



One Hundred Sixteenth Congress
Committee on Homeland Security
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

March 27, 2020

The Honorable William Barr
Attorney General
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20530

The Honorable Chad F. Wolf
Acting Secretary
Department of Homeland Security
Nebraska Ave. Center, N.W.
Washington D.C. 20528

Lieutenant General Thomas Bostic
Commanding General and Chief of Engineers
United States Army Corps of Engineers
441 G St
Washington D.C. 20313

Dear Attorney General Barr, Acting Secretary Wolf and Lieutenant General Bostic:

As you know, COVID-19 is now considered a global pandemic. Reports of confirmed cases and deaths in the United States and around the world continue to grow daily. To address this pandemic, the White House published official COVID-19 guidance, which instructs the public to “avoid social gatherings in groups of more than 10 people.” The President also declared a national emergency and various Governors and state officials have issued shelter in place orders prohibiting citizens from leaving their homes, except in cases of necessity in order to fight the pandemic. Americans are doing their part to reduce transmissions of this deadly virus by staying at home.

Contrary to the President’s own recommendations to reduce person-to-person contact, your agencies are continuing to direct border wall contractors, surveyors, appraisers, cultural and historical assessors, and other non-essential employees to leave their homes to work on the President’s border wall project. Further, the Administration continues to move forward with eminent domain actions against border landowners, which has implications not only for landowners’ property rights but also the wellbeing of the landowners, many of whom are

elderly. This is particularly true in Texas and other southern border communities, where various counties have issued shelter-in-place orders, Americans are faced with fighting the Administration's actions to take their private land and at the same time abiding social distancing recommendations and preserving their own health by staying at home. This is unacceptable.

As such, we write to request that the Department of Justice, the Department of Homeland Security, and the Army Corps of Engineers immediately cease any and all actions towards acquiring private land for border wall construction for the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic. Further, we urge the Administration to concentrate its limited Army Corps of Engineers personnel and resources on supporting and advancing a "whole of government" approach to defeating the pandemic rather than constructing additional border wall at this critical time.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Bennie G. Thompson
Chairman
Committee on Homeland Security



Kathleen M. Rice
Chairwoman
Subcommittee on Border Security,
Facilitation, and Operations
Committee on Homeland Security