

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

July 21, 2017

The Honorable Rodney Frelinghuysen
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
H-305 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nita Lowey
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable John Carter
Chairman
Subcommittee on Homeland Security
B-307 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Lucille Roybal-Allard
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Homeland Security
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Frelinghuysen, Ranking Member Lowey, Chairman Carter, and Ranking Member Roybal-Allard:

As Members of Congress who represent constituents who live and work along the U.S. southern border, we write to express our opposition to the funding and construction of border walls, including replacing vehicle barriers with pedestrian walls or the conversion of existing flood control levees into levee-border walls. While the false narrative of a violent and insecure border region has long been used to justify legislation that has negative economic and civil rights impacts on border communities, the southern border is not a war zone. In fact, communities along the southern border are some of the safest in the United States.


Walls along the southern border separate and intimidate communities, encroach on landowner rights, harm wildlife, and serve as an un-American symbol of hatred toward immigrants who contribute so much to our country. To build the existing wall, hundreds of private landowners and municipalities had their property condemned and lawsuits are still dragging through federal courts. The placement of the existing wall also forced U.S. citizens to live in a “no-man’s land,” between border barriers and the actual border. Additional walls would mean that hundreds more would lose the farm and ranch lands that provide economic support for their families and border communities.

Lands set aside by the Federal government for conservation and protection, from the Otay Mountain Wilderness Area to the Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument to the Lower Rio Grande Valley National Wildlife Refuge, have also been torn apart by border barriers. The continued separation of protected lands, including the Santa Ana National Wildlife Refuge, will push endangered ocelots, jaguars, Sonoran pronghorns, and other species closer to extinction, and will irreparably harm eco-tourism industries.

In Nogales, border walls contributed to flooding that resulted in millions of dollars of damage and the drowning of two people. In other areas, sections of the border wall have been ripped out and washed away by floodwaters. The conversion of vehicle barriers to pedestrian walls across river beds or the erection of border walls in the Rio Grande flood plain pose a serious flooding risk to ecosystems and communities.

The Government Accountability Office (GAO) reported in February that maintaining the existing border walls and patrol roads will cost \$3.5 billion over the next 20 years. The same GAO report also found that Customs and Border Protection has not demonstrated that the 654 miles of existing border wall has had any impact on border security. We oppose the FY 2018 Homeland Security Appropriations Bill which funds the construction of border walls. We will also oppose bills on the House floor that attach poison pills like border wall funding, including the replacement of vehicle barriers with pedestrian walls and the conversion of existing flood control levees into levee-border walls.

Sincerely,


FILEMON VELA
Member of Congress


RAÚL GRIJALVA
Member of Congress


JOAQUIN CASTRO
Member of Congress


RUBEN GALLEGO
Member of Congress



GENE GREEN
Member of Congress


VICENTE GONZALEZ
Member of Congress

Beto O'Rourke.

BETO O'ROURKE
Member of Congress


JUAN VARGAS
Member of Congress


HENRY CUELLAR
Member of Congress


MARC VEASEY
Member of Congress