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Fort Bliss

“El Paso is Fort Bliss, and Fort Bliss is El Paso”

Fort Bliss and El Paso are inextricably linked by both geography and economic development. As the single largest employer in the El Paso region, El Pasoans have invested heavily in infrastructure and quality of life improvements directly and indirectly affecting Fort Bliss, at a rate of \$6.8 billion over a span of 15 years, to support the Army’s mission and operations. These investments include:

- \$1.5 billion in local school bonds and expanded educational opportunities
- \$1.5 billion in healthcare expansion
- \$700 million in quality of life projects
- \$2 billion in transportation and infrastructure
- Expansion of housing (nearly 15,000 single family homes and 8,000 apartment units)

El Pasoans have been able to benefit from the many opportunities made available by Fort Bliss, in the same way that El Paso has supported servicemembers from El Paso and around the U.S during their tenure at Fort Bliss. The commitment from the city of El Paso, the majority of which would remain in TX-16 under the proposed map, to Fort Bliss is shown year after year in the City’s budget book. The most recently [adopted budget book for the city of El Paso in FY25](#) goes into further detail about Fort Bliss’ economic impact on El Paso and shows that it is a driver for local growth. It is critical for the representative of the City of El Paso to have the ability to advocate on behalf both the needs of El Pasoans and Fort Bliss. The proposed map would dilute this representation and remove Fort Bliss—an integral part of El Paso—and place it in the 23rd Congressional District.

In addition to the economic and political ties that link El Pasoans in TX-16 and Fort Bliss, the Army’s Castner Range, 7,000 acres of Army-owned land, is a symbol of ecological and cultural ties that is considered the crown jewel of West Texas by El Pasoans. This land has long-held significance to the people of the Paso del Norte area and is rich with archeological history, historic military presence, recreational activity, endangered wildlife and distinctive species of vegetation. TX-16 community members have been working alongside the Army for over 40 years on the preservation and protection of the range, which holds archeological sites dating back to the Paleo-Indian complex, the first peoples who lived in our region. Castner Range exhibits

the entire story of the development of the American Southwest with modern stone foundations, remnants of moving-target rail systems, mining remains, a heliograph site, military firing berms and residues of pre-1926 ranching days. In 2023, after decades of advocacy, the El Paso community and surrounding area successfully secured a national monument designation for Castner Range so future El Pasoans can cherish this piece of land for years to come.

At the same time, Congresswoman Escobar has been working to build and strengthen connections between the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP) and the Department of Defense (DoD), including Fort Bliss and Space Force. As an R1 research university with clearance ready students, UTEP, which would also remain in TX-16 under the proposed map, serves as a critical resource to the DoD. Ensuring the representative for TX-16 has both UTEP and Fort Bliss in their district is essential to continuing the efforts Congresswoman Escobar has pursued to connect them. These efforts include:

- [Discussing the importance of embracing the additive manufacturing technology being used at UTEP with senior DoD officials](#)
- [Providing testimony to the House Appropriations Committee on the public-private partnerships being used by the W.M. Keck Center for Additive Manufacturing to provide innovative ways to increase readiness within the armed forces.](#)
- Bringing key Department of Defense leaders, like [General John M. Murray of U.S. Army Futures Command](#) and [Joint Modernization Commander Col. Tobin A. Magsig](#), to UTEP to explore partnerships between the Department and UTEP.
- [Celebrating partnerships between UTEP and key industry leaders to foster a friendly economic environment in El Paso that UTEP students, and the community, can benefit from.](#)
- [Worked through the National Defense Authorization Act to establish the Space Force University Partnership Program, which UTEP has now joined.](#)
- [Secured \\$964,000 in the House of Representatives FY22 Defense Appropriations bill for UTEP to use in partnership with the National Center for Defense & Manufacturing to assist El Paso manufacturing businesses identify and develop proposals to address the needs of the DoD.](#)
- [Speaking with NSA Director Nakasone and Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Cyber Policy Mieke Eoyang on the importance of partnering with universities for the development and diversification of talent in the cybersecurity space](#)

House Armed Services Committee

Since 2019, Congresswoman Escobar has engaged with Army, Fort Bliss Leadership, and the Congressional Committees of Jurisdiction on Fort Bliss priorities including modernization and installation infrastructure, military personnel needs including health care, sexual assault and harassment prevention, and childcare, as well as housing, climate resiliency at Fort Bliss, in addition to community engagement between Fort Bliss, the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP), and other El Paso entities and community leaders.

