

NEWS

Walls Don't Fix It All

BY VICTORIA TURCIOS

LET'S SAY YOU WOKE UP TOMORROW with \$5.7 billion to your name; In what would you invest that money? Maybe you'd buy a few cars, pay off your looming student debt, consider early retirement, or... build a wall?

The Great Wall of China, the Berlin Wall in Germany, and the Peace Lines in Northern Ireland are just a few reminders that a physical barrier constructed with the intention of dividing ideas, beliefs, and people is nothing new. The Trump administration has added its own historic twist to it, and it's apparent that the collateral damage his approach creates as he continues proposing a border wall is somehow supposed to justify the means to an end.

Let's rip off the band-aid and talk facts about Trump's conquest for said wall. Mexico won't be paying; despite being a selling point during his campaign, Trump's now counting on Congress to give him the money for a wall which has already resulted in a history-making government shutdown that affected many.

Those living by the border are being overlooked; residents who live along the U.S.-Mexico border, many who are in support of Trump's administration, don't support a wall. According to the Star Telegram of Fort Worth, those residing in the Lone Star state are concerned not only about the barrier taking over their private land and impacting natural wildlife, but also have a growing doubt that it would reduce drug smuggling, or illegal immigration. These selling points used by Trump are also something that the DHS has stated would be nothing against the evolving smuggling methods used by many for both drugs and illegal immigration.

Rhetoric used to defend the wall is generalizing immigrants and raising hate crime; according to the Center for Immigration Studies, research states that the exaggerated fear over immigrant crime as a stereotype boils over into hate crimes while the majority of immigrants are law-abiding citizens. Hate crime statistics by the FBI support this research showing a disturbing and growing trend, as in 2017 alone these discriminatory incidents rose 17%.

It's absurd to say that Trump's rhetoric used to defend the wall, all while referring to immigrants as animals rather than people, is not a part of the growing issue. Words are fuel, and hateful intolerance is infiltrated through Trump's statements. The data doesn't add up; According to Brookings, a nonprofit organization conducting research, "There is no evidence that undocumented residents accounted for either the rise in crime or event for a substantial number of crimes. The vast majority of violent crimes, including murders, are committed by native-born Americans."

Despite these facts, PEW research statistics state that nearly eight in ten of Trump supporters favor the building of a wall along the Mexican border, but when it comes to other issues regarding immigrants, that support falters and becomes divided. They do seem to agree on one thing though: that immigration is a serious problem. Many who are currently in or have been through the immigration process in the United States (which includes myself) agree that it is a problem. According to the Council on Foreign Relations, Congress has avoided proactive policy on the matter for years despite politicians on both sides of the aisle using the matter as a marketing tactic for their electoral campaigns.

The majority of Latin American immigrants crossing the U.S border today hope to escape violence, corrupt governments, and to have a chance at a better future. Despite an overarching narrative that has sprouted a false crisis built upon dehumanizing remarks and assumptions by Trump's administration, a wall wouldn't fix the growing issue. We need an immigration reform that works for everyone, including the diverse growing demographic of minorities that will fuel our future. By 2045, the U.S. population will be 50.3% composed of Hispanics, Blacks, Asians, multiracial and other communities, according to Brookings statistics.

While a wall would give Trump a bragging token, it would come at the expense of over 800,000 federal workers missing pay, rising hate crimes,

damaged relations with neighboring countries and allies, as well as a wall that won't stop drugs and immigrants from making their way into the country. Overall, it is a costly \$5.7 billion that could be invested elsewhere.

They do say that history tends to repeat itself. While the Berlin Wall was up for twenty-eight years, it came down eventually, and not by the will of the government but by the demands of the people. †

One Side of Trump's Wall

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THE UNITED STATES BORDER NEIGHBORING MEXICO is the ninth longest international border in the world, stretching over 3,000 miles. Back in the 2016 election, President Trump made the bold campaign promise of building a wall on this very border. Overall, this has been an extremely polarizing issue during the first two years of Trump's Presidency, and it is showing prominence in the 2018 election as well.

Currently, there are large sections of the border that are protected by some sort of barrier. In Texas there is fencing in parts of high traffic areas, but the largest portion of unsecured border is in Western Texas. This section is in a very rural portion of the state, is currently 600 miles of unsecured land with no large cities on either side of the border.

In the past, this issue has not been as partisan as it is today, for there have been several federally funded measures to secure portions of the border. The Secure Fence Act of 2006 passed the House 367-109 and was signed into law by President Bush. This bill authorized roughly 1.4 billion dollars to construct a wall in vulnerable places of the border to secure newly discovered routes. President Obama, as well as current Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer supported a similar act in 2009. Many Republicans have made the claim that Democrats are simply against the wall due to the fact that it is a major campaign promise of the President.

When addressing the issue of the wall, is hard to deny the fact that this barrier would help to decrease the number of undocumented immigrants coming into the country. Looking around the world, walls are part of the primary border security of many nations including the Koreas, Israel, Vatican City, and many countries in Europe, used as checkpoints to secure their nation's borders.

In the United States, areas that have invested in a wall have seen illegal immigration slow by almost 90 percent in some areas. The El Paso section of the wall in Texas' most Western city has led to lower crime rates as well as decreased illegal immigration in El Paso, factors that were improved with the construction of the wall.

The main question is this: do the American People want to spend such a large amount of money on constructing and maintaining a wall that will rarely see any activity? Overall, securing the southern border has a lot of positives, such as helping to stop drugs from flowing into our country, and preventing human traffickers from harming more innocent people. The theory is, that if you deter people from traveling across the border, there will be less vulnerable migrants for human traffickers to capitalize on. .

There have been other compromises that have been proposed such as Will Hurd's bill, which proposed a technology wall on the border of his home district, which is the largest district on the border. Overall, it will be extremely interesting to see how the situation at the border will unfold with the Trump Administration already having gone through a government shutdown and another shutdown looming. †