

April 21, 2026

The Honorable Markwayne Mullin

Secretary of Homeland Security
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
2707 Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue SE
Washington, D.C. 20528

Re: Request for Continued Coordination with Texas-Mexico Border County Judges

Dear Secretary Mullin,

We, the undersigned County Judges, representing 100% of the contiguous Texas-Mexico border, write with respect and goodwill, and a sincere desire to serve as partners in securing our shared border.

In our roles as the chief elected officials of our counties, we also serve as the heads of emergency management pursuant to Chapter 418, Section 418.1015 of the Texas Government Code. This responsibility places us at the front line of public safety, infrastructure coordination, and emergency response across both rural and urban communities along the border.

We recognize the progress that has been made in strengthening border security, including the significant reduction in unlawful crossings. These outcomes reflect meaningful coordination among federal, state, and local partners, and we are grateful for the continued commitment to this shared priority.

Our purpose in writing is not to oppose or obstruct, but to help ensure that the people who live, work, ranch, farm, and raise families along this border continue to have a meaningful voice in decisions that shape our daily lives.

We Support Effective Border Security

Our counties lie directly along the international boundary. We see firsthand the impacts of unlawful crossings, including strain on local resources, risks to public safety, and challenges faced by landowners and law enforcement. We support efforts to strengthen border security and recognize the importance of infrastructure where it is needed most.

At the same time, we carry an obligation to speak honestly on behalf of the men and women we serve. Their experiences are grounded in daily life and vary across this region.

Each Community Along This Border Is Different

The Texas-Mexico border spans nearly 1,300 miles and includes dense urban crossings, small communities, working ranches, agricultural operations, and vast remote terrain. What works well in one setting may require adjustment in another.

In some instances, infrastructure and operational decisions have had unintended impacts, including limitations on access to water sources, challenges related to property access, and Temporary Flight Restrictions that have resulted in the temporary closure of airspace, affecting aviation activity in both rural areas and the El Paso region. These situations are not the result of ill intent, but rather reflect the complexity of large-scale planning across a diverse landscape.

Our experience has shown that early coordination and local input can help identify practical solutions that support both security and the long-term viability of border communities.

We Have Seen Collaboration Work

We have seen firsthand the value of collaboration. Following the passage of the Secure Fence Act of 2006, the Texas Border Coalition worked constructively with U.S. Customs and Border Protection to reroute a proposed fence around the University of Texas at Brownsville, now known as UTRGV, rather than allowing it to divide the campus.

More recently, collaborative efforts in the Big Bend region, including Big Bend National Park and Big Bend Ranch State Park, have demonstrated the effectiveness of adapting from a traditional physical barrier approach to a more strategic use of technology and smart infrastructure. That approach reflects how thoughtful coordination can meet security objectives while preserving natural resources, access, and the unique character of the region.

These outcomes are only possible because of open communication, local input, and a willingness to find practical solutions. That is exactly the type of engagement we are seeking today.

We Are Asking to Be Part of the Process

As County Judges, we sit at the intersection of federal policy and the communities it affects. We know our terrain, our landowners, and the long-standing practices that sustain life and livelihood in this region. We offer that knowledge as a resource.

With that in mind, we respectfully request:


1. Continued and consistent communication between the Department of Homeland Security and border county judges.
2. Early coordination with local officials and landowners before significant infrastructure or operational decisions are finalized.
3. Consideration of practical accommodations for agricultural and land management activities where feasible.
4. Reasonable provisions to ensure access to privately owned land and the protection and conservation of water and environmental resources.
5. Flexibility in approach where appropriate, recognizing that different regions may benefit from different combinations of infrastructure, technology, and personnel.

A Shared Interest in Getting This Right


We believe that strong border security and the long-term well-being of border communities go hand in hand. Stable communities, informed by local input and treated as partners, are essential to achieving lasting security outcomes.

We write without partisan intent and with a shared commitment to practical, durable solutions. We stand ready to assist and welcome continued dialogue at your convenience.

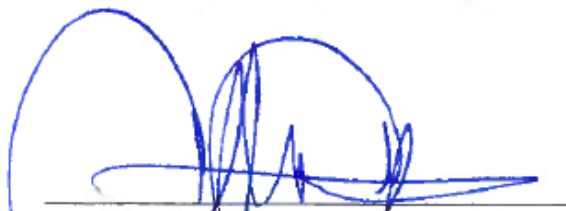
Respectfully submitted,



Joanna E. MacKenzie
County Judge, Hudspeth County, Texas



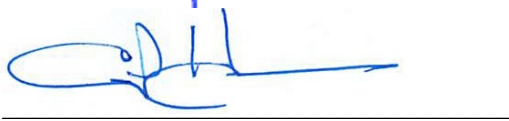
Richard Cortez
County Judge, Hidalgo County, Texas



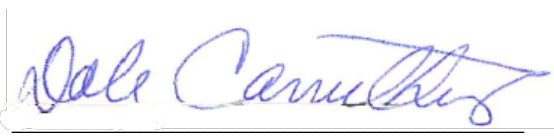
Jose Portillo
County Judge, Presidio County, Texas



Eddie Trevino
County Judge, Cameron County, Texas



Greg Henington
County Judge, Brewster County, Texas



Dale Carruthers
County Judge, Terrell County, Texas



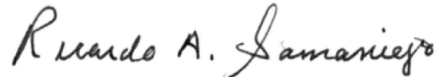
Eloy Vera
County Judge, Starr County, Texas



John P. Schuster
County Judge, Kinney County, Texas



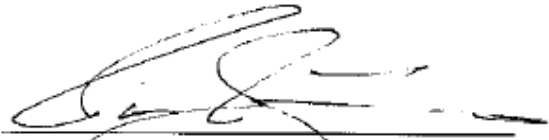
Joe Rathmell
County Judge, Zapata County, Texas



Ricardo Samaniego
County Judge, El Paso, Texas



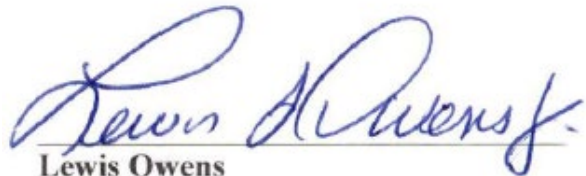
Curtis Evans
County Judge, Jeff Davis County, Texas



Tano Tijerina
County Judge, Webb County, Texas



Ramsey English Cantú
County Judge, Maverick County, Texas



Lewis Owens
County Judge, Val Verde County, Texas