

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-4315

November 6, 2018

Sent via email: commentsenv@cbp.dhs.gov.

U.S. Customs and Border Protection
1300 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20229

Dear Sir or Madam,

It is my privilege to represent the 15th District of Texas and its rich, diverse communities, economies, and wildlife. Communities on the southwest border share a relationship with Mexico like none other. Since elected to Congress, I have remained firm in my opposition to the Administration's plans to line the U.S. – Mexico border with additional fencing and physical barriers.

Walling off our border will endanger wildlife, threaten our relationship with our southern neighbor, and put American homes and businesses at risk. While I agree that we must invest in border security and stem the flow of illegal immigration, moving forward with this plan will come at a great cost to communities in the Rio Grande Valley. The benefits of a physical barrier will be minimal at best.

After this year's series of floods and severe weather events, South Texans need the federal government to reevaluate its priorities and consider more pressing needs. Our communities need the federal government to invest in flood mitigation, resiliency, and drainage infrastructure, not a wall that would heighten the risk for future devastation and economic downturn. No wall is worth letting our fellow Americans' health, well-being, and livelihoods hang in the balance. We should instead employ surveillance technology, replace outdated cameras and sensors, and work with Central America and Mexico to encourage migrants to stay home.

Today, Tuesday, November 6, 2018, as part of the U.S. Customs and Border Protection's (CBP) public comment period, I submit official correspondence concerning the cultural, diplomatic, environmental, and economic impacts of constructing a physical barrier on the U.S.-Mexico Border. Enclosed is a compilation of materials that identify and articulate key arguments that merit further consideration as planning continues. The outline is as follows:

- I. The border wall will have a detrimental effect on U.S.-Mexico relations.
- II. The border wall will be an inefficient and unnecessarily costly method to deter illegal immigration.
- III. The border wall will lead to economic and agricultural losses.

- IV. The border wall will endanger our public lands and wildlife.
- V. The border wall will create a flood hazard.
- VI. The border wall will result in our citizens losing private land through the takings clause, and there is a palpable history of our citizens not being paid just compensation.
- VII. The border wall will infringe on the property rights of Native Americans along the border.

As you review, analyze, and thoroughly process this document and all other public comments submitted to the record, I request that you contemplate whether a physical barrier along the U.S.-Mexico Border would be a wise investment of taxpayer money and what kind of return we might see. Today I implore you to thoroughly examine this information and consider whether the risks outweigh the rewards.

Regards,



Vicente Gonzalez
Member of Congress

I. The border wall will have a detrimental effect on U.S. – Mexico relations.

The United States and Mexico are geographically, economically, historically, and culturally connected. We are trading partners, allies, brothers, sisters, and cousins whose relationship spans familial connection and security cooperation. Border towns in South Texas and beyond – where the border wall is planned to be built – are the epicenter of this multifaceted and longstanding relationship. Having already witnessed the adverse economic, social, and political effects of physical barriers that harshly divide our intrinsically connected communities, those of us in living and working along the U.S.-Mexico border know that a border wall will weaken and sever the strong ties between our two countries. The town of Boquillas del Carmen, Coahuila, Mexico, located across the Rio Grande River from Big Bend National Park, is just one example of the damage that could be done, and mistakes that do not bear repeating. Until 2002, Boquillas del Carmen relied heavily on tourist traffic.¹ In 2002, when the border crossing connecting Las Boquillas to the U.S. was shut down, the town was devastated. Without the economic stimulation of tourism and travel, Boquillas del Carmen came to depend on food donations from charitable organizations. Eleven years later, the entry was re-opened, allowing visitors with a valid passport, and enough money to pay for a ride in a rowboat, to cross the border.² Boquillas del Carmen now boasts a record number of visitors from around the world. If a physical barrier is erected, this border town and many like it, will fade away.

American towns concurrently benefit from Mexican tourists coming across the border to shop. In the city of McAllen, Texas, shoppers from Mexico spend one billion dollars a year in retail sales, not including hotel or food costs.³ However, spending has been declining in recent years. While 37 percent of spending in McAllen used to come from shoppers coming over from Mexico, in 2017, that number dropped to 30 percent.³ With the impending construction of the border wall and the accompanying hostility, Mexican tourists have felt increasingly unwelcome in the U.S. As a result, border economies are experiencing losses in revenue. If rhetoric has had this significant of an impact, the unavoidable direct and indirect consequences of creating physical barrier should be reconsidered before cities in the Rio Grande Valley are faced with irreparable damage.

