



# Trump's border wall is holding America hostage

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Everyone agrees that we need to fix our broken and underfunded immigration system. But how should we invest taxpayer money to best accomplish that?

During the two years following the 2016 presidential election, the Republican-controlled Congress refused the Trump administration's repeated requests to fund a wall on our southern border. In September, the Senate's No. 2 Republican, John Cornyn from Texas said: "People can climb over the wall or go under the wall or through the wall. We've seen that in different places."

Texas Republican Rep. Will Hurd's 23rd Congressional District stretches from El Paso to San Antonio, the largest border with Mexico of any member of Congress. He recently told CNN: "I think building a concrete structure sea to shining sea is the most expensive and least effective way to do border security." Hurd, a former CIA agent, has argued for a "smart border wall" which would be composed of sensors, radar, surveillance drones and other advanced technology, something he has experience using.

The country needs a comprehensive approach to immigration reform and border security. We need additional immigration facilities and personnel (including more judges) to strengthen the efficiency and due diligence needed in processing immigrants at our border. We need to increase the use of drug scanning technology at all ports of entry where the vast majority of illegal drugs get through.

We need to implement 21st century surveillance systems with smart wall technology. It's less expensive than a physical wall and more effective because the system could be deployed anywhere to "see" people, vehicles, or boats approaching our border, day or night, and follow them until agents arrive.

We also need to redirect U.S. aid to Central America that would help reduce the civil unrest that leads to caravans of families emigrating out of those countries to escape the violence.

The president's anti-immigrant rhetoric has divided our country. His attacks are based on falsehoods and exaggeration designed to inflate a problem by fear mongering. For example, are immigrants really more prone to criminal behavior than native born Americans? According to a study by the Cato Institute, the criminal conviction rate of people living in Texas in 2015 varied by group. The study showed that for every 100,000 illegal immigrants living in Texas, 899 had criminal convictions; legal immigrants had a lower rate at 611. The criminal conviction rate for native born Americans in Texas was 1,797, or twice the rate of illegal immigrants and three times that of legal immigrants.

Immigration control is difficult and requires strict enforcement but that shouldn't include terrorizing families to make political points with a voter base. Our government has hundreds, possibly thousands of traumatized kids in custody, needlessly and for many, permanently, separated from their parents. Our Justice Department should have intervened on behalf of those children instead of enabling it.

The irresponsible shut down of the federal government over "the wall," intentionally inflicting financial and emotional stress on American families, including military families, was driven by nothing more than a thoughtless campaign rally promise. Government contractors and businesses that lost income during the shutdown won't be reimbursed. The shutdown accomplished nothing but pain for Americans. Congress needs to do its job and protect the American people from further harm and dysfunction rising from this administration.