

MIKE COFFMAN
6TH DISTRICT, COLORADO

ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0606

July 3, 2018

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President Donald J. Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, D.C., 20500

Dear Mr. President:

I write to you today to request you address an urgent issue regarding the reunification of the children who were separated from their parents who were or are being prosecuted for illegally entering the U.S. I appreciate the fact that the practice of separating these families has stopped. However, the issue of reunifying those already separated remains open. To reunify these families quickly, I urge you to appoint one individual, preferably someone with a military background, to cut through all of the red tape between these multiple bureaucracies.

I personally traveled to the border (El Paso, TX) last weekend and met with the leadership of the Border Patrol and visited the Tornillo Detention Center where some of the separated children are detained. I also met with officials from a variety of other federal agencies. Each official I spoke to narrowly provided answers with respect to his or her agency's limited jurisdiction. From this trip, it is clear to me that there is confusion on the ground due to the number of federal agencies involved. These activities range from the apprehension, the initial detention of these families, and to the separation and detention of the children. This is in addition to all these activities and various holding areas along the southern border of the U.S. Today, I made an additional visit to an adult detention center in my hometown of Aurora, Colorado. This facility currently holds 42 adults who were separated from their families at the U.S.-Mexico border. We need to reunite these parents with their children promptly.

There are three major federal departments, along with their respective federal agencies beneath them, involved in immigration proceedings revolving around these separated families: The Department of Justice (DOJ), the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), and the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Coordinating the actions of all these different agencies, with their different procedural policies and disparate record-keeping systems, is problematic even in the best of times, but when immediate results are required, as is the case here, it is more likely that the results will be chaos.

The focus here is clear: the federal government must provide the parents with reliable up-to-date information about where their children are and turn all of its efforts into reuniting these children with their parents immediately.

To that end, I urge you to appoint and empower a single individual to direct this effort. You should provide this individual the authority to cut across all of the departments and agencies of the federal government that have their fingerprints on the separation and reunification of these families. I believe you should select for this position, an individual with the experience of running a large and complex organization. Flag officers in our armed forces., in particular, have the training and expertise in coordinating complex operations involving different military units, different branches of our military, and even coordinating allied forces toward the completion of a unified mission. Such skills are essential to ensuring that the effort to reunify families proceeds quickly.

Thank you for considering my recommendation, and I look forward to your response and to seeing these families reunited quickly.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Mike Coffman", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Mike Coffman
U.S. Representative
6th District of Colorado