In fact, the Pew Research Center has found that the U.S. has already lost favorability with Mexico. In 2015, only 29 percent of Mexicans held a negative view of the U.S. Two years later, that number jumped to 65 percent.⁴ That same year, 55 percent of Mexicans viewed the economic partnership between Mexico and the U.S. as good for the country, down from 70 percent in 2013.⁴ What's more, 94 percent of Mexicans oppose the construction of a border wall.⁴ This is further proof of our strained relationship and that our country's actions toward Mexico have put this key friendship and strategic alliance in jeopardy.

¹Teresa Puente, "Please Understand Just How Harmful Donald Trump's Wall Would Be," Time, last modified October 19, 2016, <http://time.com/4509501/donald-trumps-border-wall/>.

²Molly Hennessy-Fiske, "At a remote Texas border crossing, pleas for 'No wall'," Los Angeles Times, last modified December 19, 2017, <http://www.latimes.com/nation/la-na-las-boquillas-20171219-story.html>.

³Steven Taylor, "Millar: Mexican shoppers spend almost \$1 billion a year in McAllen alone," Rio Grande Guardian, last modified June 8, 2017, <https://riograndeguardian.com/millar-mexican-shoppers-spend-almost-1-billion-a-year-in-mcallen-alone/>.

⁴Margaret Vice et al. "Mexican Views of the U.S. Turn Sharply Negative," Pew research Center, last modified September 14, 2017, <http://www.pewglobal.org/2017/09/14/mexican-views-of-the-u-s-turn-sharply-negative/>.

However, the animosity towards the wall extends beyond the citizens of Mexico and reaches the highest echelons of government. Meetings between U.S. President Donald J. Trump and Mexican President Enrique Peña Nieto have been cancelled due to rising tensions caused by the wall. Neither Head of State has travelled to visit the other.⁵ Part of the issue involves the plan to force Mexico to pay for the wall. The Mexican Foreign Ministry released a statement that Mexico will not fund the border wall stating that it would infringe on their national sovereignty and dignity.⁶ Asserting that Mexico will finance the construction of this wall represents a sea-change in our policy toward Mexico that will only serve to limit opportunities and hurt the United States and its citizens in the long run.

II. The border wall is an inefficient and unnecessarily costly method to deter illegal immigration.

A border wall cannot predict, detect, identify, classify, track, respond, or resolve any movement of illegal immigration. A wall that is unmanned is easily breached. These facts are supported by the findings from U.S. Customs and Border Protection's (CBP) annual vulnerability assessment that identifies "capability gaps" along the southwest border. Out of 902 southwest border capability gaps, only three times did Border Patrol agents suggest that a wall would be plausible solution. CBP only suggested a border fence in 34 of the 902 capability gaps.¹ It is also important to note that in the rare instances where a wall or fence was suggested, the report always requested additional resources to supplement the wall, such as surveillance technology, lighting, and access roads. In the report, Border Patrol insists on the need for increased personnel, surveillance equipment, training, and technology to combat the "Urgent and Compelling" capability gaps along the border. Chief officials from CBP and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) have publicly spoken out about the inefficiency of a border wall and the need for more effective solutions. At an April 4, 2017 hearing, David Aguilar, former Acting Commissioner of CBP, told the Senate Homeland Security and Government Affairs Committee, "the ranking now is technology definitively first just about anywhere along the border. Infrastructure and personnel will be going back and forth depending on the area."⁷ Current White House Chief of Staff and former DHS Secretary, John Kelly, pointed out the fact that even if the U.S. had a wall, more personnel and sensors would still be needed.²

No data substantiates the idea that the use of a border wall will stop illegal immigration, or even act as a meaningful deterrent. The overall trend of immigrants illegally entering the U.S. between ports of entry has continued to decline for over a decade. A 2017 Office of Immigration Statistics data brief shows that the estimated number of successful illegal entries between ports has

⁵Philip Rucker et al. "After testy call with Trump over border wall, Mexico's president shelves plan to visit White House," The Texas Tribune, last modified February 24, 2018, <https://www.texastribune.org/2018/02/24/after-testy-call-trump-over-border-wall-mexicos-president-shelves-plan/>.

⁶Louis Nelson, "Mexico to Trump: We won't pay for a border wall 'under any circumstances'," Politico, last modified August 28, 2017, <https://www.politico.com/story/2017/08/28/trump-border-wall-mexico-responds-242084>.

