



LET TEXANS DO TEXAS

THE BIG BEND BORDER SOLUTION

October 23, 2026

The Honorable John Cornyn
The Honorable Ted Cruz
The Honorable Greg Abbott, Governor of Texas
The Honorable Dan Patrick, Lieutenant Governor of Texas
The Honorable Dustin Burrows, Speaker, Texas House of Representatives
The Honorable Ken Paxton, Attorney General of Texas
The Honorable Don Huffines, Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts
The Honorable Dawn Buckingham, Commissioner, Texas General Land Office
The Honorable Cesar Blanco, Texas Senate
The Honorable Roland Gutierrez, Texas Senate
The Honorable Eddie Morales Jr., Texas House of Representatives
Members of the Texas Delegation, United States House of Representatives

Dear Sirs and Madams:

We are asking for your support and leadership for “Let Texans Do Texas” (LTDT), a Texas-led alternative to the federal government’s current border infrastructure plans for the Big Bend region.

The next three months will be pivotal for the future of the Big Bend region, and you are the elected officials who will hold office during this critical period. The Department of Justice has asked the United States Supreme Court to stay the injunction currently halting border wall construction. If granted, that stay could allow construction to resume on short notice, with lasting consequences for landowners, local communities, and the region’s natural and cultural resources. This correspondence presents a credible, Texas-led alternative that addresses the region’s border security needs while protecting its people and resources. We respectfully urge your immediate attention and serious consideration.

The six Big Bend Sheriffs — Republicans and Democrats — support this initiative along with numerous other local elected officials listed below. More local support, including landowners, is rapidly accumulating.

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The premise is simple: secure the border without sacrificing private property, historic communities, iconic parks, and one of the most extraordinary landscapes in Texas. The Big Bend region's immense distances, rugged terrain, sparse population, and exceptionally low levels of illegal crossing demand a different security strategy.

LTDT provides one.

Instead of imposing a one-size-fits-all federal construction program, LTDT would bring Texas, affected counties, landowners, local law enforcement, and the federal government together to design a security system suited to the Big Bend. Federal border-security dollars would still provide the resources, but those dollars would be directed toward personnel, technology, communications, and carefully targeted physical measures where they are actually needed.

Security Should Follow the Threat — Not the Size of the Construction Contract

The numbers make the case.

The Big Bend Sector is the largest Border Patrol sector on the southern border, yet it has the lowest level of illegal crossings. In FY2025, it accounted for only about 1.3 percent of apprehensions. The least-trafficked sector should not receive one of the most destructive security responses.

Yet the federal government is pursuing billions of dollars in construction here: 30-foot bollard walls, vehicle barriers, surveillance towers, new and expanded roads, buried fiber optic cables, staging areas, and related infrastructure. Much of that work would take private property and some of the most sensitive public lands in Texas, leaving hundreds of thousands of acres and the major water source — the Rio Grande — stranded behind walls or barriers, effectively ceding them to the Republic of Mexico.

Bipartisan Spirit

We have developed a bipartisan legislative framework that brings together interests often seen as competing: border security, private property rights, government accountability, and protection of local communities and public lands.

We support border security. But it should be proportional to actual conditions, adapted to the terrain, respectful of private property, and informed by the Texans who live and work here.

That principle has united people who disagree on plenty of other things. Landowners, local officials, business owners, conservationists, and citizens from across the political spectrum have all found common ground in the Big Bend. Ours is not a partisan issue.

The region at stake extends far beyond Big Bend National Park and Big Bend Ranch State Park (see map on page 10). From Fort Quitman to Amistad Dam, it includes historic ranches, farms,

communities, state and federal lands, and hundreds of miles of privately owned border country. Much of it remains intact because generations of Texans have taken care of it.

And Texas itself has stepped forward before.

In 1942, the Texas Legislature appropriated funds that made Big Bend National Park possible, acting to preserve what Amon Carter called “virtually all that is left of the once great American wilderness.” Countless state parks and wildlife management areas have followed in its wake.

