

Seven Questions About Border Security in the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2019

Q: How much funding for Southwest Border barriers is included in the Act?

A: The bill includes \$1.375 billion for barrier construction along the Southwest Border in Fiscal Year 2019. This is \$225 million less than the president requested for border construction in his FY 2019 budget, and \$196 million less than appropriated by Congress for FY 2018.

Q: Are there any restrictions on the use of these funds?

A: Funds are limited to construction of border barriers in the Rio Grande Valley Sector of Texas along the Southwest Border. The Act stipulates that this construction funding "shall only be available for operationally effective designs [already] deployed," blocking the Department of Homeland Security from funding the Trump Administration's proposed new border wall. In addition, none of these funds may be used to construct new barriers in certain environmentally sensitive regions of the border, including the National Butterfly Center.

Q: How many miles of barriers are funded in the Act?

A: The Act includes funding for approximately 55 miles of additional fencing in the Rio Grande Valley Sector – 11 miles of levee pedestrian fencing (\$345 million) and 44 miles of primary pedestrian fencing (\$1.03 billion). "Pedestrian Fencing" is defined as fencing primarily intended to prevent illegal border crossings by foot.

Q: How much money has the government spent on border barriers, in total?

A: Including the FY 2019 funding of \$1.375 billion, the government has spent over \$11 billion on border barriers since 2007 (for additional information on border barrier funding, see TCS's [Border Barriers: A Primer](#).)

Q: In total, how many miles of barriers are there along the Southwest Border?

A: There are 679 miles of barriers constructed or funded along the Southwest Border. If the 55 miles of barriers funded in this Act are constructed on sections of the border where no barriers already exist (there are currently multiple layers of barriers along many parts of the border), then that would account for roughly 734 miles of barriers along the almost 2,000-mile border.

Q: How much is included in the Act for non-barrier border security?

A: The Act includes \$100 million for the procurement of unspecified border surveillance technology (and notes a roughly \$200 million unspent balance in this category from FY2018 funding). It also includes \$625 million for inspection equipment for legal border Ports of Entry, \$270 million for "facilities improvements" and \$125 million for a variety of border patrol equipment, including aircraft and coastal interceptor vessels.

Q: How much money is there for additional Border Patrol Agents?

A: The Act includes \$59 million to hire 600 new Border Patrol Agents. From fiscal years 2011 through 2016, the Border Patrol had a statutorily-established minimum staffing level of 21,370 agents, and President Trump has called for the hiring of an additional 5,000 new agents (for a total of 26,370). Yet in 2017 the Border Patrol had only about 19,400 agents, and Border Patrol officials have consistently reported difficulty in even maintaining current staffing levels.

SOURCES:

Conference Report, Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2019 (H.J. Res. 31)
https://docs.house.gov/billsthisweek/20190211/CRPT-116hrpt9_u2-.pdf

Joint Explanatory Statement (to accompany H.J. Res. 31)
<https://docs.house.gov/billsthisweek/20190211/116hrpt9-JointExplanatoryStatement-u1.pdf>