⁷HSGA Minority Staff, "Border Security: Analysis of Vulnerabilities Identified by Frontline Agents," U.S. Senate Committee on Homeland Security & Governmental Affairs, last modified March 22, 2018, <https://www.hsgac.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Border%20Security%20-%20Analysis%20of%20Vulnerabilities%20Identified%20by%20Frontline%20Agents.pdf>.

fallen from over 1.7 million in 2000, to roughly 170,000 in 2016 – an approximate 90 percent drop.³

While the number of immigrants illegally entering the country has fallen overall, most undocumented migrants do not trek across the U.S. border. The Center for Migration Studies (CMS), estimates that as many as two-thirds of undocumented immigrants enter the country legally through ports of entry. According to the CMS, the number of people who overstayed their visas has been greater than the number of people illegally crossing the border, every year since 2007.⁵ DHS estimated that in 2016, 628,799 people overstayed their visas.⁴ Erecting a boundary across our southern border will do nothing to prevent people from using this avenue to enter the country. In other words, the wall will do nothing to stop or deter most unauthorized migration.

Not only will the border wall fail to stop illegal immigration, it is being cobbled together without incorporating solutions actually requested by CBP to address the high-priority gaps. As you are aware, such alternatives include: The Cross-Border Tunnel Threat (CBTT) program, Unattended Ground Sensors (UGS), or Tethered Aerostat Radar Systems (TARS).⁷ Finally, the \$1.6 billion estimate falls substantially short compared to the estimation done by DHS, which predicted the wall would cost \$18 billion over 10 years.⁸

III. The border wall will lead to economic and agricultural losses.

Building the wall will negatively affect American agriculture. Domestic producers already face great uncertainty due to labor shortages, tariffs, the rising costs of doing business, and a downturn in the farm economy. The border wall will only add insult to injury. The agricultural industry relies heavily on guest workers; 50-70 percent of the workforce consists of foreign workers.⁸ Labor costs account for 17 percent of all costs in the agricultural industry and can account for up to 40-50 percent of costs in labor-intensive sectors, like fruit and vegetables.⁹ The supply of legal workers does not meet the demand for legal workers, and because produce spoils quickly, fulfilling the labor demand is a time sensitive issue for farmers. It is also estimated that interfering with the flow of undocumented immigrants will increase the cost of agricultural by 5-6 percent.¹⁰ This price increase would uniformly affect low-income Americans across the country. While it is crucial to stem the tide of irregular migration, it is just as important that our farmers' interests be considered when planning these policies.

The National Milk Producers Federation found that the price of dairy products, a labor-intensive sector, would increase by 90 percent if immigrant workers were removed. A report from the American Farm Bureau Federation noted that if the U.S. increased immigration enforcement without reforming the existing guest worker visa program, it could cost Americans \$60 billion in

⁸Brian Barth, "If Trump Builds the Wall, What Will Happen to our Food System?," Modern Farmer, last modified January 10, 2017, <http://modernfarmer.com/2017/01/trump-builds-wall-will-happen-food-system/>.

⁹Patrick O'Brien et al. "Gauging the Farm Sector's Sensitivity to Immigration Reform via Change in Labor Costs and Availability," American Farm Bureau federation, accessed November 5, 2018, https://www.fb.org/files/AFBF_LaborStudy_Feb2014.pdf.

¹⁰ Barth, "If Trump Builds the Wall, What Will Happen to our Food System?"

agricultural production.¹¹ It goes without saying that the livelihoods of American producers should take precedent over a costly, and ineffective wall.

As stated above, the border wall would strain our relationship with Mexico. Former Mexican President, Vicente Fox, used explicative language in response to the proposed border wall.¹² In 2017, Mexico started to explore other markets for corn, as well as increasing their own domestic production.¹³ One Mexican Senator even submitted a bill to end all corn purchases from the U.S. Although Mexico never followed through on this threat, consideration alone should be taken seriously. Mexico is one of America's top three trading partners, and if a border wall elicits this type of reaction, its negative impacts on Central and North American economies are undeniable. It is not just the economies that would be affected, but the collaboration between our countries. Mexico and Texas share information and battle problems together. An example of this is our joint efforts to eradicate the boll weevil; a tiny pest that has caused billions of dollars to cotton crops over the years.¹⁴ Increasing tension between the U.S. and Mexico over a border wall impedes current and future cooperation to address mutual challenges.

