

Daily Mail editorial: Border wall funding not a national emergency

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The national media loves to challenge politicians for not following through on campaign promises, so at least credit President Donald Trump for following through on one of his most prominent campaign issues — building a wall to stop illegal immigration at the U.S.-Mexico border.

But that's as much credit as the president deserves for his emergency declaration Friday.

"We're talking about an invasion of our country with drugs, with human traffickers, with all types of criminals and gangs," Trump said Friday.

"Lawyers will spill much ink arguing about the legalities surrounding the law and whether President Trump can declare a national emergency," writes Alex Nowrasteh, senior immigration policy analyst at the conservative Cato Institute's Center for Global Liberty and Prosperity. "Regardless of what the law ultimately means, no reasonable person can look at the southern border and agree that it rises to the level of a national emergency."

Trump's favored argument for the national emergency is a supposed epidemic of immigration-induced crime and death on the border. "This is simply not the case," Nowrasteh writes.

"First, the crime rate in the 23 counties along the U.S. border with Mexico is below that of counties in the United States that do not lie along the Mexican border. Violent and property crime rates are both slightly lower along the border, but the homicide rate along the border is a whopping 34 percent below the homicide rate in non-border counties. If the entire United States had a homicide rate as low as that along the border in 2017, then there would have been about 5,720 fewer homicides nationwide that year."

Nowrasteh also points to evidence that immigrants apprehended at the border have a low criminal conviction rate and few are associated with gangs or terrorist organizations.

"Declaring a national emergency is unnecessary, unwise and inconsistent with the U.S. Constitution," Sen. Lamar Alexander, R-Tenn., said Friday. "Our founders chose not to create a chief executive with the power to tax the people and spend their money any way he chooses."

During the previous administration, conservatives frequently criticized President Barack Obama for his constant overreaches of executive authority. Obama, who infamously bragged of having a "pen and a phone" to write and implement executive orders when he couldn't get Congress to go his way, set dangerous precedent for growth of the power, as did several presidents before him.

Just as Obama's use of executive order and bypassing Congress was overreach, so is Trump's. Congress and the courts should rebuke President Trump's invalid emergency order he declared to build an unnecessary pet project.