Today Texas again has an opportunity to lead.

Request of Leadership

We ask you to:

1. Support the principles of Let Texans Do Texas presented in the pages that follow;
2. Work with state and federal leaders to halt the current Big Bend border barrier projects and redirect a portion of the federal funding committed to those projects to the **Permanent Trust for Big Bend Region Border Security (the Trust)**;
3. Bring together state and local governments, landowners, and law enforcement to develop a Big Bend-specific security strategy that strengthens local institutions, builds lasting security capabilities, and prevents a recurrence of the unilateral federal actions experienced in 2026;
4. Establish meaningful local control over the design, implementation, and oversight of border security measures, with authority vested in the Texas institutions and communities most directly affected; and
5. Ensure transparency and accountability through independent oversight, responsible contracting, and strong safeguards against corruption, conflicts of interest, and self-dealing at every level of government.

This is an urgent matter. Federal contracting, land acquisition, and construction are already underway. But there is still time to choose a better course.

The bottom line is this: LTDT offers Texas a plan that is more effective, more fiscally responsible, and better suited to the Big Bend than the current federal approach — a permanent, locally responsive, lower-impact border-security solution.

Let Texans Do Texas.

We welcome the opportunity to brief you and your staff and to work with your office to make this approach a reality.

Respectfully,



Hon. Jerry Patterson



Susan Hays



Sarah Sibley Klein



Lawrence Collins



Sean Fitzgerald



David Keller

cc: Board, Texas Department of Public Safety
Board, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department
Board, Texas Department of Transportation

List of Elected Official Supporters To Date

Sheriff Ronnie Dodson (D)
Brewster County

Sheriff Thaddeus Cleveland (R)
Terrell County

County Judge Curtis Evans (R)
Jeff Davis County

Sheriff Danny Dominguez (D)
Presidio County

Sheriff Joe Frank Martinez (D)
Val Verde County

Sheriff Oscar Carrillo (D)
Culberson County

County Judge Greg Hennington (R)
Brewster County

Commissioner John Davis (R)
Jeff Davis County, Pct. 3

Sheriff Victor Lopez (R)
Jeff Davis County

County Judge Carlos Urias (D)
Culberson County

Commissioner Albert Miller (R)
Jeff Davis County, Pct. 4

Commissioner Deirdre Hisler (D)
Presidio County, Pct. 1

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Section 1. Congressional Action: Halt Construction and Establish the LTDT Alternative

Halting construction of border barriers and associated infrastructure in the Big Bend region requires decisive legislative action. Let Texans Do Texas (LTDT) offers a practical means to stop these projects and replace them with a permanent, regionally appropriate border-security system.

The Big Bend's remote and rugged geography, low population density, and extensive private ownership, require a different approach from the large-scale physical barriers used elsewhere along the southern border.

LTDT would replace planned border-wall construction and associated infrastructure with a permanent, locally administered border-security system financed by the federal government. Congress and the Texas Legislature would act together to establish a durable alternative centered on county sheriffs, local governments, private property rights, technology, and targeted law-enforcement operations.

LTDT is intended to complement — not supplant, interfere with, or diminish — the statutory responsibilities of U.S. Customs and Border Protection, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the National Park Service, or other federal law-enforcement agencies.

The plan calls for these principal actions. Draft legislative provisions are included at the end of this document:

1. **Halt construction immediately.** Congress would impose a moratorium on border-barrier construction and related ground-disturbing activities in the Big Bend region, allowing federal, state, and local officials time to implement LTDT. CBP would provide detailed, location-specific data on illegal border activity and security threats in the affected counties to inform future planning and expenditures.
2. **Cancel Big Bend border barrier contracts, rescind unnecessary appropriations, and create and capitalize a \$2 billion permanent trust.** Congress would terminate planned barrier projects in Hudspeth, Culberson, Jeff Davis, Presidio, Brewster, Terrell, and western Val Verde counties and redirect \$2 billion to a Texas-created **Permanent Trust for Big Bend Region Border Security** (to be passed by the Legislature in 2027).