IV. The border wall will endanger our public lands and wildlife.

Furthermore, as we look at the impact of this wall, we simply cannot ignore the devastation it would bring to the plants and animals that call the U.S.-Mexico border home. The Center for Biological Diversity reports that there are currently 93 species, 57 of which are endangered, and 24 who are threatened, that would be negatively impacted by the wall.¹⁵ Their unimpeded crossing is vital for continued survival and procreation. With the wall, many would fade from existence. For example, the Cactus Ferruginous Pygmy Owl rarely flies more than five feet above the ground.¹⁶ A wall exceeding eighteen feet tall would prevent the Pygmy Owl from crossing the border, effectively decreasing an already low population.

¹¹American Farm Bureau Federation, "Agricultural Labor-Immigration Reform," American Farm Bureau Federation, accessed November 5, 2018, <https://www.fb.org/issues/immigration-reform/agriculture-labor-reform/>

¹²Adam Peck, The New Republic, accessed November 5, 2018, <https://newrepublic.com/minutes/130521/former-mexican-president-vicente-fox-wont-pay-donald-trumps-f-kng-wall>.

¹³Kirk Semple, "Mexico Ready to Play the Corn Card in Trade Talks," The New York Times, last modified April 2, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/02/world/americas/mexico-corn-nafta-trade.html>.

¹⁴Logan Hawkes, "After years of challenges, boll weevil eradication program making progress," Southwest Farm Press, last modified October 6, 2017, <https://www.southwestfarmpress.com/cotton/after-years-challenges-boll-weevil-eradication-program-making-progress>.

¹⁵Noah Greenwald et al. "A Wall in the Wild," Center for Biological Diversity, accessed November 5, 2018, https://www.biologicaldiversity.org/programs/international/borderlands_and_boundary_waters/pdfs/A_Wall_in_the_Wild.pdf.

¹⁶Noah Greenwald et al. "A Wall in the Wild".



Additionally, gene flow is critical to the survival of many species. Animals from Northern Mexico and the Southern U.S. mate, and mix genes, thereby encouraging natural selection. Populations north and south of the border must be allowed to intermix to ensure genetic diversity within these groups. However, critically endangered species such as Sonoran Pronghorns; Jaguars; and Mexican Gray Wolves, the most endangered mammal on the North American

continent; would become isolated with the border wall's construction. Conservationists have stressed that limiting the movement of these endangered species will reverse the progress already made to recover the wild populations and may lead to their extinction. Additionally, research conducted on the impact of the wall found it will stop the flow of animals far more than the flow of immigrants. While areas with walls had a significantly lower number of pumas and coatis than areas without walls, the amount of people detected in areas with and without the wall remained constant.¹⁷

There are ways to increase border security and protect the environment. Carrizo cane, an invasive species which grows along the Rio Grande River, has plagued Border Patrol agents for years, blocking line of sight to the river, providing cover for those crossing the border, and making the terrain difficult to traverse.¹⁸ At the same time, Carrizo cane uses three times more water than native plants and thereby impacts farmers and communities along the Rio Grande. Even the cattle fever tick, a problem which Texas A&M University estimates could cause \$1.2 billion in economic loss in one year if allowed to spread, is found in Carrizo cane.¹⁹ Altogether, stopping the spread of this invasive species will benefit Border Patrol, the environment, farmers, and everyday Americans. The billions that would be spent on the construction and maintenance of the border wall could be used to address the Carrizo cane problem, something that our Border Patrol, farmers, and ranchers have requested for years.

¹⁷Noah Greenwald et al. "A Wall in the Wild".

¹⁸Brian Barth, "The Wall (of Reeds) that the Border Patrol would like to Tear Down," The New Yorker, last modified July 17, 2017, <https://www.newyorker.com/tech/annals-of-technology/the-wall-of-reeds-that-the-border-patrol-would-like-to-tear-down>.

¹⁹Wyatt Bechtel, "More Options Made Available in Texas to Control Cattle Fever Ticks," Drovers, last modified September 25, 2018, <https://www.drovers.com/article/more-options-made-available-texas-control-cattle-fever-ticks>.



*Texas officials release reed-eating *Arundo* wasps into a thicket of the invasive weed *Arundo donax*, also called carrizo cane, in an effort to weaken or eradicate the plant.*

V. The border wall creates a flood hazard.

The construction of a wall between the United States and Mexico will increase the risk of flooding, undoubtedly leading to the destruction of private property and the drowning of people and animals. Erecting this physical barrier is also in violation of The 1970 Boundary Treaty. The Treaty states that both U.S. and Mexico sides of the International Boundary and Water Commission (IBWC) must agree if one side wants to build a structure that might affect the flow of the Rio Grande or its floodwaters.²⁰ Mexican officials have consistently opposed the construction of a border fence contending that it would act as series of miniature dams once debris gets stuck in it. Below are images of the border fence acting as a dam.

