



DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

Office of the Secretary

Determination Pursuant to Section 102 of the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996, as Amended

AGENCY: Office of the Secretary, Department of Homeland Security.

ACTION: Notice of determination.

SUMMARY: The Secretary of Homeland Security has determined, pursuant to law, that it is necessary to waive certain laws, regulations, and other legal requirements in order to ensure the expeditious construction of barriers and roads in the vicinity of the international land border in the state of New Mexico.

DATES: This determination takes effect on **[INSERT DATE OF PUBLICATION IN THE *FEDERAL REGISTER*]**.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Important mission requirements of the Department of Homeland Security (“DHS”) include border security and the detection and prevention of illegal entry into the United States. Border security is critical to the nation’s national security.

Recognizing the critical importance of border security, Congress has mandated DHS to achieve and maintain operational control of the international land border. Secure Fence Act of 2006, Public Law 109-367, section 2, 120 Stat. 2638 (Oct. 26, 2006) (8 U.S.C. 1701 note). Congress defined “operational control” as the prevention of all unlawful entries into the United States, including entries by terrorists, other unlawful aliens, instruments of terrorism, narcotics, and other contraband. *Id.* Consistent with that mandate, the President’s Executive Order on Securing Our Borders directs that I take all appropriate action to deploy and construct physical barriers to ensure complete operational control of the southern border of the United States. Executive Order 14165, section 3 (Jan. 20, 2025).

Congress has provided to the Secretary of Homeland Security a number of authorities necessary to carry out DHS’s border security mission. One of those authorities is found at

section 102 of the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996, as amended (“IIRIRA”). Public Law 104-208, Div. C, 110 Stat. 3009-546, 3009-554 (Sept. 30, 1996) (8 U.S.C 1103 note), as amended by the REAL ID Act of 2005, Public Law 109-13, Div. B, 119 Stat. 231, 302, 306 (May 11, 2005) (8 U.S.C. 1103 note), as amended by the Secure Fence Act of 2006, Public Law 109-367, section 3, 120 Stat. 2638 (Oct. 26, 2006) (8 U.S.C. 1103 note), as amended by the Department of Homeland Security Appropriations Act, 2008, Public Law 110-161, Div. E, Title V, section 564, 121 Stat. 2090 (Dec. 26, 2007). In section 102(a) of IIRIRA, Congress provided that the Secretary of Homeland Security shall take such actions as may be necessary to install additional physical barriers and roads (including the removal of obstacles to detection of illegal entrants) in the vicinity of the United States border to deter illegal crossings in areas of high illegal entry into the United States. In section 102(b) of IIRIRA, Congress mandated that in carrying out the authority of section 102(a), I provide for the installation of additional fencing, barriers, roads, lighting, cameras, and sensors to achieve and maintain operational control of the border. Finally, in section 102(c) of IIRIRA, Congress granted to the Secretary of Homeland Security the authority to waive all legal requirements that I, in my sole discretion, determine necessary to ensure the expeditious construction of barriers and roads authorized by section 102 of IIRIRA.

DETERMINATION AND WAIVER:

Section 1

The U.S. Border Patrol El Paso Sector is an area of high illegal entry. Between fiscal year 2021 and August 30, 2026, Border Patrol apprehended over 1,248,000 illegal aliens attempting to enter the United States between border crossings in the El Paso Sector. In that same time period, Border Patrol seized over 1,580 pounds of marijuana, over 2890 pounds of cocaine, over 3,450 pounds of methamphetamine, over 40 pounds of heroin, and over 285 pounds of fentanyl.

Since the President took office, DHS has delivered the most secure border in history. More can and must be done, however. As the statistics cited above demonstrate, the El Paso Sector is an area of high illegal entry where illegal aliens regularly attempt to enter the United States and smuggle illicit drugs, and given my mandate to achieve and maintain operational control of the border, I must use my authority under section 102 of IIRIRA to install additional barriers and roads in the El Paso Sector. Therefore, DHS will take immediate action to construct additional barriers and roads in a segment of the border in the El Paso Sector. The segment where such construction will occur is referred to herein as the “project area,” which is more specifically described in Section 2 below.

Section 2

I determine that the following area in the vicinity of the United States border, located in the state of New Mexico within the U. S. Border Patrol El Paso Sector, is an area of high illegal entry (the “project area”): Starting at Border Monument 71 and extending east to Border Monument 53, then extending north to Border Monument 40, then extending east to Border Monument 1.

There is presently an acute and immediate need to construct additional physical barriers and roads in the vicinity of the border of the United States in order to prevent unlawful entries into the United States in the project area pursuant to section 102(a) and 102(b) of IIRIRA. In order to ensure the expeditious construction of additional physical barriers and roads in the project area, I have determined that it is necessary that I exercise the authority that is vested in me by section 102(c) of IIRIRA.

Accordingly, pursuant to section 102(c) of IIRIRA, I hereby waive in their entirety, with respect to the construction of physical barriers and roads (including, but not limited to, accessing the project areas, creating and using staging areas, the conduct of earthwork, excavation, fill, and site preparation, designing, drilling, constructing, operating, maintaining, repairing, and plugging of wells, and installation and upkeep of physical barriers, roads, supporting elements, drainage,

erosion controls, safety features, lighting, cameras, and sensors) in the project area, all of the following statutes, including all federal, state, or other laws, regulations, and legal requirements of, deriving from, or related to the subject of, the following statutes, as amended: Pub. L. 82-495, section 208, 66 Stat. 549, 560 (July 10, 1952) (43 U.S.C. 666); the New Mexico Water Code (NMSA 1978, 72-1-1 through 72-20-103); and the New Mexico Administrative Code Title 19, Chapter 27, Part 1 (19.27.1.1 through 19.27.1.39) and Part 4 (19.27.4.1 through 19.27.4.39).

This waiver does not revoke or supersede any other waiver determination made pursuant to section 102(c) of IIRIRA. Such waivers shall remain in full force and effect in accordance with their terms. I reserve the authority to execute further waivers from time to time as I may determine to be necessary under section 102 of IIRIRA.

Markwayne Mullin,
Secretary of Homeland Security.

[FR Doc. 2026-20233 Filed: 10/1/2026 8:45 am; Publication Date: 10/2/2026]