

Trump's Border Wall: A Beautiful Barrier or Empty Rhetoric?

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1. Trump Wall. The actual cost for the rest of the border wall (roughly 1,300 miles) could be as high as \$16 million per mile, with a total price tag of \$15 billion to \$25 billion. Rosenblum said the \$15 billion low-end estimate is "probably an underestimate," because the parts that have yet to be fenced are the most difficult — the most dense and arid. At \$16 million per mile and with 1,300 miles to secure, the estimated cost would be \$12 billion, and the price of private land acquisitions and maintenance of fencing could push that total cost higher. Kate Drew, CNBC.com, "A roughly 2,000-mile fence on the Mexican border would cost tens of billions: This is what Trump's border wall could cost US," 9 Oct 2015.

Main Ideas:
Key Words:
Analysis:

According to a Government Accountability Office 2009 report, [the cost to build 1 mile of fencing](#) at the border averaged between \$2.8 million and \$3.9 million. But that figure may be low relative to costs for future sections of the wall. It's based only on the first 220 miles fenced and does not include other factors, such as topography, transportation logistics in harder-to-reach areas (i.e. road-building and earth and drainage work), labor costs, land acquisition costs and surveillance equipment. Kate Drew, 9 Oct 2015.

Overall, more than \$7 billion has been spent to build what is now almost 653 miles of Southwest border fencing — costing nearly \$5 million per mile in some spots — nearly half in Arizona. [Jerry Markon](#), "Trump says building a U.S.-Mexico wall is 'easy.' But is it really?" *Washington Post* Website, July 17, 2015.

2. Other Great Walls. No society could sustain such a terrible burden. Taxation became heavier and heavier. Some 3,500,000 people were involved in the building of the Great Wall [of China, which is 5,500 miles long and an average of 21 feet high]. That was 70% of the total population of China at that time. For each worker working on the wall, six were required to feed and support them. Construction of the Qin wall became the most hated imperial project in Chinese history. Paul and Bernice Noll's *Window on the World*,

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“The Cost of The Great Wall,” website, 2016.	
The Qin Dynasty had fallen, brought down by the building of the great wall. Within ten years much of the wall was a neglected ruin. Once again the northern border was at the mercy of the northern invaders. Paul and Bernice Noll, 2016.	
The Communists have assigned about 11,000 troops to guard duty at the [Berlin, which is only 91 miles] wall and have built some 124 watchtowers complete with searchlights and 200 shelters. <i>Milwaukee Journal</i> , 8/17/1963, 5.	
Some 6,000 miles of barbed wire has gone into the barricade. The total cost of the [Berlin] wall is estimated at \$25 million. <i>Milwaukee Journal</i> , 8/17/1963, 5.	
The U.S. border with Mexico is roughly <u>2,000 miles long</u> and underlines four states from California to Texas. It is a massive stretch of land — the Berlin Wall spanned just 96 miles comparatively, and <u>it cost about \$25 million to build</u> in 1961, or around \$200 million with inflation. Kate Drew, 9 Oct 2015.	

<p>3. Trump Wall Problems. Then there is the issue of the border’s topography. Just take the area from El Paso to Brownsville, Texas—which takes up about 1,200 miles of the 1,933-mile U.S.-Mexico border. How would the fence deal with Falcon International Reservoir, which is on the border? The reservoir was created by a dam, which also straddles the border. Would the fence run down the middle of the dam, then drop down to the reservoir and cut through the middle of it, dropping as much as 110 feet to its lowest depth? Or would the United States surrender huge swaths of territory by placing its “border” fence on the shoreline, far from the actual border? Kurt Eichenwald, U.S. Illegal Immigration: Myths, Half-Truths And A Hole In Trump’s Wall,” <i>Newsweek</i> website, 10/14/15.</p>	<p>Main Ideas: Key Words: Analysis:</p>
<p>Forget Falcon. What about Big Bend National Park? That runs along 118 miles of border. With canyons, mountains and a river, attempting to build a fence would not only destroy one of the country’s most beautiful parks but also be fruitless. The fence would have to go up mountains, to elevations as high as almost 8,000 feet. These are just a few of the massive challenges presented over less than half of the border. Then there are the broader issues—the billions a fence would cost and the pointlessness of the effort. The Congressional Research Service found in 2007 that a 700-mile fence would cost</p>	

<p>about \$50 billion over 25 years, including construction, maintenance and upkeep. And remember, that number isn't the half of it: The border is 1,933 miles long. But assume, somehow, that the fence is magically built over rivers and lakes and mountains for a reasonable price tag. Is there anyone dumb enough to believe that Mexican gangsters running the people-smuggling operations will look at a wall, shrug their shoulders and give up a \$6 billion yearly business? Kurt Eichenwald, 10/14/15.</p>	
<p>"The first miles of fencing were in the easiest" places, said Marc Rosenblum, deputy director of the U.S. Immigration Policy Program at the Migration Policy Institute. These were fencing areas in or close to cities and accessible transportation, rather than deep in deserts or mountains. Additionally, the first miles were on public lands, while completing a border wall would require the government to acquire land from private holders. The GAO estimate for one difficult section of fencing near San Diego was \$16 million. Kate Drew, 9 Oct 2015.</p>	
<p>The United States has debated putting up security barriers of its own along the Southwest border and has spent billions of dollars in recent years fencing one-third of it . . . Any wall-building effort would cost billions of dollars and encounter a variety of obstacles, according to experts, documents and federal officials, including some of the same difficulties that bedeviled the federal government as it spent more than \$7 billion on border fencing. The hurdles include environmental and engineering problems; fights with ranchers and others who don't want to give up their land; and the huge topographical challenges of the border, which runs through remote desert in Arizona to rugged mountains in New Mexico and, for two-thirds of its length, along rivers. Jerry Markon, July 17, 2015.</p>	
<p>4. Other Costs. Engineer Ali Rhuzkan's estimate was that a 30-foot wall would use more than three times the total concrete in the Hoover Dam. With this extra 20 feet of concrete, we're up to at least four Hoovers. Philip Bump, "Donald Trump's Mexico border wall will be as high as 55 feet, according to Donald Trump," <i>Washington Post</i>, February 26, 2016.</p>	<p>Main Ideas: Key Words: Analysis:</p>
<p>The U.S. government would have to pay to maintain the</p>	

