



U.S. Border Fence Remains Incomplete

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Donald Trump has made headlines in recent months with his bold pledge to build a wall on the U.S.-Mexico border. But the U.S. already has a wall...or more accurately...part of a wall. Thanks to the Secure Fence Act passed by Congress in 2006, the U.S. has constructed about 650 miles of fencing along the 1,954-mile border with Mexico. But only about 100 miles of that fencing is in Texas, and much of it is miles from the actual border. Thus, illegal immigrants continue to stream over and around the fencing. In recent months, thousands of children and families from Central America have poured into Texas, while residents near the border have reported seeing drug smugglers climbing over the fence.

There have been many issues with the national border fence project, starting with land disputes and difficult terrain near the border. "The notion that this was going to be a border wall where on one side you'll be in Mexico and when you step on the other side you'll be in the United States is just fantasy," says Alex Nowrasteh, immigration policy analyst with the Cato Institute. He tells KTRH the federal government has found it difficult and expensive to acquire the land near the border for the fence. "Most of the territory along the southwest border is privately owned, and the vast majority of that is in Texas," he says. "So in order to build a border wall in Texas you have to take people's private property."

Beyond the logistical issues with land and terrain is the soaring cost of the border fence. "The cost of building it, just for materials alone, is about six-and-a-half million dollars per mile of fencing," says Nowrasteh. And that amount doesn't include the millions of dollars the government has paid in legal costs to secure land and to compensate the land owners.

While there has been evidence of multi-layered border walls being successful in some places, Nowrasteh believes even a completed border fence would only be a symbolic deterrent to illegal immigration. "I think the best way to do it is to create more legal temporary visas, so that a lot of these folks who are trying to come illegally can instead come legally," he says.