

#FundBridgesNotWalls

MARCH 16, 2017

Donald Trump wants to build a wall at the U.S.-Mexico border. It's been estimated that building the wall will cost **\$21.6 billion**.¹ Meanwhile, Trump's proposed budget slashes crucial services to our most vulnerable populations and threatens our environment. Instead of funding a wall that divides us, the U.S. government could invest our taxpayer dollars to strengthen our families and communities and build bridges to opportunity.

Instead of building fear, the U.S. could invest in:

- **COLLEGE TUITION.** For the 2016–17 award year, the maximum award for Pell Grants is \$5,815. If the \$21.6 billion estimated to build the wall were used to give Pell Grants, we could reduce the costs of tuition for **3.7 million students**.²
- **MEDICAL CARE FOR VETERANS.** There are 18.8 million veterans in the United States, and the U.S. Dept. of Veterans Affairs served 5.9 million people in 2015. The \$21.6 billion could provide an additional 2.09 million military veterans VA medical care for one year.³
- **CREATING INFRASTRUCTURE AND JOBS.** Investing in infrastructure creates jobs while building roads and bridges, public transportation, and water systems. \$21.6 billion could create 388,799 new jobs and fundamentally strengthen our national transportation system and economy.⁴
- **PROTECTING OUR ENVIRONMENT.** The Environmental Protection Agency's entire 2016 budget was \$8.1 billion—a little over a third of what the wall will cost. Under President Trump's proposed 2018 budget, funding to the EPA will be cut by 25 percent. The proposed cuts target climate-change and air- and water pollution—prevention and cleanup programs. As we saw in Flint, Michigan, failure to prevent the contamination of municipal and regional water systems has devastating effects on the affected communities, especially on the communities' children. Instead of wasting \$21.6 billion in taxpayer dollars building a wall

¹ www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-trump-immigration-wall-exclusive-idUSKBN15O2ZN.

² <https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/types/grants-scholarships/pell#how-much-money>.

³ "The average cost to provide military veterans with Veterans Affairs (VA) medical care is based on the state's total VA medical care expenditures divided by the state's total number of unique patients based on data from the National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics (www.va.gov/vetdata/Expenditures.asp). Medical Care expenditures include dollars for medical services, medical administration, facility maintenance, educational support, research support, and other overhead items. Medical Care expenditures do not include dollars for construction or other non-medical support. The data year is 2014." *Fighting for a U.S. Federal Budget That Works for All Americans* (National Priorities Project), www.nationalpriorities.org/interactive-data/trade-offs/notes-and-sources/.

⁴ "According to [Good Jobs for All](#), a report by Dorian T. Warren for Columbia University and the Roosevelt Institute (page 37), a \$200 billion investment in infrastructure, including roads and bridges, public transportation, and water systems, would yield 3.6 million jobs per year." Thus, \$21.6 billion could create **388,799 for 1 Year**. *Id.*



that would disrupt wildlife and ecosystems on the southern border, the EPA should be fully funded so it can do its job of protecting our environment and health.⁵

- **FAMILIES AND CHILDREN.** Child care enables parents to work while ensuring that their children are in safe, healthy environments. Yet many families, particularly low-income families, need help affording child care. Of the 14.2 million children who are eligible for child care assistance under federal guidelines, [only 2.18 million children are being served](#), according to the most recent data.⁶ With \$21.6 billion, an additional **3.4 million children** could receive child care assistance through the Child Care and Development Block Grant.⁷

⁵ www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-37200583.

⁶ <https://aspe.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/153591/ChildEligibility.pdf>.

⁷ CLASP analysis of Office of Child Care administrative spending and participation data and Congressional Budget Office inflation projections, <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/occ/data> and <https://www.cbo.gov/files/51908-2016outlookupdateonecol-2pdf>.