As a member who served on the House Committee on Armed Services until recently, Congresswoman Escobar has regularly advocated on behalf of the needs of Fort Bliss and the servicemembers stationed there. She is also the only member of Congress from the region to use the Community Project process to directly benefit Fort Bliss. She has worked to highlight these priorities to her congressional partners in a variety of ways, including but not limited to:

- Secured historic investments for infrastructure at Fort Bliss including:
 - \$74 million for the Fort Bliss rail yard to bolster its mobility and rapid deployment capabilities. This project was first put on Congresswoman Escobar's radar from the beginning of her tenure and quickly became a top priority for her. She collaborated closely with Fort Bliss leaders to secure this funding and was the only member of Congress to join for the groundbreaking ceremony earlier this year.
 - \$15 million for a new fire station to serve the William Beaumont Army Medical Center Area
 - \$7.2 million for the planning and design of transient training barracks at Fort Bliss
- Worked with Fort Bliss leaders to ensure the installation serves as the test-bed for new and emerging technologies that will assist the Army, like [using 3D printing technology to build military infrastructure](#). At Fort Bliss this resulted in the construction of barracks that can be used to house up to 56 soldiers.
- Engaging with senior Department of Defense officials during Armed Services Committee hearings:
 - [Highlighting mental health and infrastructure needs for Fort Bliss with Army Secretary Christine Wormuth and Army Chief of Staff James McConville.](#)
 - [Discussing military housing needs at Fort Bliss with former Secretary Mark Esper and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Mark Milley](#)
 - [Advocating for modernization of the Fort Bliss railyard with former Army Secretary Ryan McCarthy and Army Chief of Staff McConville](#)

- [Encouraged private military housing companies, including Balfour Beatty Communities which provides housing on Fort Bliss, to hold themselves to a high standard as they serve our servicemembers and their families.](#)
- [Providing testimony to the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Military Construction and Veterans Affairs on critical infrastructure needs at Fort Bliss like railway modernization and barracks upgrades.](#)
- Congresswoman Escobar also engages regularly with both service members and civilians at Fort Bliss to listen to their needs and take them back to Washington to advocate on their behalf. These have included but are not limited to:
 - [Joining a USO Forum at Fort Bliss with military spouses](#)
 - [Visiting the Armed Services YMCA just off Fort Bliss to learn more about childcare options on and off post](#)
 - [Speaking with female servicemembers about programs like the Fort Bliss Mentoring and Morale Program](#)
- Additionally, Congresswoman Escobar is in regular communication with senior Fort Bliss leadership such as [General Curtis Taylor](#) to be responsive to their needs while ensuring there is seamless interaction between Fort Bliss and El Paso

National Defense Authorization Act

Since her first term, Congresswoman Escobar has advanced and advocated for numerous El Paso and Fort Bliss specific Defense priorities in successive National Defense Authorization Acts (NDAA). They include but are not limited to:

- Serve as one of only 8 members of Congress during the Quality of Life (QOL) panel for the FY25 NDAA which focused on pay and compensation, housing, health care, childcare, and spousal support, in an effort to ensure the United States continues to recruit and retain the most talented military and civilian workforce in the world. Congresswoman Escobar held multiple listening sessions on Fort Bliss to inform her work on the QOL panel and she incorporated that feedback into provisions like a 14.5% pay raise for junior enlisted service members and investments in childcare.
- Allowing the Secretary of the Army to convey land to El Paso Water for the purposes of stormwater flood control for Fort Bliss and the surrounding areas.
- Successfully included language to make the Defense Community Infrastructure Program (DCIP) permanent. Through DCIP, communities like El Paso are able to address deficiencies in community infrastructure that supports a military installation to enhance military value, installation resilience, and military family quality of life.
- Championed policy to encourage prioritization of mobilization infrastructure investments at Fort Bliss and other primary power projection platforms. Substantial infrastructure investment will ensure Fort Bliss remains viable to mobilize forces for critical overseas contingency operations.

