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Issue Brief: Donald Trump's US-Mexico Border Wall

2016 has been one of the most controversial years in American history. Most of which Donald Trump has been elected as the President of the United States. Tension has increased tremendously not just in the United States, but also around the world. Most of the world is looking at Donald Trump right now, from his absurd comments and policies to his qualifications as President of the United States of America. One of his most famous claim for his campaign during his presidential run in 2016 that most people know is his promise of building a big border wall between the United States and Mexico to prevent illegal immigration and make Mexico pay for the wall.

"I will build a great wall -- and nobody builds walls better than me, believe me --and I'll build them very inexpensively. I will build a great, great wall on our southern border, and I will make Mexico pay for that wall. Mark my words." -Donald J. Trump, June 2015. Many have both praised him for such remarks and some took it as a joke doubting that Mr. Trump would really be able to build a wall on the United States-Mexico Border. It has been one of his most controversial claim for his presidential campaign that he has repeatedly restated time and time again. So the real question is, if Donald Trump were to be able to build a real border wall, what would be the process? Is it even possible?

What would be affected and or who would be affected by this wall? Who will actually pay for the wall? What do the experts say? Is it going to be a problem? If yes, how would we deal with it? What is actually is being done about illegal immigration now? In truth, the United States-Mexico Border wall will be a very difficult task to accomplish that is near an impossibility, but if with time and resource can be possible. But it will take enormous toll of both American and Mexican families, the working class, taxpayers, the American economy, and even Donald Trump's own supporters.

So what needs to happen to make this border wall a possibility you may ask. Well for starters assuming there is enough money to pay for the border wall, on March 28th 2017, CNN wrote an article that estimated that the border wall will cost $1 billion dollars for every 62 miles across the border, with the United States-Mexico border is estimated to be 1,954 miles wide and cutting through both private US and Mexican properties, homes, mountainous terrain and villages. All together that would be around $31,516,129,032 dollars just to build the wall not including cost for maintaining the border wall and staffing. Some reported that wall might even be more than that when in October 9, 2015, CNBC estimated the wall would cost around $15-25 billion and now in a possibility to be around $66.9 billion dollars which is around two to three times the number previously predicted; this would cost

more than NASA's annual budget. The wall would also need the maintenance and staffing that was not included before with the building process which would take about 3.5 years to finish building. This will altogether will keep the people paying for it for generations to come.

Now who actually paying for the border wall? Well seeing as Trump claimed many times before that he will make Mexico pay for it. This has caught the public eye from around the world so of course Mexico did respond to this. Former President of Mexico Vicente Fox has spoken out many times that Mexico will not pay for the wall while dropping many F-bombs is his statements, saying that he will pay for a wall if it was built around President Donald Trump himself.

"TRUMP, when will you understand that I am not paying for that fucken wall. Be clear with US tax payers. They will pay for it." -Vicente Fox Quesada via Twitter.

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In response to this Trump increased 20% tariff on Mexican imports to pay for the wall in January, that means American's have to for the wall with their taxes. Now imagine this, 9 out of 10 imported avocados come from Mexico, while most of the rest come from Chile, Peru and the Dominican Republic. Now to be able to pay for the wall with Mexican import taxes, Americans might need to buy 25 billion avocados so Mexico could pay for the wall but in actuality it's Americans who do as reported in an article by the Washington Post. So either way in the realm of realism, American's will pay for the wall with their taxes no matter what, and this includes Donald Trump's own supporters. Now going back to the wall process itself that would mean generations of American

citizens onward will have to pay for the walls construction which will most likely put America into more debt than it already is, and make the younger generation suffer more than they already have.

