

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

November 14, 2017

The Honorable Paul D. Ryan
Speaker of the House
H-232, The Capitol
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Ryan:

More than 70 percent of the land along our southwest border belongs to entities other than the federal government. For this reason, it has become increasingly clear that construction of President Trump's border wall will require the extensive use of eminent domain to seize property held by American citizens.

Beyond its detrimental impact on border families and communities, this sweeping reliance on eminent domain also directly contradicts the Republican Conference's support for the principle of limited government. And indeed, you and other senior members of your party have frequently inveighed against the use of eminent domain to facilitate public projects in the past.

For example, you cosponsored legislation in response to a 2005 Supreme Court decision validating the expropriation of private land in New London, Connecticut. According to *The Hill*, you stated at the time that, "I took an oath to defend the Constitution, and this means protecting citizens' right to own private property and prevent government from abusing its power." The 2016 Republican Party platform similarly urges caution regarding the use of eminent domain in a section entitled, "The Fifth Amendment: Protecting Private Property."


Given your past statements and your party's platform, we write to ask whether you support the use of eminent domain to secure land for the construction of President Trump's expensive and unnecessary border wall. If so, we request that you explain the obvious contradiction between such a stance and your previous positions on this issue. If not, we strongly encourage you to publicly denounce the use of eminent domain to confiscate property held by private landowners in order to construct a wall that will divide border communities and waste tens of billions of American tax dollars.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. The prospect of the Trump administration fighting families in court for their own land should alarm every American. We trust that your concern for private property rights extends to families living on our southwest border and that you will publicly condemn any effort by the federal government to undermine those rights in the service of a wall that our country does not need and cannot afford.

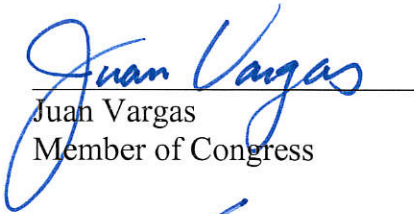
Sincerely,



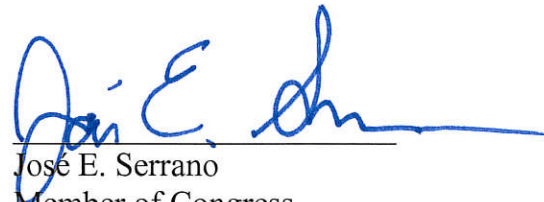
Beto O'Rourke
Member of Congress



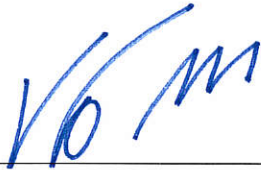
Ruben Gallego
Member of Congress



Juan Vargas
Member of Congress



José E. Serrano
Member of Congress



Vicente Gonzalez
Member of Congress