- Included feedback to improve military housing for families
- Establishing the Space Force University Partnership Program, a university consortium in support of the newly established Space Force.

Appropriations

This Congress, Congresswoman Escobar was appointed to the House Appropriations Committee, which plays a critical role in shaping national and local priorities, and oversees funding for essential areas such as infrastructure, healthcare, and defense. She is the first El Pasoan to be appointed to the committee since 1997. Additionally, she was appointed to the Subcommittee on Homeland Security and the Subcommittee on Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies. She is currently the only representative in the region that sits on any subcommittee with direct oversight over Fort Bliss or VA affairs.

In her first appropriations cycle, she has secured several policy requests that will directly benefit Fort Bliss, our local veterans and our region. They include:

- \$15 million for local defense innovation priorities to continue to build the defense manufacturing ecosystem in El Paso
- Language directing the Department of Defense to provide a report on William Beaumont Army Medical Center and the repairs it has taken to address recent water leaks and restrictions
- A feasibility study on the utilization of Inter-Governmental Support Agreements for major military construction projects to continue to build ties between Fort Bliss and El Paso. This was the result of direct collaboration between Fort Bliss and Congresswoman Escobar
- A feasibility study on land lease agreements use for military installations to partner private developers for certain non-military facilities. This was the result of direct collaboration between Fort Bliss and Congresswoman Escobar
- A report request from the VA on how it can improve community input and transparency requirements around new construction like the El Paso VA Health Care Center. This was in direct response to issues that occurred with the construction of the William Beaumont Army Medical Center and the desire for more oversight of the process
- Language highlighting the El Paso International Airport Air Traffic Control Tower as a prime candidate for replacement

Veterans Affairs

El Paso is home to over 50,000 veterans and they serve as an integral part of our community. El Paso was ranked as one of the top 10 best places for veterans to live in the U.S. and is the BEST place for veterans to live in Texas.

- Because of this, Congresswoman Escobar has worked to ensure our veterans have access to expert services and state of the art facilities. [That is why she was proud to secure \\$700 million for the construction of a brand-new VA Health Care Center](#) with a large amount

of this funding coming from the [Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023](#). She was the only House member in the region to vote for this funding. The facility will be built on 36 acres on the campus of the William Beaumont Army Medical Center complex on Fort Bliss land in East El Paso.

- Additionally, Congresswoman Escobar has been [vocal in her opposition to downsizing Veterans Affairs](#), including the mass firing of veterans themselves.

The Congresswoman was proud to always support the PACT Act, which extends eligibility for Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) healthcare services for veterans with toxic exposures from the Vietnam War, Gulf War, and post-9/11 eras, requires the VA to provide a toxic exposure screening to every veteran enrolled in VA healthcare, and has added more than 20 new presumptive conditions for burn pits and toxic exposures.

The recent FY 2025 Republican full-year continuing resolution reneges on veterans' medical care and creates future uncertainty. More veterans are enrolled in VA care than ever. This bill fails to include \$22.8 billion in fiscal year 2026 advanced funding for the Toxic Exposures Fund to care for veterans exposed to burn pits, Agent Orange, and other toxic substances.

- These funds are critical for PACT Act funding – which over 15,000 El Paso Veterans in TX-16 have qualified for.

Since coming into office in 2019, the Congresswoman has ensured El Paso veterans have received the benefits they deserve, returning over \$4.8 million in claims back to our veterans.

El Paso International Airport

Congresswoman Escobar has fought to ensure El Paso International has the resources it needs to function as a premier airport for our region. This has led to securing more than \$64.5 million for the airport since 2019 for various projects to upgrade, repair, and expand it. Much of this funding is a direct result of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law which the Congresswoman voted for and was the only House member in the region to vote for this bill. Additionally, since she was sworn in she has consistently heard from both airport officials and air traffic controllers that the El Paso Air Traffic Control Tower needs to be replaced and has made its replacement a top priority. That is why after the [Bipartisan Infrastructure Law](#) was signed into law, she wrote to the [Biden Administration](#) urging them to allocate funding for a new tower. After [she secured funding](#) for the initial stages of the tower, she hosted [administration officials](#) like [Secretary Buttigieg](#) and [Mitch Landrieu](#) to discuss the tower. With its design nearing completion, she is looking forward to continuing to advocate for construction funding.

