

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

November 28, 2018

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Minority Leader Schumer:

As Members of Congress who represent constituents who live and work along the U.S. southern border, we write to express our alarm and opposition to your comments that \$1.6 billion for a physical wall along the border is the starting negotiating position for Democrats. Any appropriations for a border wall would have unequivocally deleterious economic, diplomatic, and environmental effects on the region. We believe the Democrats should oppose all funding for a physical wall along the U.S.-Mexico border in a FY 2019 Appropriations package.

As lifelong residents of the southern border region, we know firsthand that a wall along the border would separate local communities, serve as a symbol of antagonism to Mexico, trample on landowner rights, harm wildlife, and cost immense sums of taxpayer dollars that could better be used for other purposes. This money could be better spent on more Border Patrol agents and CBP officers, technology, equipment, and improving security and economic development in Central America. As a result of the construction of current border barriers, hundreds of private landowners and municipalities have had their property condemned; resulting lawsuits are still dragging on. Additional walls would force countless farmers and ranchers to relinquish their lands that have provided economic support, often for generations, to their families and communities.

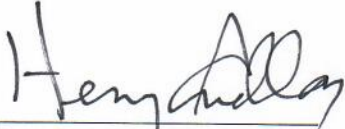
Lands set aside by the Federal government for conservation and protection have been torn apart by border barriers. The imposition of new barriers, including those for which funding has already been dispensed, currently threaten the integrity of national wildlife treasures such as the Bentsen-Rio Grande Valley State Park and the National Butterfly Center. Further separation of protected lands will push endangered species closer to extinction, harm the eco-tourism industry, and potentially close them to the public permanently.

Maintaining the existing border walls and patrol roads will cost \$3.5 billion over the next 20 years, and CBP has not demonstrated that the 654 miles of existing border wall has had any appreciable increase in border security, according to a February 2017 Government Accountability Office (GAO) report. Furthermore, erecting new border walls will cost the taxpayer tens of billions of dollars – funds which could be far more efficiently spent elsewhere.

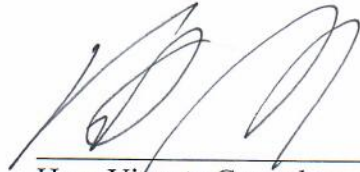
For all the reasons elucidated, we firmly believe a border wall would be detrimental to U.S. interests in more ways than we can enumerate. We, therefore, implore you to reconsider and

clarify the Senate Democratic negotiating position on border wall funding in the FY 2019 Homeland Security Appropriations Bill.

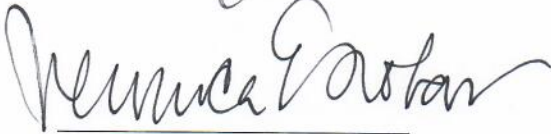
Sincerely,



Hon. Henry Cuellar
Member of Congress



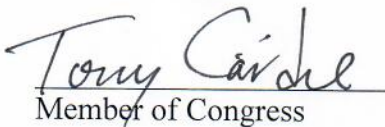
Hon. Vicente Gonzalez
Member of Congress



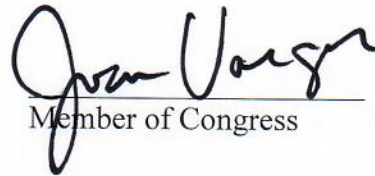
Member of Congress



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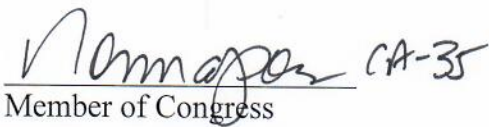
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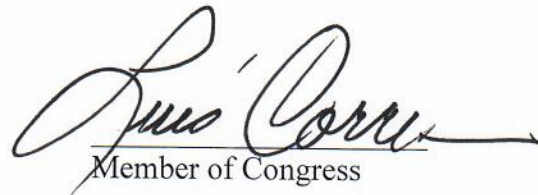
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