

VERONICA ESCOBAR
16TH DISTRICT, TEXAS

ASSISTANT WHIP

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

SUBCOMMITTEE ON CRIME, TERRORISM,
AND HOMELAND SECURITY

SUBCOMMITTEE ON IMMIGRATION AND CITIZENSHIP

HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON
MILITARY PERSONNEL, VICE CHAIR

SUBCOMMITTEE ON CYBER, INNOVATIVE
TECHNOLOGIES, AND INFORMATION SYSTEMS

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ETHICS

HOUSE SELECT COMMITTEE
ON THE CLIMATE CRISIS



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

WASHINGTON D.C. OFFICE:
1505 LONGWORTH HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
(202) 225-4831

EL PASO OFFICE:
221 N. KANSAS STREET, SUITE 1500
EL PASO, TX 79901
(915) 541-1400

<http://escobar.house.gov>

VICE CHAIR
DEMOCRATIC WOMEN'S CAUCUS
DEPUTY WHIP
CONGRESSIONAL PROGRESSIVE CAUCUS
CONGRESSIONAL HISPANIC CAUCUS
NEW DEMOCRAT COALITION

November 21, 2023

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Chair
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Homeland Security
H-307 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Chuck Fleishmann
Ranking Chair
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Homeland Security
1036 Longworth HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chair DeLauro and Ranking Member Fleishmann:

As you continue working to finalize the appropriations package for Fiscal Year 2023 (FY23), I write to urge for prioritizing available funding for a Joint Processing Center (JPC) in the final appropriations bill for a JPC in El Paso, Texas.

In 2021, U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) purchased 60 acres of land from the City of El Paso as the first step in building a new JPC for the region; this land was purchased using funds from the Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Package for Humanitarian Assistance and Security at the Southern Border Act of 2019. The updated facility would increase CBP and El Paso's capacity to efficiently process migrants and ease overcrowding at existing processing centers, which are too old and small to adequately handle current processing needs. However, construction on the facility had not started before the funding from 2019 had to be repackaged and re-appropriated to prevent losing it, leaving CBP with 60 acres of land and no funding for further development.

With additional funding for JPCs available in final FY23 appropriations bill, I would like to stress the importance of affording communities that consistently welcome migrants into their cities, like El Paso, the opportunity to modernize outdated infrastructure that no longer meets the challenges presented by the new normal of 21st century immigration.

El Paso has a long history of receiving migrants from across the global south and other regions in large part because of our geography. The city is located on a dry and narrow segment of the Rio Grande, which provides migrants with safe crossing relative to other locations across Texas. El

Paso is also a large transportation hub with proximity to larger cities, and our non-governmental organization (NGO) network has developed lasting relationships with similar networks in other cities across the southwest and beyond over years of assisting arriving migrants.

Local leaders and stakeholders in El Paso have had to assist the federal government over the years through evolving and emerging immigration challenges. For decades El Paso has had to support the federal government, which has failed to adequately address the growing numbers of migrants at the southern border. Congress has failed to modernize antiquated immigration laws and for decades has addressed immigration policy as border policy. At the same time, the situation has become more unsustainable as immigration is increasingly driven by political instability and accelerating climate change in equatorial countries. El Paso – the personnel stationed to our sector as well as the NGOs, local governments and the community at large – has had to adapt to new migration patterns, seasonal influxes, changing migrant demographics, and new migrant populations with wholly different needs. The city’s once nearly sufficient infrastructure at ports of entry and processing centers are overwhelmed on a daily basis, as are the city’s NGO shelters. It is clear that El Paso’s current processing infrastructure desperately needs to be updated.

Last Congress, I brought over 20% of my Congressional colleagues to El Paso to see how outdated border infrastructure, outdated personnel structures, and decades-old immigration laws have created processing inefficiencies, led to frequent overcrowding in processing facilities, fueled mission creep for CBP agents, led to indefensible backlogs in the immigration system, and have ultimately worked to make our border less secure. With these lessons learned in mind, I have advanced several strategies that could help streamline processing at the border, including successfully establishing civilian Processing Coordinator positions, introducing legislation that reimagines asylum processing into a comprehensive process, and calling for more legal immigration pathways.

I urge the Committee to consider El Paso a recipient for JPC funding in FY23. Thank you for your consideration of my request as you finalize the final FY23 appropriations bill.

Sincerely,



Veronica Escobar
Member of Congress