

U.S. Sen. Baldwin: Opposes Defense Department transfer of \$1.5 billion to pay for President Trump's wall

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Senator Tammy Baldwin and every Democratic member of the Senate Appropriations Defense Subcommittee and the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies today slammed the Department of Defense for its transfer of another \$1.5 billion to be used to build part of President Donald Trump's wall on the southwest border. In a letter to Acting Defense Secretary Patrick Shanahan, the Senators expressed concern that this reprogramming comes at the expense of the readiness of the Armed Forces. This is the second time in two months that the Defense Department has used this unilateral process to bypass Congress.

“Once again, the Department of Defense has ignored decades of precedent and cooperation with the Congress in carrying out a transfer of funds without regard to any consultation with the Appropriations Committee,” the Senators wrote. “We are dismayed that the Department has chosen to prioritize a political campaign promise over the disaster relief needs of our service members, given the finite reprogramming authority available.”

In addition to Senator Baldwin, today's letter was signed by Senators Patrick Leahy (D-VT), Dick Durbin (D-IL), Jack Reed (D-RI), Brian Schatz (D-HI), Tom Udall (D-NM), Patty Murray (D-WA), Chris Murphy (D-CT), Dianne Feinstein (D-CA) and Jon Tester (D-MT).

In March, the Defense Department sent Congress a list of more than \$10 billion worth of military construction projects that could be delayed or cancelled in order to pay for President Trump's border wall.

The full text of the letter is available [here](#) and below. An online version of this release is available [here](#).

May 10, 2019

Dear Secretary Shanahan,

We are writing in opposition to the \$1.5 billion reprogramming for additional border wall that has been delivered to the congressional defense committees. Once again, the Department of Defense has ignored decades of precedent and cooperation with the Congress in carrying out a transfer of funds without regard to any consultation with the Appropriations Committee.

In addition to the unilateral process being used for the second time in two months, we have concerns that this reprogramming comes at the expense of the readiness of the Armed Forces. Last week, the Secretary of the Air Force announced that cleanup operations at Tyndall Air Force Base were being impacted by a shortfall in funding. We are dismayed that the Department has chosen to prioritize a political campaign promise over the disaster relief needs of our service members, given the finite reprogramming authority available. We remind you that we continue to work diligently on a supplemental appropriations bill that will provide relief to all Americans impacted by natural disasters, despite the fact that the President of the United States has requested no emergency funding to address the current needs for hurricane and flood relief.

Finally, we note that the decision to notify us of the reprogramming comes the day after you testified before the Subcommittee on Defense, and hours after the announcement of the President's intent to nominate you to be Secretary of Defense. We look forward to hearing your views on how you intend to repair the damaged relationship between the defense oversight committees and the Department.

Sincerely,