

December 1, 2020

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
S-128 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Vice Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
S-146A The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Shelley Moore Capito
Chairwoman
Subcommittee on Homeland Security
Appropriations
131 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jon Tester
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Homeland Security
Appropriations
128 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nita M. Lowey
Chairwoman
Committee on Appropriations
United States House of Representatives
H-307 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kay Granger
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
United States House of Representatives
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Lucille Roybal-Allard
Chairwoman
Subcommittee on Homeland Security
Appropriations
2006 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Chuck Fleischmann
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Homeland Security
Appropriations
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

**Re: Please Reject Border Wall Funding in the Final Fiscal Year 2021
Appropriations Bill**

Dear Chairs and Ranking Members:

We write to strongly urge that Congress not include any funding for construction of more border wall system in the final fiscal year 2021 appropriations. Specifically, we urge Congress to stop funding President Trump's border wall and reject the proposed \$1.96 billion contained in the Senate's Homeland Security appropriations bill that would bankroll 82 more miles of Trump's costly and harmful wall. We also wish to express strong support for \$75 million provided in the House version of the Department of Homeland Security appropriations bill to begin to address damage by border wall construction on public lands.

By January 20, 2021, the Trump administration will have foisted well over 400 miles of border wall on California, Arizona, New Mexico and Texas. While media

reports have often characterized much of this construction as “replacement” barriers, in fact, the 30 foot wall is new, impenetrable to most wildlife, and significantly more destructive than the vehicle barriers that were in many of those locations earlier. The construction of this 30 foot wall has torn apart and blasted some of our nation’s most spectacular lands, literally blown up Native American burial sites and other important sites for Native American tribes, destroyed mountains in national monuments and other public lands, torn homes, farms and ranches away from landowners, negatively impacted border communities and local economies, irreversibly harmed wildlife and fragile ecosystems, and significantly jeopardized water availability in the most arid parts of the United States.

While the country reels from a pandemic, U.S. taxpayers have footed the bill for this destruction, most of it through funds that President Trump raided from funds that Congress appropriated for the Department of Defense and the Department of the Treasury. Wall construction continues at a rapid pace and at phenomenal costs as high as \$41 million a mile. All federal and related state and local environmental and public health laws have been waived, along with all laws protecting Native Americans, the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, historic preservation laws and procurement laws. And as the Inspector General of the Department of Homeland Security recently determined, U.S. Customs and Border Protection has not demonstrated the needed capabilities in the context of the border wall, did not conduct an analysis of alternatives to assess appropriate and affordable solutions, and relied on prior outdated border solutions. *CBP Has Not Demonstrated Acquisition Capabilities Needed to Secure the Southern Border*, OIG-20-51, July 14, 2020.

Moreover, much of the new wall construction has taken place on some of our nation’s most fragile and biodiverse habitat, including national wildlife refuges and other public lands. As noted earlier, we strongly support statutory language included in the House Department of Homeland Security Act, H.R. 7669, that directs the transfer of up to \$75 million to the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service for mitigation activities, including land acquisition, related to the construction of border barriers on Federal lands – lands which belong everyone in our nation. This is just a needed first step in beginning to address the appalling damage from this unnecessary and destructive wall. We urge that this language and funding be retained in the final bill.

President-elect Biden has stated that, “there will not be another foot of wall constructed in my administration” and that he would stop the condemnation lawsuits that the federal government has filed to seize land for border wall construction. Vice President-elect Harris has stated that the wall is a complete waste of money and has supported a bill rescinding President Trump’s executive order directing construction of the wall. Congress should halt border wall funding now and begin focusing on mitigating the damage done to Native Americans, border communities, public lands and wildlife.

Sincerely,

Adhikaar

Alianza Nacional de Campesinas

American Friends Service Committee

Arizona Trail Association

Bend the Arc: Jewish Action

Borderlands Restoration Network

Bridges Faith Initiative

Center for Biological Diversity

Center for Popular Democracy

Christian Council of Delmarva

Columban Center for Advocacy and Outreach

Conservation Council for Hawaii

Defenders of Wildlife

Detention Watch Network

Disciples Refugee and Immigration Ministries

Earthjustice

Endangered Species Coalition

Environmental Protection Information Center
(EPIC)

Friends of Blackwater

Friends of Friendship Park

Friends of the Earth U.S.

Friends of the Sonoran Desert

Friends of the Wildlife Corridor

Great Old Broads

GreenLatinos

Hands Across the River

Healing the Border

Hispanic Federation

Indivisible

Klamath Forest Alliance

LA RED: Faith in Action

Latin American Working Group

Madrean Archipelago Wildlife Center

NY4WHALES

National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum

National Korean American Service & Education
Consortium (NAKASEC)

National Network for Immigrant and Refugee
Rights

National Parks Conservation Association

National Wildlife Refuge Association

Native Plant Conservation Campaign

Native Plant Society of the United States

Northwest Environmental Center for Alternatives to
Pesticides

OVEC-Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition

Oceanic Preservation Society

Partnership for the National Trails System

PoderLatinx

Rio Grande International Study Center

Rio Grande Valley Equal Voice Network

Save Wolves Now Network

Sisters of Mercy of the Americas – Justice Team

Sky Island Alliance

Southern Poverty Law Center

Southwest Environmental Center

The Immigration Hub

The National Association of Social Workers

The National Butterfly Center

The North American Butterfly Association

The Northern Jaguar Project

The Sierra Club

The Southeast Asia Resource Action Center

The Southern Border Communities Coalition

The Wilderness Society

Turtle Island Restoration Network

T’ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights

Union for Reform Judaism

United We Dream

Via International

Washington Office on Latin America

Western Watersheds Project

WildEarth Guardians

Wildlands Network

Win Without War

Wind of the Spirit Immigration Resource Center

Wyoming Untrapped

Young Center for Immigrant Children's Rights

cc: The Honorable Mitch McConnell, Majority Leader, U.S. Senate
The Honorable Chuck Schumer, Minority Leader, U.S. Senate
The Honorable Nancy Pelosi, Speaker, U.S. House of Representatives
The Honorable Steny Hoyer, Majority Leader, U.S. House of Representatives
The Honorable Kevin McCarthy, Minority Leader, U.S. House of Representatives