

**Congress of the United States**  
Washington, DC 20515

June 16, 2026

Markwayne Mullin  
Secretary of Department of Homeland Security (DHS)  
Washington, DC 20528

Dear Secretary Mullin:

We write in strong opposition to the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) recent waivers of numerous federal environmental and historic preservation laws inside Big Bend National Park. These waivers endanger the intrinsic nature of the park, local economies, biodiversity, and the safety of communities along the Rio Grande River. We urge you to rescind these waivers and instead offer proposals subject to public review and input. There is no border security emergency here that warrants giving CBP unfettered authority to unnecessarily destroy some of the wildest parts of Big Bend or to disregard the overwhelmingly bipartisan will of the people, the actual data showing minimal numbers of border crossings inside the park, and the values that Texans and all Americans hold dear as represented by the National Parks.

The administration has failed to demonstrate that Big Bend National Park is an area of high illegal entry—a requirement under Section 102(c) of the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996, as amended (IIRIRA).<sup>1</sup> Your notice of the waivers does not contextualize the number of illegal entry incidents. In Fiscal Year 2025 (FY25), Big Bend Sector recorded 0.45% of all illegal border crossings nationwide.<sup>2</sup> Big Bend Sector represents the lowest level of illegal activity along the entire border, with the National Park itself comprising even fewer instances, disqualifying the region from your claims of high activity.<sup>3</sup> The rough terrain of Big Bend itself and Mexican lands to the south form a natural wall deterring illegal activity with its rugged terrain, as CBP has acknowledged.

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1 [https://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?hl=false&edition=prelim&req=granuleid%3AUSC-prelim-title8-section](https://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?hl=false&edition=prelim&req=granuleid%3AUSC-prelim-title8-section1103&f=treesort&num=0&saved=%7CKHRpdGxIOjggc2VjdGlvbjoxMTAzIGVkaXRpb246cHJlbGlhKSBP)

[n1103&f=treesort&num=0&saved=%7CKHRpdGxIOjggc2VjdGlvbjoxMTAzIGVkaXRpb246cHJlbGlhKSBP](https://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?hl=false&edition=prelim&req=granuleid%3AUSC-prelim-title8-section1103&f=treesort&num=0&saved=%7CKHRpdGxIOjggc2VjdGlvbjoxMTAzIGVkaXRpb246cHJlbGlhKSBP)  
[UiAoZ3JhbnVsZWlkeiVQy1wcmVsaW0tdGl0bGU4LXNlY3Rpb24xMTAzKQ%3D%3D%7CdHJlZXNvcnQ%3D%7C%7C0%7Cfalse%7Cprelim](https://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?hl=false&edition=prelim&req=granuleid%3AUSC-prelim-title8-section1103&f=treesort&num=0&saved=%7CKHRpdGxIOjggc2VjdGlvbjoxMTAzIGVkaXRpb246cHJlbGlhKSBP)

2 <https://www.cbp.gov/newsroom/stats/nationwide-encounters>

<https://www.cbp.gov/newsroom/local-media-release/illegal-border-crossings-big-bend-sector-fall-significantly-fy-2025>

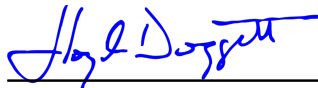
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[https://keepbigbendwild.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/05/BIBE\\_Supts\\_Letter\\_to\\_DHS\\_Secretary\\_2026May21\\_final.pdf](https://keepbigbendwild.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/05/BIBE_Supts_Letter_to_DHS_Secretary_2026May21_final.pdf)

With U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) having responding to our March 27 letter by noting the “intrinsic importance” of the landscape and history of the Big Bend area, you must act—as Commissioner Scott committed in his response—to preserve the park and its surrounding areas and to “minimize harm to the greatest extent practicable in accordance with applicable law.” Waiving 28 environmental and historic preservation laws—including the National Park Service Organic Act, the National Historic Preservation Act, the Endangered Species Act and the Antiquities Act— totally contradicts Commissioner Scott’s words. As noted in our prior letter, expedited construction of new technology and roads will disrupt the flow of the Rio Grande River, increasing flash flood risk in the park and in Laredo and other communities along the border, deplete West Texans’ access to natural resources, including safe drinking water, and choke wildlife corridors, endangering many unique species.

Current CBP presence in Big Bend National Park is effective. Sheriffs from the region have written to you that this proposed construction is unnecessary, especially given the successes of ongoing practices. Issuing these waivers bypasses all opportunity for stakeholder comment and ignores state and federal land managers, local law enforcement, and local residents who know the area best. We urge you to reverse these dangerous waivers and meaningfully engage with, and transparently respond to the input provided by, the National Park Service, local government, and the public.

Sincerely,



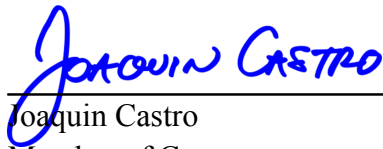
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Lloyd Doggett  
Member of Congress



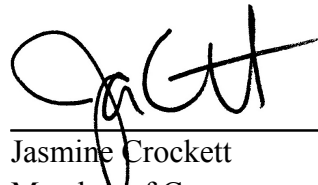
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Greg Casar  
Member of Congress



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Joaquin Castro  
Member of Congress



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Jasmine Crockett  
Member of Congress



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Veronica Escobar  
Member of Congress



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Lizzie Fletcher  
Member of Congress



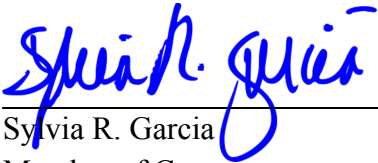
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Al Green  
Member of Congress



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Vicente Gonzalez  
Member of Congress



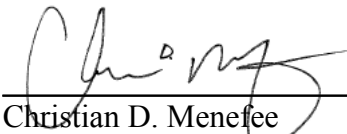
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Sylvia R. Garcia  
Member of Congress



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Henry Cuellar  
Member of Congress



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Christian D. Menefee  
Member of Congress



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Marc A. Veasey  
Member of Congress



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Julie Johnson  
Member of Congress



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Jared Huffman  
Member of Congress



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Donald S. Beyer Jr.  
Member of Congress



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Raja Krishnamoorthi  
Member of Congress



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Mike Quigley  
Member of Congress



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Deborah K. Ross  
Member of Congress