Section 2. Texas Legislative Action: Establish and Administer the Permanent Trust

I. Establish and Administer the Trust Under Texas and Local Leadership

The Texas Legislature would establish the Permanent Trust for Big Bend Region Border Security, capitalized with \$2 billion in federal funding. The principal would remain intact in perpetuity, with investment earnings supporting ongoing border-security operations, technology, training, and institutional capacity-building in affected local jurisdictions.

An independent Texas governing board would oversee the Trust, with substantial representation from Big Bend county governments, including law enforcement, and affected private property owners. Relevant state and federal agencies would provide technical and operational coordination.

The legislation would establish strong safeguards for transparency, independent oversight, responsible contracting, and prevention of conflicts of interest, corruption, and self-dealing.

II. Purpose and Guiding Principles

The Trust is designed to create a durable source of border-security funding rather than a one-time grant program. Only interest and investment earnings generated by the Trust could be spent on projects, preserving the approximately \$2 billion principal.

Funding would flow to county governments rather than directly to individual property owners, the federal government, or state agencies. The Trust could not be used to construct a border wall or related infrastructure and cannot be used to support eminent domain proceedings. State participation would focus on locally initiated collaborative projects. The Trust would rely substantially upon regional sheriffs, affected private property owners, and county governments to identify security needs and develop locally appropriate solutions. Counties would apply for funding pursuant to strategic plans developed with substantial participation from affected landowners.

The Trust would be governed by an independent Texas board, led by the Secretary of State, with substantial representation from the Big Bend region, including local government, law enforcement, landowners, and other appropriate state and regional interests. Administrative support could be provided through the Governor's Office of Trusteed Programs.

III. Authorized Uses of Trust Funds

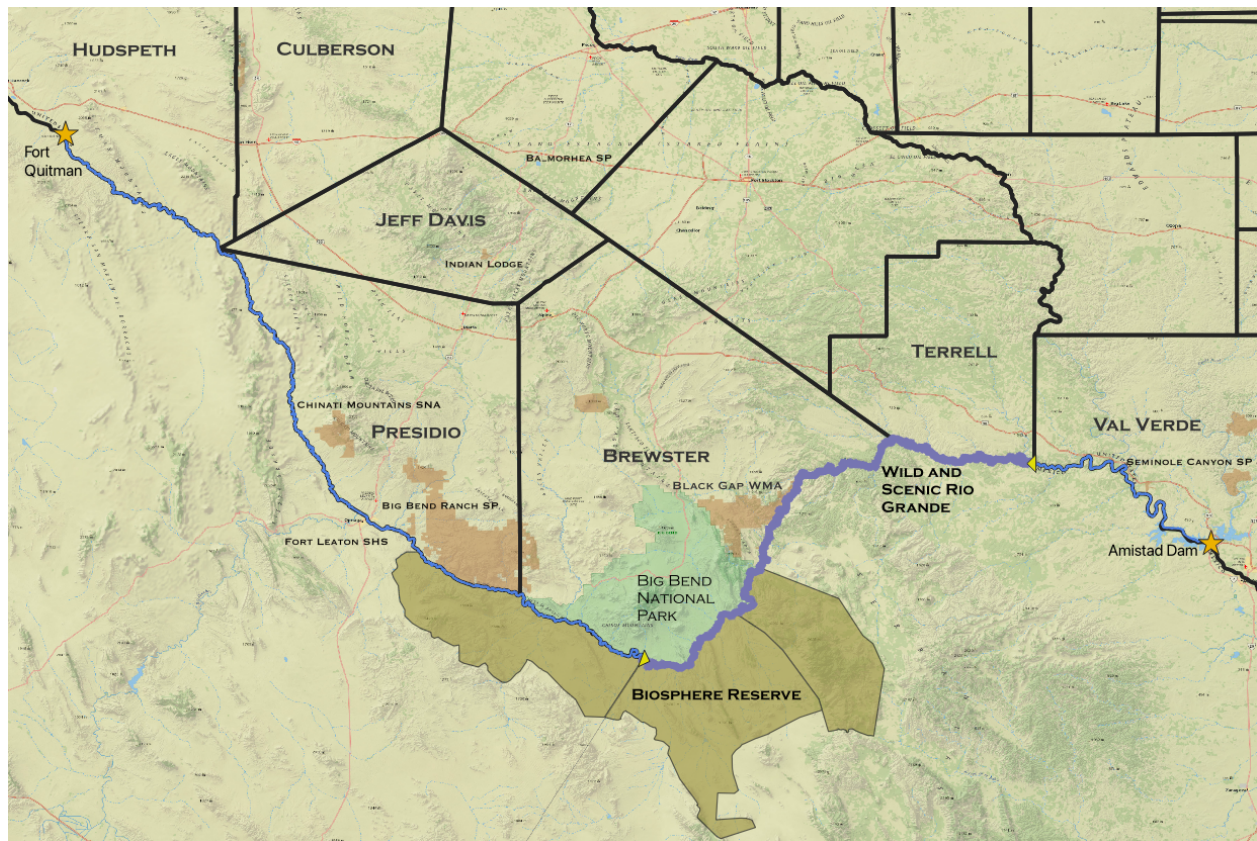
Trust funds could support a broad range of locally directed border-security activities, including:

