

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

January 17, 2024

The Honorable Antony Blinken
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Mr. Secretary:

We are writing to urge you to quickly implement a key provision in the recently enacted National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2024¹ (NDAA) that advances several international bridge projects in Texas. As you are aware, Mexico is one of the United States's most important trading partners with nearly \$800 billion in goods exchanged in 2022. These international bridges will expand such trade, creating vital jobs and economic opportunities in the Texas border region and helping improve supply chains across our country.

Section 5414 of the NDAA establishes a clear process for the administration to issue presidential permits for international bridge projects in three counties in Texas. Specifically, the provision applies to applications for international bridge projects submitted between December 1, 2020, and December 31, 2024, in Webb, Cameron, and Maverick counties in Texas. There are currently four international bridge projects eligible under this provision: the World Trade Bridge Expansion Project in Laredo, Webb County; the Flor de Mayo International Bridge in Cameron County; the Laredo 4/5 International Bridge in Webb County; and the Puerto Verde Global Trade Bridge in Maverick County. Another permit application to expand the Laredo-Colombia Solidarity International Bridge in Webb County may also be filed soon.

Under this provision, the State Department has 60 days to recommend to the president whether he should approve or deny the applications for a presidential permit. For applications submitted prior to enactment of this provision, that timeline starts on the date of enactment of the NDAA (December 22, 2023). Further, the provision makes clear that the basis for your recommendation, “shall be whether the international bridge is in the *foreign policy* interests of the United States,” (emphasis added). It is clear the relevant international bridges in Texas are in the foreign policy interest of the United States given they will strengthen ties with our southern neighbor and bring benefits to international trade, supply chains, economic development, and job creation. After you have given the president your recommendation, the president will have 60 days to approve or deny the applications for presidential permits. As part of the permitting process, the administration cannot require an applicant to have first completed National Environmental Policy Act² reviews. However, the provision makes clear that the applicants must complete the environmental reviews prior to project construction, just as is required for domestic bridge

¹ Pub. L. No. 118-31

² 42 U.S.C. §§ 4321 et seq.

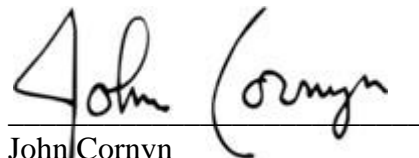
projects. Further, the provision gives the president the authority to condition an approved presidential permit on the project sponsor completing all environmental reviews.

It is vital that the State Department adhere to the requirements of Section 5414 of the NDAA and expeditiously recommend to the president that he grant the presidential permits for these critical international bridge projects. The sooner the president approves the presidential permits for these projects, the sooner these projects will deliver more jobs, make supply chains more efficient, and improve relations with Mexico.

Sincerely,



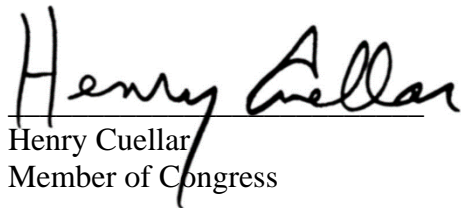
Ted Cruz
United States Senator



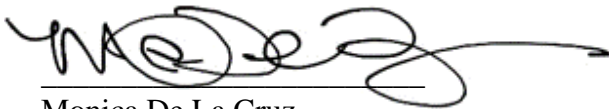
John Cornyn
United States Senator



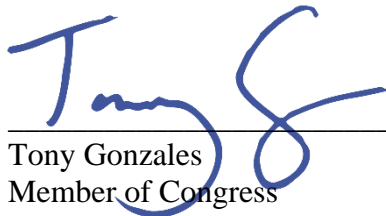
Vicente Gonzalez
Member of Congress



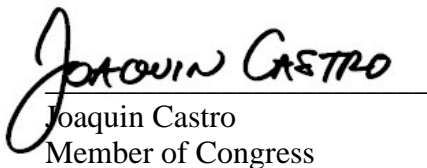
Henry Cuellar
Member of Congress



Monica De La Cruz
Member of Congress



Tony Gonzales
Member of Congress



Joaquin Castro
Member of Congress