

January 17, 2018

Senator Charles E. Schumer
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Senator Dick Durbin
711 Hart Senate Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Senator Michael Bennet
261 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Senator Lindsey Graham
290 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Senator Jeff Flake
413 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Senator Bob Menendez
528 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Senator Cory Gardner
354 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi
233 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Congressman Will Hurd
317 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Congressman Pete Aguilar
1223 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Senators and Representatives:

We write to urge you to strongly oppose authorizing additional border wall construction, the conversion of existing vehicle barriers to border walls, and the waiver of federal laws along the border. Bipartisan solutions should not include funding for structures that will destroy ecosystems and tear communities apart. Limited resources would be much more wisely invested in modernizing and adequately staffing our ports of entry, which would enhance both national security and facilitate efficient commerce with our third largest trading partner.

Walls already exist along 354 miles of the southern border. These walls stand as hateful symbols of division in otherwise connected borderlands communities, dividing neighborhoods, blocking wildlife and disrupting the flow of water, with devastating impacts.

Numerous scientific studies have documented negative impacts to native species such as bighorn sheep, coati, puma and cactus ferruginous pygmy owl from current structures, including pedestrian fencing, mesh wall/fencing, levee walls and bollard fencing.¹ Border walls also undermine binational conservation efforts to manage protected areas and recover endangered species like jaguar, Sonoran pronghorn and ocelot that rely upon cross-border habitat and movement.

Existing border walls have been designed and constructed with no environmental review, as otherwise required by federal law, because of the authority to waive these laws granted to the Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security by Congress under the Real ID Act of 2005. The result has been devastating not just to wildlife, but to local

¹ Flesch, et al, 'Potential Effects of the United States-Mexico Border Fence on Wildlife,' Conservation Biology, 2009.; Lasky, et al, 'Conservation Biogeography of the U.S.-Mexico Border: A Transcontinental Risk Assessment of Barriers to Animal Dispersal,' Diversity and Distributions, 2011.; McCallum, et al, 'Conservation on International Boundaries: The Impact of Security Barriers on Selected Terrestrial Mammals in Four Protected Areas in Arizona, USA, Plos One, 2014.

communities that have experienced deadly flooding and lost access to important cultural heritage sites due to poorly designed and impenetrable fences and walls.²

It is long past time to put an end to border security measures that tear apart border communities, destroy habitat, divert water resources, and kill people and wildlife. Beside vehicle barriers, which create the least impediment to the movement of wildlife and water across the border, funding for the addition or conversion of all other current barriers constitutes new border wall.

We also urge you to oppose any provision that allows the Secretary of Homeland Security to waive all laws such as was done under Section 102 of the Real ID Act, and any provision that expands, renews or reinforces any such authority to waive federal law.

Our millions of members and supporters nationwide are counting on you.

Sincerely,

Animal Legal Defense Fund
Another Gulf Is Possible
Arkansas United Community Coalition
Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance, AFL-CIO (APALA)
ATXEJ – Austin Environmental Justice Team
AWIA Awesome Women in Action
Border Action Network
Catholic Charities of Southern New Mexico
Center for Biological Diversity
Coalición de Derechos Humanos
Cougar Rewilding Foundation
Courage Campaign
Craighead Institute
Defenders of Wildlife
Earthjustice
Friends of Friendship Park
Friends of the Wildlife Corridor
Frontera Audubon Society
Great Old Broads for Wilderness
GreenLatinos
Green Valley/Sahuarita Samaritans
Hope Border Institute
Humane Borders
Keep Flagstaff Together

² Brady McCombs, *Report: Faulty dam design turned border fence into dam*, Arizona Daily Star (August 15, 2008), http://tucson.com/news/local/border/report-faulty-design-turned-border-fence-into-dam/article_fe6f1f2f-5820-5c08-be14-cf037a69ace8.html.

La Frontera Ministries
Las Cruces CIVIC (Community Initiatives for Visiting Immigrants in Confinement)
La Unión del Pueblo Entero (LUPE)
Lone Star Chapter Sierra Club
LUPE Tucson
National Parks Conservation Association
Neta
NM Comunidades en Accion y de Fe
New Mexico Environmental Law Center
New Mexico Wildlife Federation
OneAmerica
Patagonia Area Resource Alliance, Inc.
Pathways: Wildlife Corridors of NM
People for Peace and Justice
PFLAG of Harlingen, Texas
ProgressNow New Mexico
Proyecto Azteca
Proyecto Fronterizo de Educación Ambiental A.C.
Rachel's Network
Rocky Mountain Wild
Round River Conservation Studies
Services, Immigrant Rights, and Education Network (SIREN)
Shared Earth Foundation
Sierra Club
Sky Island Alliance
Southern Border Communities Coalition
Southwest Environmental Center
The City Project
The Wilderness Society
We Belong Together
Western Wildlife Conservancy
Wilderness Watch
Wildlands Network
Yellowstone to Uintas Connection