1. **Law-enforcement personnel and training:** Additional deputies and other full-time personnel, overtime and salary supplements, professional training, manned patrols, and small stations.
2. **Technology and communications:** Remote and small-scale surveillance and security technologies, portable observation towers, law-enforcement communications systems, and communications equipment for affected private property owners with appropriate privacy protections.

3. **Vehicles and transportation:** Patrol and emergency vehicles, horses and trailers, boats, light aircraft (fixed or rotary wing) and pilots, shared among counties or other appropriate jurisdictions.
4. **Roads and infrastructure:** Maintenance and improvements of existing county roads, heavy equipment rental and acquisition, and other low-impact infrastructure necessary for security operations, subject to applicable environmental protections and private property rights.
5. **Emergency and specialized operations:** Emergency medical services, intelligence gathering, security-related flood mitigation, and soil and water conservation projects supporting security operations and access.
6. **Cooperative security efforts:** Collaborative initiatives with other law-enforcement jurisdictions, state and national parks, the International Boundary and Water Commission, and appropriate authorities in Chihuahua and Coahuila.

Section 3. Map of the Greater Big Bend Region

- The Greater Big Bend Region Defined: the greater Big Bend region (aka “the Big Bend” or “the Big Bend region”) extends along the Rio Grande for roughly 600 miles from Fort Quitman to Amistad Dam, encompassing the areas affected by the BBT-1 through BBT-5 border barrier projects.
- Seven counties within this region border the Rio Grande: Hudspeth, Culberson, Jeff Davis, Presidio (which includes Big Bend Ranch State Park and Chinati Mountains State Natural Area), Brewster (which includes Big Bend National Park and Black Gap Wildlife Management Area), Terrell (which includes a significant portion of the Rio Grande Wild and Scenic River), and Val Verde County to the Amistad Dam.
- The Mexican Rio Conchos joins the Rio Grande at Presidio and rejuvenates its flow. Above its confluence with the Rio Conchos (to Fort Quitman) the Rio Grande is commonly referred to as the "Forgotten Reach" due to its extreme remoteness.
- The Congressionally designated Rio Grande Wild and Scenic River starts at Mariscal Canyon in the Southern-most portion of Big Bend National Park and runs to the Val Verde County line. Most of this stretch of river is private property.



Map of the Greater Big Bend Region from Fort Quitman to Amistad Dam.

Section 4. Permanent Trust for Big Bend Region Border Security

Detailed Legislative Framework

Purpose and Guiding Principles

The Permanent Trust for Big Bend Region Border Security (the Trust) would provide a lasting source of federal funding to strengthen locally administered border-security capabilities in the Big Bend region of Texas.