<p>wall, which could cost as much as \$750 million a year, according to an analysis conducted by Politico. And then if it wanted to man it with personnel, that would be an additional cost — border patrol has an operating budget of \$1.4 billion for 21,000 agents. Kate Drew, 9 Oct 2015.</p>	
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<p>"So you take precast plank," Donald Trump said. "It comes 30 feet long, 40 feet long, 50 feet long. You see the highways where they can span 50, 60 feet, even longer than that, right? And do you a beautiful nice precast plank with beautiful everything. Just perfect." Philip Bump, February 26, 2016.</p>	

<p>5. Circumvention. And that brings us to the fence. There are many problems with this, the most important of which is that a huge percentage of the 11 million immigrants without documentation in the U.S. didn't cross the border illegally. Some 4 million to 5 million of them simply overstayed their visas. No fence, no matter how high, will solve that problem. Kurt Eichenwald, 10/14/15.</p>	<p>Main Ideas: Key Words: Analysis:</p>
<p>Of course not. Instead, boats will start dropping immigrants at Padre Island, just off the Gulf of Mexico but in the United States. Or the smugglers will raise their prices, and ships will take immigrants north, where they can come ashore above San Diego. Or guards will be bribed. Or the fence bombed. Put simply, people who believe violent criminals cannot find their way around a wall are not being honest with themselves or the public. What, then, should the United States do about illegal immigration? A fence won't work, mass deportation won't work, and every plan the government has adopted in recent decades has done nothing but enriched and empowered crime syndicates that have transformed a modest problem into an intractable one. Kurt Eichenwald, 10/14/15.</p>	
<p>If such a barrier could be erected, experts and government officials agreed that making it impenetrable would be virtually impossible, as is completely securing the entire</p>	

1,954-mile border. Jerry Markon, July 17, 2015.	
Thad Bingel, a former senior U.S. Customs and Border Protection official, who was involved in border fence-building during the George W. Bush administration and is now a partner at Command Consulting Group in Washington — added: “Every wall can be circumvented. People can go under it, they can go over it. . . . No one should go into this with the idea that if you just build the right kind of wall, no one will get through.” Jerry Markon, July 17, 2015.	
Wayne Cornelius, director of the Mexican migration field research program at the University of California at San Diego, called Trump’s proposal “ludicrous. . . . Any physical barrier can be tunneled under or climbed over or gotten around. There will always be gaps, and smugglers and migrants will seek out those gaps and go through.” Jerry Markon, July 17, 2015.	

<p>6. Mexico Will Pay For It. Mexico must pay for the wall and, until they do, the United States will, among other things: impound all remittance payments derived from illegal wages; increase fees on all temporary visas issued to Mexican CEOs and diplomats (and if necessary cancel them); increase fees on all border crossing cards – of which we issue about 1 million to Mexican nationals each year (a major source of visa overstays); increase fees on all NAFTA worker visas from Mexico (another major source of overstays); and increase fees at ports of entry to the United States from Mexico [Tariffs and foreign aid cuts are also options]. We will not be taken advantage of anymore. Donald J. Trump for President website, “Immigration Reform That Will Make America Great Again,” 2016, 1.</p>	<p>Main Ideas: Key Words: Analysis:</p>
<p>On day 1 promulgate a "proposed rule" (regulation) amending 31 CFR 130.121 to redefine applicable financial institutions to include money transfer companies like Western Union, and redefine "account" to include wire transfers. Also include in the proposed rule a requirement that no alien may wire money outside of the United States unless the alien first provides a document establishing his lawful presence in the United States. Donald J. Trump for President website, 1.</p>	
<p>On day 2 Mexico will immediately protest. They receive approximately \$24 billion a year in remittances from Mexican nationals working in the United States. The majority of that amount comes from illegal aliens. It serves</p>	

as de facto welfare for poor families in Mexico. There is no significant social safety net provided by the state in Mexico. Donald J. Trump for President website, 1.	
On day 3 tell Mexico that if the Mexican government will contribute the funds needed to the United States to pay for the wall, the Trump Administration will not promulgate the final rule, and the regulation will not go into effect. Donald J. Trump for President website, 1.	
Visa fees: Even a small increase in visa fees would pay for the wall. This includes fees on border crossing cards, of which more than 1 million are issued a year. The border-crossing card is also one of the greatest sources of illegal immigration into the United States, via overstays. Mexico is also the single largest recipient of U.S. green cards, which confer a path to U.S. citizenship. Again, we have the leverage so Mexico will back down. Donald J. Trump for President website, 2.	
On his campaign website, Trump's immigration reform plan calls for impounding remittance payments derived from illegal wages and imposing increased visa and entry fees to the U.S. from Mexico unless the latter agrees to finance the wall. Kate Drew, 9 Oct 2015.	

7. The Law. "No person shall . . . be deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor shall private property be taken for public use, without just compensation." US Constitution, Fifth Amendment.	Main Ideas: Key Words: Analysis:
The Congress shall have Power to lay and collect Taxes, Duties, Imposts and Excises, to pay the Debts and provide for the common Defence and general Welfare of the United States; but all Duties, Imposts and Excises shall be uniform throughout the United States. US Constitution, Article I, Section 8. Clause 1.	