[Escobar Secures \\$44 Million for airport improvements](#)

In previous years, Congresswoman Escobar actively advocated for and secured funding through several historic pieces of legislation. She is the only member of Congress from the region who voted in favor of transformative bills such as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, which has

funded the majority of these projects. In addition to legislative efforts, Congresswoman Escobar has also obtained critical funding through Community Project Funding (CPF) appropriations requests.

2024

- **5 Node Intersection Remediation Project - \$26.8 Million**

- This project is aimed to simplify a complex taxiway intersection, enhancing safety and efficiency. This area was identified as a high-risk “hot spot” and will do the following: reduce taxiway intersections to streamline aircraft movement, separate commercial carrier traffic from general aviation traffic, remove unnecessary pavement to improve operational flow.

- Article link: <https://cbs4local.com/newsletter-daily/277m-in-federal-grants-will-boost-el-paso-airport-infrastructure-ensure-safer-flights-aviation-administration-improvement-program?photo=3>

- **Terminal Roof Replacement Phase II - \$813,000**

- This project will replace the middle section of the terminal roof to enhance energy efficiency in important areas (security checkpoint, and terminal lobby).

- Article link: <https://cbs4local.com/newsletter-daily/277m-in-federal-grants-will-boost-el-paso-airport-infrastructure-ensure-safer-flights-aviation-administration-improvement-program?photo=3>

- **Solar Array – Rental Car Center - \$3 Million**

- The funding will establish solar panels on the ELP Rental Car Center to offset the airport’s energy usage.

- COEP press release: https://www.elpasotexas.gov/assets/Press-Releases/2023.08.06-NEWS-RELEASE_ELP-Awarded-3M-FAA-Grant.pdf

- **Sustainability Mater Plan - \$360,000**

- This project develops a plan that incorporates sustainable best practices into the airport’s master plan.

- COEP press release: https://www.elpasotexas.gov/assets/Press-Releases/2023.08.06-NEWS-RELEASE_ELP-Awarded-3M-FAA-Grant.pdf

- **General Aviation Ramp Reconstruction - \$10.6 Million**

- This project will create a new general aviation (GA) apron (area where planes are parked and load passengers) and rehabilitate existing GA apron pavement to

improve efficiency.

- Article Link: <https://www.ktsm.com/news/el-paso-airport-awarded-10-6m-grant-to-renovate-facility/>

- **Terminal Drive Bridge Replacement - \$850,000**

- The funding would be used to develop the Terminal Bridge Reconstruction Project including the design and reconstruction of the terminal bridge, which serves as the primary exit from the El Paso International Airport.

- Article link: <https://kvia.com/news/el-paso/2024/03/27/el-paso-airport-bridge-gets-a-new-look-in-2025/>

2023

- **Solar Array – Short Term Parking Lot - \$1.75 Million**

- The project will design and build a new solar panel array on the airport's short-term lot that will produce 1.5 megawatts of renewable energy.

2022

- **Airport Terminal Program - \$5 Million**

- The funding was used for updates to improve traveler experience, updates include replacement of terminal lighting with energy-efficient LED lights, installation of new seating with power outlets, updated wayfinding signage at the airport and update seating spaces to accommodate more travelers and improve ADA access.

- Article link:
<https://www.elpasotimes.com/story/news/2022/07/25/travelers-can-look-forward-to-el-paso-international-airport-upgrades/65373183007/>

2020

- **CARES Act Economic Relief for Airports - \$15.4 Million**

- Funding was to assist with prevention, preparedness, and response to the impacts of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. It allowed El Paso International Airport to mitigate financial losses arising as a result of COVID and continue to provide essential air transportation services.

- Press release:
<https://escobar.house.gov/news/documentsingle.aspx?DocumentID=305>