Now that we know who will most likely pay for the US-Mexico border wall, what would be affected and or who would be affected by this wall? Well we need to go back to what was the purpose of the wall in the first place. Donald Trump proposed the wall idea during his announcement of his presidential run in 2016 on the issue of illegal immigration. So it's a no brainer that he is trying to target illegal immigrants. Well that it's correct that it will affect illegal immigrants, but the border wall will affect a lot more people than just them. As we see now, the wall is something that would stretch over 2000 miles of rough terrain cutting through mountain, rivers, villages and even people's homes. It will most like separate families not just Mexicans but Americans too as some private property reside on both the United States and Mexico. Currently, a third of that border already has a barrier, thanks to the Secure Fence Act of 2006, which was signed by then-President George W. Bush. That initiative ran into issues with landowners near the Rio Grande. If the wall goes forward as Trump promises, more lawsuits may be coming. Landowner and Professor at University of Texas Rio Grande Valley Eloisa Tamez received $56,000 from the federal government for a quarter-acre of her ancestral land, but she says, "I wasn't looking for the money. I don't want to lose the land." As reported by NPR's Parker Yesko.

Yes, we already went over that most likely the border wall will put the US in more debt economically, now we look at how the wall will affect families. As of February 2017,

President Donald Trump has set stages for mass deportation especially in "Sanctuary Cities" which he called cities that tries to protect illegal immigrants. In a CNN article, the fundamental shift in US policy will likely continue to provoke fear in immigrant communities of a vast expansion of the government's use of its enforcement powers to potentially deport undocumented immigrants who have lived in their communities for years, and may have family members who are legal US residents or citizens. The Trump administration also emphasizes that it is leaving intact the DACA program -- President Barack Obama's protections for so-called DREAMers -- even if the new rules chip away at protections for undocumented migrants overall. This still causes a problem in many ways. DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) Obama's executive orders protecting young undocumented immigrants brought to the US as children and undocumented parents of US citizens conflicts with this and can result in many unaccompanied minors. Not only this but the mass deportation because of the wall will make it more difficult for asylum seekers, The change could send potentially tens of thousands of non-Mexican migrants back over the border, and would largely apply to Central Americans who flee violence, gangs and drug cartels to seek refuge in the US. Another note on the mass deportation is the changes to use of laws, the new plan vastly grows the number of individuals who can be deported using "expedited removal" procedures, which affords immigrants almost no court proceedings. Under the new policy, if someone can't prove he or she has been living in the US continuously for two years, he or she could now be eligible for expedited removal. Previously, this was limited in practice to people apprehended within 100 miles of the border and who had

arrived within the past two weeks. Currently there are around 11.5 million undocumented immigrants residing in the US which is a problem which has pros and cons to the economy, but building a border wall will not help.

"Legal status would boost the economy, but the resulting productivity and wage gains would be much higher if the vast majority of the undocumented population are granted citizenship. Researchers found that immigrants who are only eligible for legal status, but not citizenship, would contribute about $832 billion to the economy in a ten year period, add 121,000 more jobs per year, and pay $109 billion in taxes over a ten-year period. Compare that to a scenario where undocumented immigrants are granted legal status and citizenship at the same time, the U.S. GDP would grow by $1.4 trillion over a ten year period, immigrants would help to create an additional 203,0000 jobs per year, and add $184 billion in tax revenue. In another scenario where undocumented immigrants are granted legal status and citizenship after five years, the GDP would grow by $1.1 trillion, there would be an additional 159,000 jobs per year, and add $144 billion in tax revenue." -Esther Yu-Hsi Lee, MA

Yet there are Con's to economic security with the issue of illegal immigration as stated by John Boehner "Our national and economic security depend on requiring people who are living and working here illegally to come forward and get right with the law. There will be no special path to citizenship for individuals who broke our nation's immigration laws – that would be unfair to those immigrants who have played by the rules and harmful to promoting the rule of law. Rather, these persons could live legally and without fear in the U.S., but only if they were willing to admit their culpability, pass

