also severs the migration pathways of imperiled wildlife, including jaguars, ocelots, and big horn sheep, further contributing to their decline.

Our organizations were extremely disappointed that some very modest but important amendments proposed by Senators Ron Wyden and Barbara Boxer were not included. Among other things, these provisions would have required some mitigation of the extensive damage that will be inflicted on the fragile borderland environment from these extreme and unnecessary security measures. We fail to understand how the inclusion of these very modest improvements would have derailed or undermined any of the requirements of this amendment, and in fact they would have done a great deal of good.

More walls will only harm – not protect – America. We ask that this provision be removed from the bill and that decisions about security measures that are needed remain in the purview of the Department of Homeland Security.