

May 8, 2013

The Honorable Patrick J. Leahy
Chairman
United States Senate
Committee on the Judiciary
224 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles E. Grassley
Ranking Member
United States Senate
Committee on the Judiciary
224 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 2051

Re: S. 744 – Vote YES on Feinstein Amendment 11 which would redefine the Southwest border region to be the area within 25 miles of the Southern border.

Dear Chairman Leahy, Ranking Member Grassley, and Members of the Committee:

We, the undersigned organizations, urge you to support Senator Feinstein’s amendment 11 (ARM13559) to S. 744, the Border Security, Economic Opportunity, and Immigration Modernization Act, which is expected to be considered by the Senate Judiciary Committee on May 9, 2013. We are deeply concerned about the expansive definition of the “Southwest border region” in Senate Bill 744, which threatens to subject millions of people, citizens and non-citizens alike, to constant surveillance by government personnel and technology, like drones, far from the border. We write to urge you to support Senator Feinstein’s amendment, which would ensure that newly-deployed enforcement resources are not used far from the border and do not ensnare innocent residents in a network of pervasive surveillance and militarization.

Section 1101 of SB 744 defines the “Southwest border region” as “the area in the United States that is within 100 miles of the Southern border.” That area is home to close to 15 million people. Pursuant to the bill’s requirements, those 15 million people – many of whom live far from the border itself in places like Orange County, California – would be subject to 24-hour drone and video surveillance. In short, there could be drones over Disneyland. The bill allows for other enforcement measures within that expansive area, including the deployment of the National Guard in the interior of the country. Border Patrol already has expansive authority to enforce the law within the border region. Senator Feinstein’s amendment prevents the unreasonable expansion of this authority.

Senator Feinstein’s amendment would redefine the “Southwest border region” to be the area within 25 miles of the Southern border. The amendment thus ensures that the agency’s new powers will remain focused at the border, to better prevent drug and human trafficking, and will not expand into, and damage the quality of life in, communities far from the border. We strongly encourage you to support this amendment and prevent the encroachment of invasive border enforcement into communities. Please do not hesitate to contact Michelle Richardson at mrichardson@dcaclu.org or (202) 715-0825 with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

American Civil Liberties Union
Alliance San Diego
American Immigration Lawyers Association
Arizona-Sonora Border Coalition
California Immigrant Policy Center
Casa Cornelia Law Center - San Diego CA
Catholic Charities, Diocese of San Diego
Central Coast Alliance United for a Sustainable Economy (CAUSE)
Chinese for Affirmative Action
Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles
Community United Against Violence -CUAV
Council on American Islamic Relations (CAIR) - CA
Dolores Street Community Services
DRUM - Desis Rising Up & Moving
DWN
Employee Rights Center
Encuentro
Every neighborhood partnership
Fresno Immigrant Youth in Action (FIYA)
Future Leaders of America, Inc.
Green Valley/Sahuarita Samaritans
Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights
Immigrant Legal Resource Center
Immigration Center for Women and Children
Interfaith Coalition in Immigration (ICOM, Mn)
Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice of San Diego County
Korean Community Center of the East Bay
Korean Resource Center
Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights of the San Francisco Bay Area
The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights
MFSA, Cal-Pac Chapter
Mobilize the Immigrant Vote
Mujeres Unidas y Activas
National Center for Lesbian Rights
National Council of La Raza (NCLR)
National Evangelical Coalition NALEC
National Immigrant Justice Center
National Immigration Project of the NLG
NationaRev. Walter Contreras Vice President of Evangelical Coalition NALEC / LA Red de pastores
Out4Immigration
Pangea Legal Services
Priority Africa Network
San Diego Immigrant Rights Consortium
Seminario Permanente de Estudios Chicanos y de Fronteras
Services, Immigrant Rights and Education Network
Silicon Valley Alliance for Immigration Reform
Southern Border Communities Coalition
Sweetwater Zen Center

The Reformed Church of Highland Park (NJ)
Word for the World