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That's actually a good question and one that Paul's campaign won't answer. His website says only the following: "My plans include an underground electric fence, with helicopter stations to respond quickly to breaches of the border." The details of how it would be built, what it would take to make it work and how much it would cost are left unanswered.

Moreover, aides to the Kentucky Republican have refused repeated attempts to explain the idea to the Huffington Post. On June 14, Paul's former spokesman and current campaign manager, Jesse Benton, said he would call the following day to provide further details. He never did.

Some elaboration on the concept is needed because even respected immigration experts -- including those from libertarian backgrounds (as is Paul) -- say they're in the dark.

"Kind of an interesting idea," Daniel Griswold of the CATO Institute said sarcastically. "I haven't heard of it.

"I have never heard of it before," said William Frey a widely-respected voice on immigration policy with the Brookings Institute. "I know there were a lot of ideas floating around in 2007 when they were trying to come up with comprehensive legislation. But I have never seen anything about underground fences."

There has been, to be sure, some discussion of "virtual fences." But those would be above ground. The notion -- as with Paul's idea -- is to monitor where border crossings take place without actually having guards stationed at frequent intervals. During a time of heavy concern about illegal immigration in 2006, Congress contracted with Boeing Co. to build a "fence of cameras, radar and other technology." But the project was plagued by delays and massive costs.

Indeed, when lawmakers have considered constructing an electronic fence along the border, they tend to view the burial process as either redundant or economically prohibitive.

Take, for instance, Rep. Steve King (R-Iowa), hardly a shrinking violet among conservatives. In July of 2006, the Iowa Republican took to the House floor to discuss a fence that he had "designed" for the southern border.

"I also say we need to do a few other things on top of that wall," King said, while putting together a model of the fence on the desk in front of him, "one of them being to put a little bit of wire on top here to provide a disincentive for people to climb over the top or put a ladder there. We could also electrify this wire with the kind of current that would not kill somebody, but it would simply be a discouragement for them to be fooling around with it. We do that with livestock all the time."

King's fence, according to an accompanying AP article, would have been 12 feet high, made of 6-inch thick concrete panels and spanned the border. The congressman pledged to keep it in place "for perhaps a hundred years, if necessary."

King's idea never went anywhere. But in other countries, electric fences have actually

been erected. An academic paper on how to control land borders written in November 2002, mentioned that a Norex electrical fence was constructed along the border between South Africa and Mozambique but suffered, occasionally, from an insufficient current. An Agence France-Presse article from April 1997, noted that: "Turkey is planning to buy Israeli-made electronic equipment including special fences and radars to seal its border with Iraq to prevent infiltration into the country of separatist Kurdish rebels."

Neither South Africa nor Turkey built their fences underground, in part because their plans for border security are conceptually different than Paul's appears to be. The Kentucky Republican, it appears, isn't placing his hopes in the act of literally preventing immigrants from crossing the border. He wants to provide law enforcement officials advanced tools to monitor when and where that crossing takes place and then crack down on the illegality.

But for a self-professed libertarian, the idea doesn't seem to fit with the broader policy platform. For starters, it requires plenty of government involvement, including the reliance on law enforcement officials to carry out the strategy and the distinct possibility of taking private land.

"They are going across very sensitive land along the Rio Grande River," said CATO's Griswold. "They are going across land for ranchers -- it is running roughshod over private property rights which kind of shocks me that Rand Paul would embrace this concept with the eminent domain issues it entails."

But mainly, Griswold notes, it's incredibly expensive. Rep. King said that his proposal would have cost \$1.3 million per mile and up to \$680 million total. That was the congressman's own, rosy estimate. And that was for a fence built over ground. Paul's underground fest would, in all likelihood, range well over \$1 billion.

Of course, Paul's proposal would have little chance of passing through the Senate even if he is elected to that body. Despite an ever-growing appetite for border security, serious restraints still exist as to just how far the government can and will go. But it is an important part of his platform and a telling illustration of how his views on immigration tend to put him far at odds with the libertarian community and even to the right of his fellow Republicans.

That said, Paul's views may not be the most extreme of the bunch. Tom Mullins, a Republican nominee for a New Mexico congressional seat was quoted ten days ago, expressing some support for a proposal to place land mines along the Mexican border.