Capitalized with \$2 billion in federal funds and established under Texas law, the Trust would preserve its principal in perpetuity and use investment earnings to support county governments, including law enforcement, in developing security strategies appropriate to the region's geography, population, landownership, and documented security needs.

The Trust would prioritize lasting improvements to local law-enforcement capabilities, including personnel, training, technology, communications, transportation, and cooperative operations. Funding would support locally developed security plans rather than federally imposed infrastructure projects.

County governments and sheriffs would play central roles in identifying priorities and administering security operations, with substantial participation by affected private property owners. The Trust would respect private property rights, minimize environmental disturbance, and maintain strong safeguards against conflicts of interest, corruption, and misuse of public funds.

The Trust would complement, rather than replace or interfere with, the statutory responsibilities of federal border-security and law-enforcement agencies. Cooperation among local, state, and federal authorities would be encouraged wherever appropriate.

Governing Board (on state side)

The governing board of the Trust makes decisions on the administration of current law (as established by the implementing legislation) and future legacy purposes of the fund. Depending upon preferences of the state and federal government, it may be necessary to form a joint state and federal cooperative agreement.

The board is composed of 11 members appointed to 4-year terms. One is appointed by the Governor (and grants are administered out of this office), four by the Lt. Governor, and four by the Speaker of the House. Two (chair and vice chair) are permanent by statute and two more represent the state and national parks. Of the total, local representation is strong with 6 members appointed by legislative leaders. There is one elected official, the Commissioner of the General Land Office. The structure of the governing board is designed to minimize political whims and ensure a seriousness of purpose.

1. Chair, Secretary of State (permanent member by statute)
2. Vice Chair, Commissioner of the General Land Office (permanent by statute)
3. 1 county judge, 1 county commissioner with a precinct contiguous to the border, 1 county sheriff (appointed by the Speaker of the House)
4. 3 private property owners for the Big Bend region (appointed by the Lt. Governor)

5. 1 former member of the United States Congress (appointed by the Governor)
6. 1 former member of the Texas Senate (appointed by the Lt. Governor)
7. 1 former member of the Texas House of Representatives (appointed by the Speaker of the House)

Administering Agency

The Governor's Office of Trusteed Programs administers the programmatic aspects of the fund.

Structure & Method of Finance for the Trust

1. The Trust is outside of General Revenue and not subject to appropriation.
2. The Trust is managed by the Comptroller of Public Accounts in the Texas Treasury Safekeeping Trust Company.
3. Initial capitalization is made possible by federal appropriation from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security for use by the State of Texas.
4. Other federal or state funds appropriated, transferred, or deposited to the credit of the fund by the legislature or the federal government;
5. If desired, the proceeds of a fee or tax imposed by this state, that by statute is dedicated for deposit to the credit of the fund;
6. Investment earnings and interest earned on amounts credited to the incentive fund;
7. Gifts, grants, and donations made to the office and deposited to the credit of the fund.

Permanent Advisory Board

1. Department of Public Safety
2. Office of the Attorney General
3. International Boundary and Water Commission (invitation to participate)
4. U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (invitation to participate)
5. U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (invitation to participate)
6. U.S. Customs and Border Protection
8. National Park Service
9. Texas Department of Parks and Wildlife
10. Texas Department of Transportation

Capacity and Capacity-Building

The Trust is not a free-for-all. Applicants must demonstrate capacity to utilize the funds effectively. However, the purpose of the Trust is to build capacity over time. A primary purpose of the board and its advisors is to help guide applicants through long-term capacity building.

Applicants + Process Issues

1. Applicants for funds are individual county governments or multi-county initiatives via interlocal agreements.
2. Applicants are presumed eligible for funding contingent upon the establishment of a committee of citizens of the county, primarily composed of affected private property owners, appointed by the Judge and commissioners whose precincts include the border. The committee will submit recommendations to the Commissioners Court for a vote.

