

Rolling Stone

Trump's 'Big, Beautiful Wall' Prompts Dueling Crowdfunding Efforts

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In his speech announcing his presidential candidacy, President **Donald Trump** made a promise that he would repeat ad nauseam throughout the campaign and his administration: “I would build a great wall, and nobody builds walls better than me, believe me, and I’ll build them very inexpensively. I will build a great great wall on our southern border and I’ll have Mexico pay for that wall.”

Yet, here we are, almost two years into a Trump administration, and no sign of Mexico paying a single cent. So Trump has turned to the American taxpayers to fund his pet project. But with Congress at a standstill, the government shutdown, and Democrats poised to take over in the House, Trump may have to turn to alternate sources to build his “big, beautiful wall.”

Enter GoFundMe, the crowdfunding platform usually used by Americans to **pay for their healthcare**. Except now, they’re using it to raise funds for the wall. Brian Kolfage, a disabled Air Force veteran and Purple Heart recipient, started one such effort that has **brought in \$16.5 million** so far toward its \$1 billion-dollar goal.

Kolfage’s GoFundMe page reads like an article from The Onion. When addressing the question of how they will get the funds to the government, Kolfage wrote, “We have contacted the Trump Administration to secure a point of contact where all the funds will go upon completion. When we get this information secured we will update. We have many very high level contacts already helping.”

But it won’t be that easy. The Department of Homeland Security cannot accept the funds without Congressional approval. “Congress would still have to enact a statute permitting this,” David Bier, a policy analyst at the libertarian Cato Institute **told the *New York Times***. “But current law prohibits the administration from taking this money and spending it, and it also violates the law to accept donations that bind the hands of the administration.”

Not to be outdone, others who don’t support Trump have started GoFundMe campaigns to help immigrants scale the wall. Freelance writer Luke O’Neil **started one to build escalators** every half mile along the completed wall — a particularly fitting metaphor, as that is how Trump entered the room to make his presidential announcement speech. So far O’Neil has raised nearly \$8,000, all of which will go to RAICES, a charity that provides legal services to immigrants. Another similar effort has raised \$160,000 **for ladders over the wall**.

But Trump supporters do not appreciate the joke. In an email to *Rolling Stone*, O’Neil said: “The best part is how many Trump people got extremely red-assed at the escalator idea, like arguing

that it wouldn't even be possible and that ICE would shut it down. These people are really devoid of irony. It's got to be so lonely over there."