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PRESS RELEASE

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LOCAL, STATE AND FEDERAL ELECTED OFFICIALS SEND LETTER TO PRESIDENT-ELECT BARACK OBAMA OPPOSING THE BORDER WALL

On Wednesday, December 3, 2008, El Paso State Senator Eliot Shapleigh, Congressman Silvestre Reyes, County Attorney Jose Rodriguez, and City Representative Steve Ortega, signed a joint letter addressed to President-elect Barack Obama opposing the construction of the Border Wall. The signing-in ceremony took place this afternoon at the Hotel Camino Real, as part of the two-day National Border Wall Summit that is currently taking place in El Paso. Other El Paso elected officials who couldn't be present will also sign the letter.

In the letter, the elected officials request President-elect Barack Obama to stop the construction of the border wall and instead concentrate the efforts of his administration on achieving control of the border by adequately staffing the ports of entry, using state-of-the-art technology to detect border incursions, funding the construction of modern infrastructure along the border, and allocating sufficient resources to achieve effective enforcement.

The officials also state that it is fiscally irresponsible to spend 6.3 billion dollars "...on a wall that will not only scar our environmental landscape, but also damage our relationship with communities and countries across the Americas."

The letter explains that sections of the border wall built in California have already begun to erode the Tijuana River Estuary, and another section of the wall in Arizona has caused severe flooding in Nogales.

The letter closes by asking President-elect Obama to "stop the *muros de odio*[walls of hate] on our southern border –let us stop building these ill-conceived walls founded in current notions of racism. As the next President of the United States, we hope you administration will lead the U.S. to once again be the beacon of hope to the world."

A copy of the letter will also be delivered to Hillary Clinton, Secretary of State designee, Janet Napolitano, Secretary of Homeland Security designee, Bill Richardson, Secretary of Commerce designee, and John Podesta, Presidential Transition Team Co-Chair.

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