²⁰John Burnett, "Mexico Worries That A New Border Wall Will Worsen Flooding," National Public Radio, last modified April 25, 2017, <https://www.npr.org/2017/04/25/525383494/trump-s-proposed-u-s-mexico-border-wall-may-violate-1970-treaty>.



When the floodplains are dammed up, the natural drainage system is obstructed, and neighboring villages are at risk of flooding. In 2008, Southwest Arizona experienced this exact situation. A storm brought two inches of rain to the region, which could not drain in its natural North-South direction, so it drained laterally across the fence. This caused the city of Lukeville, Arizona to experience unprecedented flooding, as shown below.



The proposed border wall will only exacerbate this problem. While fences allow for water to flow freely if there is no debris clogging it, concrete walls do not.. Antonio Rascon, Mexico’s chief engineer at the IBWC, has already publicly condemned the construction of a concrete border wall.²¹

In the twin cities of Nogales, we have seen more examples of the types of damage a border wall could cause.

Floodwaters collapsed part of the fence, cars were washed away, and residents were subjected to a flooding event that would not have happened if the border wall had not acted as a dam.²² A border wall along the Rio Grande River would change the natural drainage of the Rio Grande Valley, which puts people’s lives and property at an unnecessary level of risk.

South Texas already has a history of flooding. This past summer, South Texans witnessed extraordinary amounts of rainfall and major flooding. These 15-17 inches caused millions in

²¹John Burnett, “Mexico Worries That A New Border Wall Will Worsen Flooding”.

²²Naveena Sadasivam, “The US-Mexico border wall’s dangerous, costly side-effect: enormous floods,” Quartz, last modified August 17, 2018, <https://qz.com/1353798/the-us-mexico-border-walls-dangerous-costly-side-effect-enormous-floods/>.

damage - enough to warrant a major disaster declaration by the federal government.²³ The communities damaged by these floods are still recovering. South Texas is also routinely affected by the Atlantic hurricane season. Communities affected are already aware that building a border wall will cause the damages from floods to intensify. Unless, and until these maintenance issues are addressed, we should refrain from building further structures that increase our risk of flood, especially considering recent weather events. Instead, we should direct federal resources to expedite the construction of major flood control infrastructure like the Raymondville Drain, which is projected to satisfy critical flood mitigation and drainage needs across Hidalgo, Cameron, and Willacy Counties.

VI. The border wall will result in our citizens losing private land through the takings clause, and there is a palpable history of our citizens not being paid just compensation.

The federal government plans to take the property of private citizens to accomplish the construction of a border wall, showing that we have not advanced beyond the mistakes of the past. In 2006, Congress passed the Secure Fence Act, authorizing the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to build 700 miles of wall along the border. This disproportionately affected Texas, as much of the land is privately owned. This forced the government to seize land through a process called eminent domain. This is particularly true near the Rio Grande River.

Over a decade later, not all litigation from this era is settled, nor have all payments been made, even for those who accepted the government's initial low-ball offers. A single federal court in Brownsville, Texas, heard more than 300 related eminent-domain cases, according to National Public Radio.²⁴ Judge Hanen, who heard many of these cases was quoted as saying:

“You have to realize these are everyday people living their ordinary life, and all of a sudden the government knocks on their door and says, 'We want your backyard,' I mean, all of a sudden they're facing the might of the Department of Homeland Security and the Department of Justice, and all of a sudden, they're a defendant in a lawsuit through no fault of their own.”

There are also U.S. citizens who have found themselves stranded on the wrong side of the wall, with non-functioning gates. This is what happened to the Loop family, who lost their home and barn to a fire due to the border wall stranding them on the wrong side of the wall and preventing firetrucks from reaching their property in time. Notably, this is after the federal government took a portion of their property for use in constructing the border wall. Doubly affected by the wall, the Loop case is also additional proof of the failings of past land evaluations. They were initially offered a mere \$10,100. Eventually a judge ordered that they receive \$1.39 million for the property.

²³TBB Staff, “Gonzalez, Cornyn, Cruz, Vela, Cuellar Send Letter to FEMA Administrator Long Urging Reassessment of FEMA Denial,” Texas Border Business, last modified October 24, 2018, <https://texasborderbusiness.com/gonzalez-cornyn-cruz-vela-cuellar-send-letter-to-fema-administrator-long-urging-reassessment-of-fema-denial/>.