3. Every three years, the County Judge must submit a strategic plan to private property owners and public park systems within their counties who would have been affected by the border barrier project.
4. No county government may apply for funds from the Trust without an approved strategic plan that has substantial support from private property owners and public land agencies.
5. County governments must publicly give notice, proclaim a plan and vote on specific, legitimate, and effective border protection alternatives (and related capital projects) that can be operationalized in short-order.
6. County officials must adopt a conflict-of-interest policy that prohibits local public officials or their families from benefiting from proceeds of the Trust.
7. Landowners must affirm that they will neither permit nor knowingly facilitate illegal immigration or drug cartel activity on their property.

Term of the Trust

The Trust is intended to exist in perpetuity. Only interest earned on the Trust may be spent for security projects.

Eligible Initiatives and Projects

Eligible projects must be demonstrably related to border security and designed to minimize new ground disturbance, with preference given to existing roads, facilities, rights-of-way, and previously disturbed areas.

1. New Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs) (including overtime and supplements)
2. Manned patrol and small stations
3. Unobtrusive, low impact, mobile, or remote technological solutions
4. Vehicles
5. Boats
6. Horses and trailers
7. Light aircraft and pilots
8. Communication equipment for law enforcement (interoperability)
9. Costs for rental or purchase of equipment and supplies
10. County road maintenance and, where demonstrably necessary, limited improvement of existing county roads
11. Emergency medical services
12. Demolition of incomplete or ineffective federal border barrier initiatives
13. Restoration of land damaged by border barrier construction
14. Other

Prohibited Uses

The Trust is designed for law enforcement, border security, and community safety to be utilized by border counties in the greater Big Bend region. It is not intended for private landowners or federal or state agency use except by locally-initiated collaborative projects. Nor shall the Trust be used for the following purposes:

1. A border wall or other large scale border barrier infrastructure
2. Eminent domain proceedings

3. New roads or fences

Permanent Advisory Board

1. Texas Department of Parks and Wildlife
2. Department of Public Safety
3. Office of the Attorney General
4. International Boundary and Water Commission (invitation to participate)
5. U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (invitation to participate)
6. U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (invitation to participate)
7. U.S. Customs and Border Protection
8. National Park Service
9. Texas Department of Transportation

Oversight

1. Appropriate committees of the Texas Legislature
2. Comptroller of Public Accounts

Audit

Because counties are presumed to be eligible for the funds they seek, the Office of the State Auditor shall periodically conduct financial audits to assess compliance with the Trust's goals and fraud, waste, and abuse.

Section 5. Additional Congressional Protections for the Big Bend Region

Wilderness Designation for Big Bend National Park

Bulldozing in the Santa Elena Canyon and Mariscal Mountain areas in Big Bend National Park in 2026 demonstrated the vulnerability of one of America's most treasured national parks to large-scale federal construction projects.

In 1978, the National Park Service recommended that Congress designate 538,250 acres of Big Bend National Park as wilderness. Nearly five decades later, Congress has yet to act on that recommendation.

LTDT encourages Congress to complete this longstanding unfinished business by establishing statutory wilderness protections for the park's qualifying undeveloped lands. Such designation would preserve the park's exceptional natural and cultural resources while maintaining existing public roads, developed areas, and recreational access. The Rio Grande itself would remain outside the proposed wilderness designation.

While wilderness designation is not a prerequisite for implementing LTDT, it would provide an important additional layer of statutory protection against future destructive development, complementing the broader effort to establish a responsible, regionally appropriate approach to border security.

