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**NEWS RELEASE**

**Archbishop John C. Wester Joins Border Bishops and Other Prelates in  
Opposition to Further Construction of a Border Wall**

ALBUQUERQUE – Friday, February 15, 2019—IMMEDIATE RELEASE—

**Statement of U.S. Catholic Border Bishops on a Border Wall**

As Catholic bishops of dioceses along the US-Mexico border, joined by some of our brother bishops across the nation, we stand in opposition to the further construction of a border wall.

In our view, a border wall denies bona fide asylum-seekers from entering the country in search of protection—their right under domestic and international law. It also would destroy parts of the environment, disrupt the livelihoods of ranchers and farmers, weaken cooperation and commerce between border communities, and, along some parts of the border, undermine the right to the freedom of worship.

The majority of persons coming to the southern border are asylum-seekers, many of whom are women and children from Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador. They are no threat to U.S. citizens and are themselves fleeing persecution and violence in their countries. A wall would keep them in danger, subjecting them to harm by drug cartels, smugglers, and human traffickers.

It also could drive them to more remote regions of the border, at risk of losing their lives. When a wall was constructed in the San Diego area in the mid-1990s, for example, migrants were driven, often by smugglers, to the desert of Arizona and other remote regions in order to cross the border. According to U.S. Border Patrol statistics, over 8,000 migrants died in these areas from 1998-2016.

We acknowledge the right of a sovereign nation to control its borders to ensure the security of its citizenry. We support enforcement efforts to halt human trafficking, the transport of illegal guns, and drug smuggling, which research shows occur more frequently at ports of entry. However, border enforcement must protect and preserve the human rights and human life of all persons, regardless of their legal status.

We agree with President Trump that there is a humanitarian challenge at our border, but erecting a wall would only compound the problem. Instead of building a wall, the administration and Congress should focus on policies which are more humane, and, in the long-term, more effective, such as reforming the immigration system in a manner that is just, protects human rights, and reflects American values.

As such, we oppose the declaration of a national emergency and transfer of budget funds to further construct a border wall.

As Pope Francis has said, we must reject the globalization of indifference toward migrants and instead stand in solidarity with our brothers and sisters, who are desperate to find protection and to support their families. As a nation, we should work together with the global community to address the root causes of flight, so migration becomes a choice, not a necessity.

His Eminence Blase J. Cardinal Cupich  
Archbishop of Chicago

Most Reverend Gerald F. Kicanas  
Apostolic Administrator  
Diocese of Las Cruces

His Eminence Sean P. Cardinal O'Malley, OFM Cap  
Archbishop of Boston

Most Reverend Robert W. McElroy  
Bishop of San Diego

Most Reverend Ricardo Ramirez  
Bishop Emeritus, Diocese of Las Cruces

Most Reverend Mark P. Seitz  
Bishop of El Paso

Most Reverend Gustavo Garcia-Siller  
Archbishop of San Antonio

Most Reverend John Stowe  
Bishop of Lexington

Most Reverend James A. Tamayo  
Bishop of Laredo

His Eminence Joseph Cardinal Tobin  
Archbishop of Newark

Most Reverend Edward J. Weisenburger  
Bishop of Tucson

Most Reverend John C. Wester  
Archbishop of Santa Fe

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