²⁴John Burnett, “Landowners Likely To Bring More Lawsuits As Trump Moves On Border Wall,” National Public Radio, last modified February 23, 2017, <https://www.npr.org/2017/02/23/516895052/landowners-likely-to-bring-more-lawsuits-as-trump-moves-on-border-wall>.

Time and again when eminent domain is used to take citizens' property for the use of the government, citizens lose. The Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996 (IIRIRA) Section 102(b)(1)(C) requires the DHS Secretary, prior to taking actions to carry out IIRIRA, to: consult with the Secretary of the Interior, the Secretary of Agriculture, States, local governments, Indian tribes, and property owners in the United States to minimize the impact on the environment, culture, commerce, and quality of life for the communities and residents located near the sites at which such fencing is to be constructed. The Fifth Amendment's takings clause states, "Nor shall private property be taken for public use, without just compensation." Unfortunately, just compensation is not only not always offered, as we learned from the Loop family's experience. Sometimes it is not paid even after the taking occurs.

An investigation last year by *ProPublica* and *The Texas Tribune*²⁵ found that the federal government invoked a law that allowed it to utilize a quicker process to seize land to build the barrier and compensate landowners later. Dozens of landowners still have not received compensation for the federal government's exercise of eminent domain. Important to note is that steps have not been taken to correct these problems, instead the same formula that lead to violations in the past is being followed today.

VII. The border wall will infringe on the property rights of Native Americans along the border.

Finally, as we look at the damage the wall will cause, we cannot ignore the fact that Native Americans along our border would again have their land taken away and thereby continue the disturbing trend of indigenous people being stripped of their sovereignty. Our nation has recognized the right of indigenous people to self-determinate through such documents as the United Nations Declaration of Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) adopted by the General Assembly on September 13, 2007. According to Article 8 section 2 of UNDRIP, the United States should make every effort to have in place a system to prevent "any action which has the aim or effect of dispossessing them of their lands, territories or resources" and "any action which has the aim or effect of depriving them of their integrity as distinct peoples, or of their cultural values or ethnic identities".²⁶ By building the wall, the United States would directly go against the UN Declaration as many tribes would not only have their land taken away, but their culture as well.

For example, the Tohono O'odham Nation stretches between the U.S. and Mexico and the ability for their people to cross that border is integral to their culture and survival. On the Mexican side of the border is a burial ground as well the sites of many important cultural and religious traditions. With the current fencing in place, some members have been forced to walk more than four miles to access water on the other side of the fence.²⁷ Additional walls would further cut off the Tohono O'odham Nation from their land and thereby impede their ability to practice their

²⁵T. Christian Miller et al. "The Taking," ProPublica, last modified December 14,2017,

<https://features.propublica.org/eminent-domain-and-the-wall/the-taking-texas-government-property-seizure/>

²⁶United Nations, "United Nations Declarations on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples," United Nations

https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/DRIPS_en.pdf.

²⁷ Dawchelle Hamilton, "Trump's Border Wall Could Carve Path Through Native American Lands," NBC News, last updated September 16, 2017, <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/trump-s-border-wall-could-carve-path-though-native-american-n801691>.

culture and simply live on their property. Additionally, we must consider the irreparable damage construction would do to the remains of the indigenous people who are buried along its path. The Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act protects the burial sites of Native Americans and instructs the federal government to consult with the tribes to ensure respect is given to these places.²⁸ However, we have already seen grave sites desecrated and destroyed with the construction of border walls. In 2008, Ned Norris Jr. of the Tohono O’odham Nation addressed the House Committee on Natural Resources, saying that:

“During an October 2007 field visit to the Christiansen Ranch site, Site AZ FF:9:10, fragments of human remains were observed in the tire tracks of the heavy construction equipment. Barriers and the border road now cross the site. Imagine a bulldozer parking in your family graveyard, turning up bones. This is our reality.”²⁹

By building the proposed wall, we are not only showing a complete disregard for the dignity of indigenous people, but that we also are failing to learn from our mistakes.

²⁸Francis P. McManamon, “Archeology Program,” National Park Service, last updated November 5, 2018, <https://www.nps.gov/archeology/tools/laws/nagpra.htm>.

²⁹“Written Testimony of the Honorable Ned Norris, Jr., Chairman Tohono O’odham Nation to the Subcommittee on Fisheries Wildlife and Oceans and Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands of the House Committee on Natural Resources,” Tiamat Publications, accessed November 5, 2018, http://www.tiamatpublications.com/docs/testimony_norris.pdf

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