rigorous background checks, pay significant fines and back taxes, develop proficiency in English and American civics, and be able to support themselves and their families (without access to public benefits). Criminal aliens, gang members, and sex offenders and those who do not meet the above requirements will not be eligible for this program. Finally, none of this can happen before specific enforcement triggers have been implemented to fulfill our promise to the American people that from here on, our immigration laws will indeed be enforced."
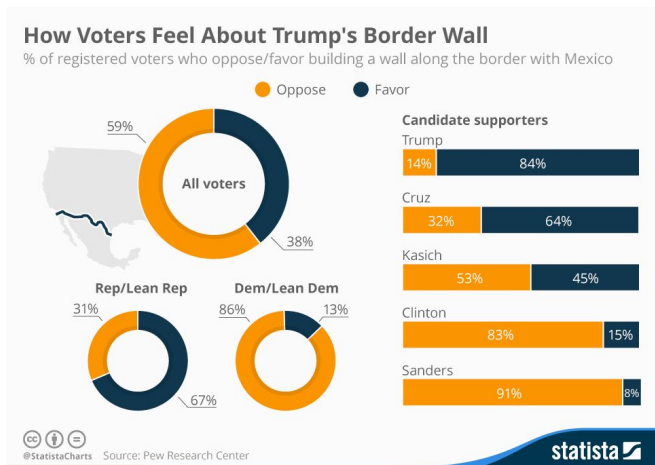
You think the wall will affect just humans? Sorry to say but that is wrong. A study by Mexico's top university has revealed that at least 800 species of wildlife will be adversely affected by President Trump's planned 2,000-mile border wall with Mexico. Research published by ecologists from the Mexican National Autonomous University has shown that an impassable physical barrier placed into ecosystems inhabited by jaguars, black bears and bighorn sheep will so disrupt patterns of migration as to cause a "natural catastrophe."

Now the wall was meant to reduce the number of illegal immigrants from coming over. However it would help very little, even if the wall was built it is not a sure way to stop illegal immigration, for 20-40% of illegal immigrants come here not over the walls, but by planes and overstay their visas (Politifact September 8, 2015).

So what do the experts say about the wall itself? What is a more realistic approach? While not finalized, CNN talked to two dozen sources and some high level discussions with members of the Department of Homeland Security and reports have been through that the phrase of "fences" seems to be suggested rather than a wall that

President Donald Trump had hoped for which is something that is used to deal with the problem of right now already. An article from The Guardian suggested that proposal ideas also range from having a glass window to see through the other side, watchtowers, drones and even a toxic moat.

Now what can we do to solve the problem? Currently it seems to be a pipe dream for this to possible work which is good, but if tried, the country would go into further debt than it already is and taxpayers will pay enormous amounts for generations. Mexico also doesn't plan to pay so the burden falls on the American people. So the best method of preventing this problem (If it becomes a possibility) is to vote. Speaker Paul Ryan has confirmed that it will in fact be Americans who will fund this chimera of security. And because of that, voters now have a way to stop it — by voting Trump's party out of congressional power in 2018. Congress controls everything so senators and representatives gets to say where the tax dollars go. Participate in your local government so you can make a difference. There is a lot of paperwork to make it possible for the wall the legally go through so we have time to do something about it in our government in 2018. As of August 2016, a solid 59 percent of voters surveyed opposed the wall altogether. This proves how much it is a problem to the majority and how we still need to

How Voters Feel About Trump's Border Wall
% of registered voters who oppose/favor building a wall along the border with Mexico
● Oppose ● Favor

All voters — 59% / 38%

Rep/Lean Rep — 31% / 67%
Dem/Lean Dem — 86% / 13%

Candidate supporters
Trump — 14% / 84%
Cruz — 32% / 64%
Kasich — 53% / 45%
Clinton — 83% / 15%
Sanders — 91% / 8%

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improve to prevent the border wall from happening.

In conclusion, the wall is most likely an impossibility as of now, but if were to become a possibility there would a plethora of issues it would cause socially, morally and economically would be very harmful to both America and Mexico; especially the people. This seems to be one of the most controversial topic to occur in 2016 that needs to be brought up and addressed if need be.

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