

RAÚL M. GRIJALVA  
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April 27, 2021

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden  
President of the United States  
White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20500

The Honorable Kamala Harris  
Vice President of the United States  
White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden and Vice President Harris,

I write to first and foremost applaud President Biden for tasking Vice President Harris to oversee and provide leadership to our nation's borders, primarily the Southern border with Mexico. For too long, we've seen inflammatory rhetoric and political opportunism continually impede efforts to address the balance between security, humanitarianism, and legal processes that the border desperately needs. Without taking urgent action and implementing a multi-pronged approach to address the myriad of issues at the border; human desperation, hopelessness, and fear will continue to dominate immigration issues.

As a Member of Congress who represents a district along the Southern border, I have witnessed firsthand the devastating impacts of the previous administration's punitive immigration policies. From border wall construction wreaking havoc on the environment and wildlife, border communities, and Native American sacred sites to the thousands of families and unaccompanied children that are presenting themselves at ports of entry seeking asylum from incredible violence and persecution in their countries of origin, these consequences continue impacting those who call the border home.

As your administration develops a plan to redirect funding, repurpose contracts, and restore the land damaged by the border wall construction, I once again urge that the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to:

- Develop a meaningful environmental mitigation plan for the borderlands with local stakeholders.
- Immediately cancel all border wall contracts and not initiate new contracts or resume any construction activities.
- Divert remaining funds to other purposes, including mitigating harms from the wall and removing border wall in places with particularly destructive environmental damage and destruction of sacred sites.
- Rescind the Real ID Act of 2005 harmful waiver entirely to prevent future abuse of power at the expense of our communities.


- Remove all military personnel and equipment from border communities, including rescinding any maintenance contracts for concertina wire.

Throughout Southern Arizona non-governmental organizations, counties, and cities have a history of helping asylum-seeking families navigate a difficult and complex asylum process after they are released from DHS. With limited support from the federal government, they ensure families receive basic necessities, medical care, and assistance with travel arrangements while providing them with important information on their immigration court proceedings. As non-governmental organizations, counties, and cities continue to assist, I ask that federal funds be designated so these entities can immediately access them and continue helping asylum-seeking families. These entities have the expertise and desire to support these families. The millions of dollars designated towards the DHS soft-sided detention facilities and hotel beds and related services to provide for Emergency Family Reception Sites (EFRS) ignore the community-based options for asylum-seekers that have the proven reputation, demonstrated success, and capacity to collaborate with the federal government to address this ongoing challenge. The resources needed by community-based options are minor compared to the expense of DHS soft-sided detention facilities and emergency family shelters.

Finally, I would like to raise concerns regarding the presence of military personnel and equipment at the border. While Governor Ducey continues to militarize the southern border with his latest politically-motivated deployment of the National Guard, it is imperative that asylum-seeking families are not met with guns and troops. This deployment is a waste of taxpayer dollars and does nothing to address the needs of these families and those assisting them. It is unfortunate, though not surprising that Governor Ducey has decided to take unilateral action without consulting with the various local officials on the current needs of border communities. As the Arizona Coalition of Border Communities, a group of officials from Pima, Santa Cruz, Cochise, and Yuma counties stated, “Based on our experience, the Arizona National Guard is not needed for security or providing those tasks required of the federal government.”

Please know that you have an open invitation to visit Southern Arizona and I look forward to welcoming you. Thank you for your consideration and for working proactively with border communities to address these concerns.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Raúl M. Grijalva". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Raúl M. Grijalva  
Member of Congress