



"I will build a great, great wall on our southern border. And I will have Mexico pay for that wall. Mark my words."

- Donald Trump, June 16, 2015

On [June 16, 2015](#), then-candidate Donald Trump announced plans for a wall along the border between the United States and Mexico, and he made the proposal one of the centerpieces of his presidential campaign. Two years later, and almost five months after President Trump took office, key questions remain unanswered about major aspects of one of the administration's primary policy initiatives.

American Oversight launched *Audit the Wall* to force the release of information about President Trump's proposed border wall and provide the public with critical answers about a project that could cost tens of billions of dollars and reshape our southern border.

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| <p>Q: How much will the wall cost and who will pay for it?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> American Oversight has submitted FOIA requests to the Office of Management and Budget and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to uncover the government's actual cost estimates. | <p>A: UNKNOWN</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The President and his administration have provided shifting costs for the wall over the last two years. During the campaign, Trump's estimates ranged from \$4 billion to \$12 billion. An internal report by DHS found that the wall could cost \$21.6 billion. A separate report by the U.S. Senate estimated that the cost of the border wall would be nearly \$70 billion. |
| <p>Q: How will the contracting and construction process proceed?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Building the border wall would be a massive construction project, and would involve numerous outside engineers and contractors. Government-funded construction projects have strict rules to prevent corruption and waste – but is the administration following them? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Note: President Trump had a long history of unethical and illegal contracting practices during his private sector career.</i> American Oversight submitted record requests to DHS to uncover outside proposals and schedules related to construction of the wall. | <p>A: UNKNOWN</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The administration has publicly solicited proposals from the private sector for two possible wall types. A number of contractors have been selected to build prototype sections of the wall near San Diego, but their identities and plans have remained secret. President Trump has promised to be directly involved in the construction of the wall, has made personal suggestions for its design, and reportedly offered the project to a friend. |

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| <p>Q: What will the environmental impact of the wall be?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • President Trump’s border wall would create a physical barrier thousands of miles long that would cut natural ecosystems in half. What impact would this have and what steps have been taken to mitigate any harm? • American Oversight has filed requests with multiple agencies to uncover internal environmental impact analyses. | <p>A: UNKNOWN</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The administration hasn’t provided any answers – and no environmental impact assessments have been made public. • Environmental groups and scientists have raised major concerns about the “catastrophic” effect the wall could have. |
| <p>Q: How will the wall affect residents along the border?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Constructing the wall would potentially require the seizure of land from thousands of landowners along the border. • The wall would also bisect the Tohono O’odham Nation, which straddles the U.S.-Mexico border. • American Oversight submitted FOIA requests to multiple agencies, including DHS, the Department of the Interior and the Army Corps of Engineers to learn more. | <p>A: UNKNOWN</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The White House and DHS have not provided any public indication of how the wall will respect the land of the Tohono O’odham Nation. The Nation’s leaders have expressed overwhelming opposition to the wall. • President Trump’s proposed budget included a request for funding for 20 Department of Justice lawyers dedicated to defending land seizures carried out via eminent domain – a technique Trump has used previously. Some landowners have already received notices of the government’s intent to seize their property through eminent domain. |
| <p>Q: Will the wall make America safer?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Serious questions exist as to whether construction of a physical border wall will be effective in stopping crime or drug smuggling. No member of Congress who represents the border – both Democrats and Republicans – has expressed support for construction of the wall. • American Oversight has requested documents from DHS detailing the reasons for the cancelation of SBINet – a previous border security effort. | <p>A: UNKNOWN</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While the White House has repeatedly vouched for the effectiveness of the wall, DHS Secretary John Kelly testified during his confirmation hearings that “a physical barrier will not do the job” by itself. • An earlier effort initiated by the Bush administration for a high-tech border barrier, dubbed SBINet, was scrapped due to cost concerns and questions about its efficacy. |

Major questions remain about the proposed U.S.-Mexico border wall, but few answers have been forthcoming from the administration.

As we pass the two-year mark after the announcement of the wall proposal, [American Oversight](#) will continue to hold the administration accountable and use all the tools at our disposal to shine a light on one of President Trump’s central policy priorities.

Read more about our investigation at [AuditTheWall.org](#).