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Defend Texas Calls on State Officials to Protect Property

(Mission, Texas) – As Customs & Border Protection moves rapidly to secure Right of Entry to private property in the path of President Trump’s Border Wall, funded by the 2018 Omnibus Appropriations Bill, private landowners have begun to demand state officials take action in defense of Texas. This uprising is due in part to the May 7 publication of the pre-solicitation notice for contractors, with an anticipated proposal response date of August 15, 2018; thereby signaling the start of Phase 1 in the wall construction process.

The construction of 33 new miles of border wall in Hidalgo and Starr Counties will require the government seizure of public and private lands belonging to Texans. If the federal government acts as it did in the last round of border wall construction in the Lower Rio Grande Valley, eminent domain proceedings will not be settled prior to the taking, nor will landowners be compensated before their property is divided or destroyed. On the chopping block are approximately 6,500 acres that will be between the Rio Grande River and the wall, which may be built up to 2 miles inland. In some places, people’s very homes will be bulldozed to make way for the wall.

“This is the biggest government land grab in modern history,” states Texas State Representative Ryan Guillen. “If the Rio Grande was the Red River, you’d have a militia of minutemen ready to fight a civil war in defense of their property. We cannot, and will not, take this lying down.”

When the Bureau of Land Management tried to take private property at Texas’ northern border, along the Red River, the state’s elected officials fought back, calling the federal government’s act “unconscionable,” but those same officials are silent, today—with the exception of Representative Guillen.

"There are many effective ways to stop illegal immigration. However, expropriating the hard fought-for land of Texans to build a physical wall is not among them, especially considering that about three-fourths of illegal immigrants enter the United States on legal visas," asserts Dr. Jeffrey Glassberg, founder of the North American Butterfly Association, a nonprofit organization that owns the 100-acre National Butterfly Center.

Last July, the center's director found surveyors stakes and private contractors cutting down trees and clearing brush on the property to widen a road in preparation for the border wall. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the private contractors were sent by Customs & Border Protection, without notice or due process of law.

"We understand that not everyone in the country may be as interested in butterflies or in the environment as we are, but everyone should care when the government thinks it can do whatever it wants on your private property," adds Glassberg.

Public lands belonging to all Texans, such as Bentsen-Rio Grande Valley State Park, and historical landmarks like La Lomita Mission, as well as tribal lands, individual homes, farms, businesses and recreational areas will all be behind the border wall, along with the Rio Grande River, which is the only natural source of fresh water for more than 2 million people in Hidalgo and Cameron County.

While Customs & Border Protection officials remain tight-lipped about details related to the wall, leaving border residents and property owners largely in the dark, the Pre-solicitation Synopsis Notice for Multiple Award Task Order Contract (MATOC) for Horizontal Construction Services in support of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is visible at www.fedbizopps.gov, #W9126G18R0092.

According to sources inside the federal government, the first contracts for wall construction will be awarded this fall.

For more information or to learn more about Defend Texas, visit www.defendtx.org.

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