



SB 684(Hueso) - California Border Commission

Summary

SB 684 requires a restructuring of California-Mexico Border Affairs under one public stakeholder commission to improve efficiency, maximize resources, and increase community input.

Background

Existing law establishes the California Border Relations Council and the Office of Binational Border Health. On December 4, 2019, Governor Newsom entered into a memorandum of understanding between our state and the State of Baja California and Baja California Sur to establish the Commission of the Californias.

The border region was particularly hard hit by the COVID-19 pandemic. Imperial County was the epicenter of the COVID-19 pandemic. With infection rates six times as high as California's rate as a whole, patients had to be transported as far as Sacramento. In San Diego, communities along the border were harder hit, with the zip codes closest to the Border experiencing rates 5x as high in comparison to the rest of the county¹ and a significant portion of those who became unemployed, coming from Black and Hispanic communities clustered along the border.²

Why this bill is needed?

As the fifth largest economy in the world, California has positioned itself as a global leader. Our close proximity and shared values with Mexico have resulted in a high degree of economic, social, and cultural interdependence. Our shared border poses a unique set of challenges and opportunities that affect one of the most economically successful regions in the world. The border region was particularly hard hit by the COVID-19 pandemic, whose impacts were exacerbated by long-standing inequities including high

unemployment, limited access to services, and underinvestment in the region. Building a 21st century border economy will be key to California's economic recovery.

Although three state entities exist in state government, there continues to be underinvestment in the region, a lack of adequate coordination with local stakeholders, and no strategic planning. Understanding of the unique challenges and opportunities will be required to address long-standing inequities. Given the importance of the border region, the distinct nature of the challenges and opportunities faced by the region, and limited state resources, it is appropriate for the state to have a singular public stakeholder commission capable of developing policy proposals and recommendations to address the challenges and seize the opportunities that come with bordering a foreign country.

To accomplish this, the commission will be comprised of 11 members: nine voting members and two nonvoting members (a Senator and an Assembly member). The nine voting members will include three representatives from Imperial County, three representatives from San Diego County, and three representatives from the public at large. The commission will be tasked with developing policy proposals and recommendations to improve outcomes in the border region.

Staff Contact

Aaron Brieno

Deputy Chief of Staff

Aaron.Brieno@sen.ca.gov

Capitol Office: 916-651-4040

¹ San Ysidro Health

² "COVID-19 Impact on the San Diego Region: Black and Hispanic Communities Hardest Hit." SANDAG, https://www.sandag.org/uploads/publicationid/publicationid_4679_27578.pdf.

