

Udall, Heinrich announce investigation to protect N.M. land

Written by Staff Reports

Friday, 20 September 2019 03:52



Senators looking into proposed seizure of land to build Trump border wall

WASHINGTON, D.C.- U.S. Senators Tom Udall, D-N.M., and Martin Heinrich, D-N.M., announced Sept. 11, that the nonpartisan U.S. Government Accountability Office will investigate the Trump Administration's efforts to use eminent domain to “[take the land](#)” of private landowners by any means necessary in order to build an ineffective border wall.

In August, Sens. Udall and Heinrich sent a [letter](#) to U.S. Comptroller General Gene Dodaro, urging GAO to investigate the Trump Administration's harmful efforts that could affect New Mexico.

Sens. Udall and Heinrich emphasized that despite multiple requests from Congress, the Trump Administration has failed to provide specific information regarding its eminent domain efforts, including how many citizens will have their land seized, definitive real estate costs or requirements, or a timetable for completing land acquisition efforts. The lawmakers also

Udall, Heinrich announce investigation to protect N.M. land

Written by Staff Reports

Friday, 20 September 2019 03:52

stressed that landowners must receive just compensation for any public seizure of private property.

Earlier this year, Sens. Udall and Heinrich introduced the [Full Fair and Complete Exchange Act](#), legislation that would prohibit the federal government from taking possession of land for border infrastructure until all persons or entities entitled to compensation are remunerated in full. The bill ensures that the federal government provides compensation on a timely basis for land acquired for border infrastructure, and would require consultation and approval from relevant stakeholders, including tribes, for any acquired state land.

“I welcome the new GAO investigation into the Trump administration’s abuse of eminent domain to seize the property of land owners for a wasteful and unpopular border wall,” Udall said. “Not only is the Trump administration stealing funds from critical military projects to pay for the wall, they’re also pushing to take away people’s private land often with little to no compensation - with the president reportedly ordering officials to ‘take the land’ and ‘don’t worry’ about the law because ‘I’ll pardon you.’ Under this administration’s thoughtless and potentially lawless land grab, homes could be confiscated, farms and livelihoods ruined, neighbors cut off from one another, Tribal sovereignty upended, and endangered species and habitat lost forever. In the interest of preserving the rule of law, stopping waste, fraud and abuse, and protecting the private landownership of Americans living along the border, the administration should suspend all use of eminent domain until GAO is able to fully investigate this issue to its conclusion. Congress and the American people deserve honest answers.”

“Close to 70 percent of land along the southwest border belongs to entities other than the federal government,” Heinrich said. “Any efforts by the Trump Administration to use eminent domain must take into account the rights of landowners and provide just compensation for any seizure of private property. These property owners deserve transparency and the administration needs to be held accountable for its actions. I support this investigation and call on my colleagues to pass the Full Fair and Complete Exchange Act, so that we can prevent landowners from having their land seized until all persons or entities are properly compensated in full.”