Is a Border Barrier Justified?

On February 15, 2019, President Donald Trump declared a national emergency on the southern border after Congress refused to fully fund a wall. Democrats and Republicans disagree over the right border security measures, cost and the effectiveness of physical barriers.

While apprehensions have increased on the Southwest border, they remain below historic highs: 688,375 as of June 2019\(^1\)

58% of Americans polled oppose expanding the wall\(^2\)

~90% of heroin, cocaine, meth, and fentanyl are smuggled through ports of entry, not between them\(^3\)

The wall could worsen flooding and threaten wildlife, including 100 endangered species\(^4\)

Policy Recommendations

- Find the right mix of physical barriers of several types, and use technology and agents on the ground for border security
- Invest in more technology to detect cargo carrying illegal drugs at ports of entry
- Allocate more funding for the U.S. immigration system, including courts and judges, prioritize visa overstay enforcement, and expand and modernize guest worker programs

Sources

* This research is generously supported by a grant from the Center for Houston’s Future.