

New bill seeks to protect Mount Cristo Rey site from border wall

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Leighanne Munoz

Texas State Rep. Veronica Escobar introduced a bill to block the Trump administration from building a border wall on Mount Cristo Rey.

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U.S. Representative Veronica Escobar, who represents the District of El Paso, has introduced legislation to protect [Mount Cristo Rey](#), which sits on the U.S. border with Mexico in Sunland Park, New Mexico.

The legislation would block President Donald Trump from using eminent domain to build a border wall along the mountain owned by the Catholic Diocese of Las Cruces.

Escobar introduced the [Mount Cristo Rey Protection Act](#) on Monday, July 20, 2026, according to the [El Paso Times](#).

The bill recognizes Mount Cristo Rey as a holy site and would prohibit federal funds to litigate against the Diocese of Las Cruces in its lawsuit challenging the federal government's attempted land seizure. The bill would also prohibit the use of federal funds to construct, install, operate, or maintain border barrier infrastructure on or near Mount Cristo Rey.

"Mount Cristo Rey is a religious and cultural landmark that has been central to our community for generations," Escobar said. "Rather than working with border communities to advance effective border security, the Trump administration continues to disregard the people, history, and culture that make our region special. I will continue to fight for its preservation."

The Trump administration is looking at taking the 1.2 miles of land that is owned by the Diocese that runs along the border between the U.S. and Mexico. The administration wants to add to the boarder wall on the southern side of Mount Cristo Rey. These plans have been met with public backlash and concern from the church and people who view the mountain as a sacred symbol.

 A border wall is seen where part of the rock was blasted for construction at the base of Mount Cristo Rey on April 29, 2026, as viewed from the Mexican side of the border.

The mountain has served as a sacred site since 1939 where hikers, bikers and Catholic pilgrims on both sides of the mountain have made it up the trails to see the 29-foot-tall limestone monument of Jesus with arms stretched. The hike is most popular on Good Friday every year where people go to celebrate Easter.

"(Mount Cristo Rey) has become for people in our region a holy site marking the unity of humanity and of faith that transcends borders," El Paso's Bishop Mark Seitz said. "For the federal government to forcefully take this holy ground to build a tall barrier topped with razor wire would represent an overreach on the part of the government and create a sign that speaks, not of mutual respect and love, but of separation and rejection."

[Leighanne Muñoz](#) is the business and development reporter for the Las Cruces Sun-News and is a fellow with the New Mexico Local News Fellowships and Internships Program, which places emerging journalists in newsrooms across New Mexico. Learn more at www.newmexicolocalnewsfellowships.org. Email her at lmunoz@gannett.com.