

## ***Will Push Legislation to Complete Border Fence***

**(WASHINGTON, D.C.)** – U.S. Rep. Mike Coffman (R-Colorado) announced today that he will introduce legislation to complete the border fence with Mexico. His announcement comes on the heels of a recent trip he made to the Arizona-Mexico border where Coffman was able to observe key sections of the border and meet with local ranchers, citizen groups, the U.S. Border Patrol, and other law enforcement agencies to discuss the problems associated with human smuggling and drug trafficking across the U.S. and Mexico border areas.

“I believe securing our borders is within reach if we have the will to do it. The problem is that the border fence is yet to be completed,” said Coffman.

Coffman visited an area known as the *Tucson Sector*. The Tucson Sector is a 262-mile stretch of the border known for having the highest rates of apprehensions on the U.S.-Mexico border. In 2008, there was an average of 900 apprehensions a day making up 40% of the total border apprehensions on the entire U.S.-Mexico border.

The Department of Homeland Security has completed only 375 miles of border fencing and 300 miles of vehicle barriers on the 1,950 mile border with Mexico. Coffman believes that the border fence provides an effective and an important linear defense that can be enhanced, in depth, by U.S. Border Patrol agents, ground sensors, cameras, and even thermal imaging that can detect movements at night.

“I observed a variety of barriers on the Arizona-Mexico border, all of them commonly referred to as *the fence*. I saw everything from an impressive 15-foot metal fence to a four-foot system of metal rails meant to stop only vehicles. It’s a patchwork system with many gaps, and we can do better. All three elements can work together—the fence, Border Patrol agents, and technology. There is no doubt that we need more of all these elements if we are to achieve true border security,” said Coffman.

According to Coffman, another part of the problem with enforcement is that Border Patrol has limited access to national park lands and the Native American Indian reservations that are on the border. There are over 100 critical miles of the Arizona-Mexico border in this 262-mile sector that are restricted to any fencing and where the Border Patrol has only limited access because the border crosses public lands managed by the National Park Service, the Forest Service, the Fish and Wildlife Service, or the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

“I was stunned by the conflicting missions and the lack of cooperation between the Department of the Interior and Homeland Security when it comes to protecting our borders,” said Coffman.

“The Border Patrol has designated 100 miles of public lands to the west of Nogales as its most significant problem, yet their access to that land is restricted and they can’t complete the fence there. It appears that protecting the rights of the pronghorn sheep to go back and forth between Mexico and the United States is more important than protecting our borders,” said Coffman.