

# DIGITAL JOURNAL

## Op-Ed: We have a 'national emergency' alright — It's Trump

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Washington - Yes, we do have a national emergency. Its name is Donald Trump, and it is a force of mindless, pointless disruption bordering on constitutional vandalism and abuse of power. For those of you who don't get it, you are seeing the start of a dictatorship.

After the Senate and House of Representatives voted and passed on the spending bill, that includes \$1.375 billion for 55 miles of border fence construction, White House Press Secretary Sarah Sanders said in a statement: "President Trump will sign the government funding bill, and as he has stated before, he will also take other executive action — including a national emergency — to ensure we stop the national security and humanitarian crisis at the border."

Specifically, the 1,159-page spending bill earmarks three-quarters of a billion dollars for border security technology, of which \$570 million must focus on "non-intrusive inspection equipment at ports of entry." The bill also includes about \$2.5 billion to be used through 2023 on border-security-related vehicles, including drones.

"It does not fund the president's wall, but it does support smart border-security initiatives that both parties have always supported, including increased security at our ports of entry and humanitarian assistance at the border," said Senate minority leader Chuck Schumer on the floor Thursday. "Most importantly, it will keep our government open."

US President Donald Trump has hinted he could use his emergency powers to move ahead with construction.

US President Donald Trump has hinted he could use his emergency powers to move ahead with construction of a wall on the US-Mexico border if Congress will not fund it

Trump's national emergency

Trump has already decided to use multiple parts of the federal government to extend his "great wall," and it looks like it will start with the Department of Defence, according to two senior administration officials and a congressional aide, reports NBC News.

The problem with Trump declaring a national emergency, especially when it is a political ploy made to appease his base, is that besides being an "end run" around Congress, it also violates Trump's oath to "preserve, protect and defend the Constitution of the United States" — which gives Congress, not the president, the authority to decide how public money is spent, writes the Washington Post.

I really don't know where Trump gets his figures, perhaps he pulls them out of his ear, or someplace like that, but border security experts, the Drug Enforcement Administration and many governors in our border states say there is not an emergency at our Southern border and many also stress that a physical wall is just not a practical or effective way to support our border patrol.

Republicans and Democrats are in agreement on the need for alternatives to a barrier, such as border-surveillance technologies.

"The wall is expensive and unnecessary given the current level of flow into the United States," says Alex Nowrasteh, a senior immigration policy analyst at the Cato Institute.

"These government mega-construction projects usually cost at least 50 percent more than what's budgeted. We estimate that each mile of the wall would cost about \$36 million to construct, and it won't have a major impact on deterrence, because most of the people coming are asking for asylum."

And using drug trafficking as an excuse to build his wall is another lie Trump has been cramming down people's throats. I wrote a story on the fentanyl crisis brewing along our Southern border earlier today. One fact I found was particularly telling.

According to the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration's 2018 National Drug Threat Assessment, 85 percent of the illicit drugs coming from Mexico come through the San Diego area border crossings.

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As for Trump's "gangs of illegal aliens," and all the "killers, gang members, and human traffickers," the reality is that the majority of the people trying to enter this country are trying to escape violence and poverty, just like many of our immigrant ancestors did years ago.

Most people living in the U.S. are too young to remember the Mexican families that crossed our Southern border 40 years ago, looking for work in the agricultural fields. The billions of dollars we have spent to date on physical barriers were founded in that reality — and as discussed by Wired, that was only to control the flow, not stop migrants outright.

Christopher Wilson, deputy director of the Mexico Institute at the Wilson Center says the best use of any funding should be for "border security that isn't about the wall."

US workers build the border wall between El Paso Texas US and Ciudad Juarez Mexico on February 5.

US workers build the border wall between El Paso, Texas, US and Ciudad Juarez, Mexico on February 5, 2019

"A lot of it needs to go to the ports of entry rather than the areas between the ports of entry," Wilson says. "It's at the ports of entry that we can do so much more than what we're doing, both in terms of facilitating legal travel and trade while enhancing border security."

Trump's despotic behavior is beginning to wear on many people. His temper tantrums, belittling of lawmakers and news people on Twitter and in public, and generally obnoxious threats like the government shut down are bad enough. But his behavior is frightening in another way that many people just refuse to think about: Trump is moving this country toward a dictatorship.

Think about it. A dictatorship is a form of government in which absolute power is concentrated on one person or a small, select group with either no party or a weak party. Sound familiar? When Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell came out this afternoon and announced that Trump would sign the border security bill and also declare a national emergency, he showed his yellow streak to the nation.