

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0552

December 8, 2017

Hon. Ken Calvert
Chairman
House Appropriations Committee
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment,
and Related Agencies
2205 Rayburn Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Calvert,

As members representing congressional districts that have greatly benefited from the Border Wastewater Infrastructure Program (BWIP), we urge you to restore the program during the conference process of the House and Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Department of the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Acts of 2018. The BWIP is a critical program that funds priority wastewater infrastructure projects along the U.S. - Mexico border to prevent sewage pollution from negatively impacting the public and environmental health of our constituents and our national security.

Since 1997, this program — funded by Congress through the State and Tribal Assistance Grant Program (STAG) of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) — has awarded grants to address high-priority wastewater infrastructure needs in the U.S. - Mexico border region. These funds, administered by the North American Development Bank (NADB), have supported the development of projects benefitting nine million border-region residents.

The program benefits border region communities by supporting urgent investments aimed at eliminating untreated sewage discharges from impacting shared waterways and the health of U.S. residents. For example, on Oct 26th, 2017 a sewage spill in Tijuana, Mexico drained into its coastal waters and was carried by ocean currents northward, polluting the beaches of Imperial Beach, CA. Dozens, including city officials, reported falling ill after coming in contact with the sewage-contaminated water. The BWIP invests in aging infrastructure that can help prevent situations like this from taking place in the future.

This program also plays a critical role in our national security. U.S. Border Patrol Agents are frequently exposed to sewage, chemical and heavy metal pollutants doing their jobs near areas in close proximity to cross-border flows. According to the U.S. Border Patrol Union Representative of local 1613, National Border Patrol Council, (AFGE)¹ in 2017, over 80 agents have suffered contamination, injuries, and illnesses related to transboundary runoff. Funding much needed infrastructure improvements will ensure agents are less exposed to harmful waste.

The BWIP is also a catalyst for cooperation by bringing key federal and state agencies together to find solutions and combine resources—\$1 invested by the program leverages more than \$2 from federal, state, and local sources. It provides accountability measures by establishing expected investment outcomes and tracks program achievements. It also provides substantial project oversight and support throughout the development and implementation process, resulting in highly efficient funds management.

Unfortunately, the U.S. House of Representatives has rescinded the \$10 million for the BWIP (H.R. 3354). However, the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Department of the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies voted for inclusion of the program in its version of the bill.

We urge you to consider restoring the BWIP during the conference reconciliation process. These funds play a critical role in protecting public health, including those tasked with protecting our borders by reducing sewage runoff and human exposure to bacterial and viral pathogens that are transmitted through sewage including *E.coli*, *Vibrio*, *Listeria* and Hepatitis A, chemicals, and heavy metals.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,




Scott H. Peters
Member of Congress



Will Hurd
Member of Congress

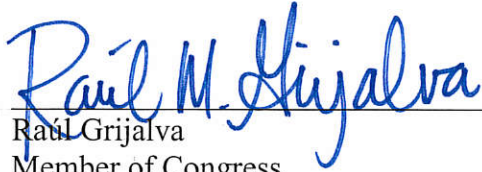
¹ American Federation of Government Employees



Susan Davis
Member of Congress



Darrell Issa
Member of Congress



Raul Grijalva
Member of Congress



Steve Pearce
Member of Congress



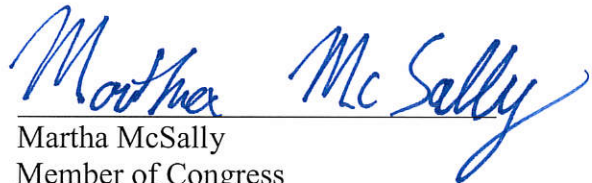
Betó O'Rourke
Member of Congress



Juan Vargas
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Filemon Vela
Member of Congress



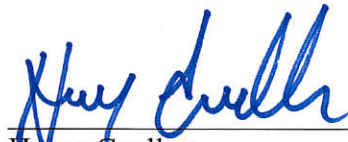
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