

## United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-4305

April 16, 2021

The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Homeland Security  
3801 Nebraska Ave NW  
Washington, DC 20016

Dear Secretary Mayorkas:

I write to request the Department of Homeland Security take swift action to allow the reconstruction of several levees along the Rio Grande in South Texas. Leaving these levees in their current state could put more than 200,000 Texans in the path of catastrophic flooding as hurricane season rapidly approaches. It is critical that the Department permit the Army Corps of Engineers and other contractors to continue their work to rebuild and repair these levees.

There are currently significant vulnerabilities in the levee system that protects Hidalgo County from flooding. These levees, which have been largely built and maintained using local funding over many years, protect the delta from major flooding often associated with hurricane season. The levees were leveled by Federal contractors in preparation for construction of new levee wall segments, thereby creating the vulnerabilities. However, President Biden halted all work on projects relating to physical barriers on the Southern Border shortly after taking office. That order did not permit the repair or reconstruction of flood barriers that were augmented by other projects.

I have heard from dozens of local leaders who are concerned with the threat this unfinished work represents to their communities. Despite repeated outreach to the Department of Homeland Security, Federal Emergency Management Administration, International Boundary and Water Commission, and Army Corps of Engineers, these officials have yet to receive assurances the flood threat will be mitigated or eliminated in time to avoid a major disaster. It is troubling that local governments that have invested local funds and depend on the levee system for protection are unable to receive any information from their Federal partners.

While I disagree with the administration's decision to halt all border barrier projects without regard for local impact, I am confident we can agree on the need to ensure the public safety of South Texans. I respectfully request you take immediate action to implement an emergency mitigation plan to protect Hidalgo County in the short term and permit these critical projects to move forward to ensure the safety of South Texans along the Rio Grande in the long term

Thank you for your consideration, and please do not hesitate to contact me if I can assist you with this matter.

Sincerely,



JOHN CORNYN  
United States Senator