Section 6. Draft Congressional Rider Provision to Delay Construction

Department of Homeland Security 2027 Appropriations Act or Similar Legislative Vehicle

Temporary Delay on Border Barrier Construction in the Greater Big Bend Region —

None of the funds appropriated or otherwise made available to U.S. Customs and Border Protection or the Department of Homeland Security by this Act or the One Big Beautiful Bill Act, Public Law 119–21, or any other federal appropriation or reprogramming shall be obligated or expended for site preparation or construction of a border barrier, border barrier-related infrastructure, or other ground-disturbing activity in the greater Big Bend region including Big Bend National Park, the Rio Grande Wild and Scenic River, Big Bend Ranch State Park, or Seminole Canyon State Park & Historic Site or elsewhere in Hudspeth, Jeff Davis, Culberson, Presidio, Brewster, Terrell, and Val Verde Counties, Texas, including eminent domain proceedings and land acquisition, from the effective date of this act to June 1, 2027.

By April 15, 2027, the Commissioner of U.S. Customs and Border Protection shall submit a data-intensive report to the appropriate committees of Congress on the nature, frequency and specific location of all types of illegal immigration activity in the greater Big Bend between Fort Quitman downstream to Amistad Dam (the Big Bend Sector and part of the Del Rio Sector above Amistad Dam) for each fiscal year 2021-2026, explaining trends resulting from changes in policy or enforcement. This report shall also be distributed to the Governor of Texas and appropriate state and local public safety agencies in the state, and published on the CBP website for public inspection.

**Section 7. Draft Congressional Rider Provision to Rescind/Cancel
Contracts/Capitalize Trust**

Draft Appropriation Provision for 2027 DHS Funding Bill

SEC. ____ . RESCISSION OF FUNDS FOR BORDER BARRIER AND ASSOCIATED INFRASTRUCTURE IN THE GREATER BIG BEND REGION OF TEXAS.

(a) Prohibition on Border Barrier Construction. — None of the funds appropriated or otherwise made available by this Act or the One Big Beautiful Bill Act, Public Law 119–21, to U.S. Customs and Border Protection shall be obligated or expended for construction of a border barrier, border barrier-related infrastructure or ground-disturbance activity in the Greater Big Bend region.

(b) Rescission and Contract Cancellation. — Of the unobligated balances available to U.S. Customs and Border Protection under the heading “Procurement, Construction, and Improvements” from prior appropriations acts, including the One Big Beautiful Bill Act (Public Law 119–21), \$7,500,000,000 is hereby rescinded.

(c) Exceptions for Rescinded Funds — None of the funds made available by this Act, or heretofore appropriated by any other Act, may be used to execute, oversee, manage, or make payments upon any contract for the construction of a border barrier, border barrier-related infrastructure, or associated ground-disturbing activity along the international border of the United States within the Greater Big Bend Region except for the payment of allowable settlement costs resulting from a termination for the convenience of the Government.

(d) Capitalization of the Permanent Trust for Big Bend Border Security in the State of Texas — Of the amounts made available for the State Border Security Reinforcement Fund under section 1716 of title 8, United States Code, \$2,000,000,000 shall be transferred by the Secretary of Homeland Security to the State of Texas for deposit into a trust fund established under the laws of the State of Texas for the purpose of providing financial assistance to counties, county sheriffs, and other units of local government in the Greater Big Bend region of Texas for activities described in section 1716(a)(2) of title 8, United States Code:

Provided, That amounts transferred pursuant to this section shall constitute the permanent corpus of such trust fund and shall be held and invested in perpetuity by the State of Texas;

Provided further, That the corpus shall not be expended or diminished and that interest, dividends, investment earnings, realized appreciation, and other income attributable to the corpus may be retained and expended solely for activities described in section 1716(a)(2) of title 8, United States Code;

Provided further, That amounts transferred pursuant to this section shall be considered fully obligated upon transfer to the State of Texas, and, notwithstanding sections 1301 and 1532 of title 31, United States Code, the corpus and earnings thereon shall remain available without fiscal year limitation and shall not be required to be returned to the Treasury solely by reason of the expiration of the period of availability of the Federal appropriation from which such amounts were derived;

Provided further, That the Secretary shall enter into an agreement with the State of Texas providing for such accounting, reporting, auditing, and enforcement requirements as the Secretary determines necessary to ensure compliance with this section.