

February 27, 2017

U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Re: Oppose the border wall – Support H.R. 837 & H.R. 739

Dear Representative:

On behalf of civil rights, faith, environmental, and indigenous organizations and communities, we write to express our opposition to any efforts to expand the extensive, nearly 650 mile-long border wall that already exists between the United States and Mexico as specified in the Border Security and Immigration Improvement Executive Order (1/25/17).

Instead, we urge you to support legislation such as H.R. 837, the Build Bridges Not Walls Act and H.R. 739, the This Land Is Our Land Act that prohibit the use of taxpayer dollars to build the wall, ensuring that Congress remains a guardian of civil rights, a good steward of taxpayer dollars and the responsible custodian of the integrity of our public lands.

The false narrative of a violent and insecure border region has long been used to justify and advance anti-immigrant, anti-border, pro-criminalization, and anti-environment legislation that has negative economic and civil rights impacts on border communities. However, the fact is that border cities are some of the safest in the country and that communities with more immigrants are likely to be safer than places with fewer immigrants.

The wall, increased militarization of the border region, the criminalization of immigrants, and the destruction of wildlife habitat are all tools of radical politicians who seek to advance an extreme hate-filled and profit driven agenda at the expense of our communities. Moreover, these measures have nothing to do with the security of the border region or our nation.

The latest move to advance this administration's anti-immigrant agenda is President Trump's Executive Order (EO) directing the construction of a wall on our southern border. This EO is not just bad policy that will do nothing to make us safer and squander billions of dollars, but it is also a divisive decision opposed by civil rights, border, religious, environmental, and indigenous communities, and private-property and business owners who live and work along the U.S.-Mexico border. Latinos in particular see the wall as anti-immigrant, anti-Latino, and anti-Mexican.

Additional construction of the border wall is expected to cost \$21.6 billion according to the latest estimates from the Department of Homeland Security. In spite of the administration's unfounded assurances that another sovereign country will be made to foot the bill, the President has no ability to make that happen and should not make such false promises to the American taxpayers.

Further construction of a border wall will harm the environment that border communities cherish and depend on. It will further hurt wildlife; destroy sensitive habitat for endangered species; damage the natural flow of floodwaters; lead to costly litigation with landowners, Native American communities, and other stakeholders; and threaten the economic, social, and cultural ties between the United States and Mexico.

Your leadership is needed to put an end to the unnecessary expansion of a southern border wall which, at its core, is simply another manifestation of this Administration's anti-immigrant sentiment dressed up as public policy.

Your support for legislation such as H.R. 837, the Build Bridges Not Walls Act and H.R. 739, the This Land Is Our Land Act is critical. The Build Bridges Not Walls Act would protect taxpayers by prohibiting the

implementation of President Trump's Executive Order to build a wall on our U.S.-Mexico border using taxpayer dollars. The This Land Is Our Land Act would bar the construction of any wall or fence on Federal lands controlled by the U.S. Departments of Agriculture or Interior.

We strongly urge you to support these two pieces of legislation and are counting on you to help fight any legislative attempts to authorize or fund additional, and unnecessary construction of a wall at our southern border. For more information, please contact Luis Torres, Director of Policy and Legislation, at latorres@lulac.org.

Sincerely,

League of United Latin American Citizens
African American Ministers In Action (AAMIA)
Alliance for Citizenship
American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU)
American Friends Service Committee (AFSC)
Arte Inc
Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC
Azul
Bend the Arc Jewish Action
Calpulli Mexican Dance Company
Center for Biological Diversity
Chicago Area Fair Housing Alliance
Chispa, League of Conservation Voters
Coalition for Hispanic Family Services
Community Science Institute - CSI
Conference of Major Superiors of Men
Detroitters Working for Environmental Justice
Disability Rights Education & Defense Fund
Earthjustice
El Taller Latino Americano
Equality California
Equality New Mexico
Farmworker Justice
Franciscan Action Network
Franciscan Peace Center
Friends of Friendship Park
GreenLatinos
Hispanic Federation
Hispanic Health Council
Hispanos Unidos De Buffalo Inc.
Interfaith Worker Justice
International League of Conservation Photographers
Jesus People Against Pollution
Junta for Progressive Action, Inc.
Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Commission of the Sisters of Saint Francis
Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Office, Sisters of St. Francis, Oldenburg
Latino Commission on AIDS
Latino Decisions
Latino U College Access

LatinoJustice PRLDEF
Leadership Team of the Felician Sisters of North America
Los Jardines Institute
Mazzoni Center
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd
National Center for Lesbian Rights
National Center for Transgender Equality
National Council of Jewish Women
National Council of La Raza
National Education Association
National Immigration Law Center
Natural Resources Defense Council
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice
New Mexico Environmental Law Center
Noble Renewables Group of the West
NoMAA (Northern Manhattan Arts Alliance)
Pride at Work
Rosedale Recycles
Sierra Club
Sisters of Mercy of the Americas - Institute Justice Team
South Asian Americans Leading Together (SAALT)
Southeast Asia Resource Action Center (SEARAC)
Southern Border Communities Coalition/Church World Service
Spanish Speaking Elderly Council - RAICES
The United Methodist Church - General Board of Church and Society
third horizon consulting
Verde
Violence Intervention Program
Voces Verdes
We Stay/Nos Quedamos
West Oakland Environmental Indicators Project