

November 29, 2018

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate

The Honorable Paul Ryan
Speaker
U.S House of Representatives

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Chairman
U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Rodney Frelinghuysen
Chairman
U.S. House Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Nita Lowey
Ranking Member
U.S. House Committee on Appropriations

Dear Leader McConnell, Leader Schumer, Speaker Ryan, Leader Pelosi, Chairmen Shelby and Frelinghuysen, and Ranking Members Leahy and Lowey:

We write as a cross-section of organizations to demand that Congress adhere to a basic principle of good governance in considering the Fiscal Year 2019 DHS budget, and specifically its border wall component: No funds should be appropriated without adequate information and time to analyze prior spending; otherwise good money is likely to be wasted without proper consideration of alternatives or past misuse of taxpayer dollars.

The Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2018, passed in March, required the Secretary of Homeland Security to submit to both Appropriations Committees, on or before September 19, a risk-based border-security plan. That border-security report is now more than two months overdue, with no guarantee from the DHS Secretary that it will even be provided by December 7, when appropriators are considering DHS's request for billions more in border wall funding. Such inexcusable delay pushes back the Comptroller General's required evaluation of the plan and makes considered deliberation by this Congress of additional border wall funding in the pending DHS budget impossible.

Had the report been submitted on time, Members would have the Department's analysis of optimal location and staffing of border-security resources, their "effects on communities and property owners," and "the environmental impacts, including on wildlife." In addition, there would be a required Department plan to consult stakeholders on eminent domain and other construction issues. Members - and the independent Government Accountability Office - could have evaluated DHS's methodologies for measuring border security through proposed performance metrics.

Without submitting this plan in a timely fashion as requested by congressional appropriators, DHS has kept Congress in the dark on crucial oversight information such as a "description of the status of ... open recommendations by the Office of Inspector General and the Government Accountability Office relating to border security, including plans, schedules, and associated milestones for fully addressing such recommendations." There are myriad reasons to debate thoroughly the wisdom and efficacy of border wall funding on its merits. By failing to submit this report, however, DHS has forfeited the argument this year. Congress should deny a rushed process of border wall funding consideration without a reasonable period, extending into 2019, for Members and GAO to evaluate the report DHS was ordered eight months ago to prepare and produce.

Respectfully submitted,

Alianza Americas
Alliance San Diego
American Civil Liberties Union
American Oversight
Amnesty International USA
Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC
Auburn Pastoral Counseling
Center for Biological Diversity
Church World Service
Congregation Hakafa
Earthjustice
Equal Voice Action
Franciscan Action Network
Franciscan Sisters of the Poor, US Area
Franciscans for Justice
Friends Committee on National Legislation
Friends of the Sonoran Desert
Friends of Friendship Park
Frontera de Cristo
Great Old Broads for Wilderness
Hispanic Federation
Hope Border Institute
Immigrant Legal Resource Center
JPIC Commission, Capuchin Province of St. Joseph
La Union del Pueblo Entero (LUPE)
Latin America Working Group
Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd
National Council of Jewish Women
National Immigrant Justice Center
National Immigration Law Center
New York Immigration Coalition
OneAmerica

Project on Government Oversight
RGV No Borderwall Movement
Rio Grande Valley Equal Voice Network
San Diego Immigrant Rights Consortium
Sierra Club
Sisters of Mercy of the Americas – Institute Justice Team
Sisters of Mercy of the Holy Cross USA Province
Sisters of St. Francis Justice, Peace and Care for Creation Committee
Sisters of St. Francis of the Neumann Communities
Sisters of St. Francis of the Providence of God
Southeast Asia Resource Action Center
Southern Border Communities Coalition
Southwest Environmental Center
T’ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights
Temple Beth Emeth
Temple Sholom
Voto Latino
Woodlands Community Temple

CC: Members of the U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations
Members of the U.S. House Committee on Appropriations