

Agricultural Missions, Inc. ▪ Alliance of Baptists ▪ Bend-Condega Friendship Project
Centro Pastoral, Region 6, Louisville, Kentucky ▪ Columban Center for Advocacy and Outreach
Connie Hogarth Center for Social Action at Manhattanville College ▪ Franciscan Action Network
Friends Committee on National Legislation ▪ Guatemala Human Rights Commission/USA
Hispanic Coalition for Comprehensive Immigration Reform
Institute Justice Team, Sisters of Mercy of the Americas ▪ Jewish Reconstructionist Federation
Marin Interfaith Task Force on the Americas ▪ Medical Mission Sisters' Alliance for Justice
Mennonite Central Committee U.S. ▪ Missionary Oblates Justice and Peace office - Washington D.C.
National Advocacy Center Sisters of the Good Shepherd ▪ National Council of Churches of Christ, USA
National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference ▪ Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Washington Office
SHARE Foundation: Building a New El Salvador Today ▪ Standing For Truth Foundation
Union for Reform Judaism ▪ Unitarian Universalist Associations of Congregations
The United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries
The United Methodist Church – General Board of Church and Society ▪ Witness for Peace

June 4, 2009

Dear Representative:

We are writing to you to express our strong support for H.R. 2076, the Border Security and Responsibility Act of 2009.

As people of faith and stewards of God's great earth, we are gravely concerned about the environmental destruction currently occurring in the U.S.-Mexico border region due to construction of border fencing and walls. Nearly one-third of U.S. land along this border lies in public hands, including national wildlife refuges, national parks, and national forests. The border fence currently cuts through places like Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument, home to over 500 species of plants, 50 species of mammals, and nearly 300 species of birds. Fencing and walls, though doing little to stop human migration, are severing migration routes and destroying thousands of acres of wildlife habitat. Barriers resulted in extensive flooding at Organ Pipe last summer and also in Nogales, Mexico, contributing to the deaths of two people.

On April 1, 2008, the Department of Homeland Security began using a blanket waiver of environmental and land management laws along 470 miles of the U.S.-Mexico border in order to speed construction of the fence. Laws waived included the Clean Air Act, the Safe Drinking Water Act, the National Environmental Policy Act, and the Endangered Species Act. Such laws are designed not only to protect wildlife and natural habitats, but to protect human health as well.

Opposition to construction of the border fence comes not only from those interested in protecting the environment, but also from private property owners, business owners, and local governments. **On April 23, the "Border Security and Responsibility Act 2009," H.R. 2076, was introduced by Rep. Raul M. Grijalva, and to date has 22 cosponsors.**

We urge you to cosponsor H.R. 2076. This legislation would:

- Provide for flexibility rather than a one-size-fits-all approach to border security. In addition to calling for a strategy that takes into consideration the effectiveness of various security measures, the bill would review associated costs to promote fiscal responsibility and to minimize impacts to cultural and natural resource investments.
- Allow land managers, local officials, and local communities to have a say in border security decisions, requiring full public notice and participation.

- Ensure full compliance with laws intended to protect air, water, wildlife, culture, and health and public safety.
- Develop initiatives to help mitigate damage to communities and natural resources, including the network of congressionally protected federal lands along the border.

But ask the animals, and they will teach you; the birds of the air, and they will tell you; ask the plants of the earth, and they will teach you; and the fish of the sea will declare to you. Who among all these does not know that the hand of the Lord has done this? In his hand is the life of every living thing and the breath of every human being (Job 12:7-10 NRSV).

Sincerely,

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