



EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20503

May 1, 2019

The Honorable Michael R. Pence
President of the Senate
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Mr. President:

We are continuing to experience a humanitarian and security crisis at the southern border of the United States. Apprehensions are expected to surpass one million by the end of the year, more than doubling those compared to last year. The number of large-scale groups of family units and unaccompanied alien children (UAC), primarily from El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras, seeking to enter the country and claim asylum has increased dramatically.

The situation becomes more dire each day. The migration flow and the resulting humanitarian crisis is rapidly overwhelming the ability of the Federal Government to respond. Only halfway through this fiscal year (FY), the U.S. Border Patrol has apprehended more than 360,000 migrants. This is over 187,000 more than during the same period in FY 2018, and just 35,500 below the number apprehended for all of FY 2018.

The demographics of migrants arriving at our border has changed dramatically, from single adult males to family units and UAC. This year, over 52 percent of apprehensions have been migrant families. The number of UAC referred to the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) has increased by almost 50 percent over last year. This shift in demographics has stressed a system mainly designed for single adults. These increased flows are exacerbated by Mexico's inability and unwillingness to curb the illegal migration flow through its own southern border. In addition, the speed with which illegal migrants transited through Mexico to reach the United States continues to challenge America's best efforts to keep pace with the overwhelming numbers of migrants arriving at the southern border. The historic influx of families and UAC is challenging the capacity of the Federal Government to shelter, care for and protect those we encounter, and presents child welfare concerns beyond the treacherous journey that these vulnerable migrants undertake to reach our southern border.

In February, U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) encountered more than 76,000 illegal border crossers and inadmissible aliens, and in March that number exceeded 100,000 – the highest monthly level in more than a decade. Despite heroic efforts, the United States Government's ability to humanely and compassionately care for vulnerable populations and to expeditiously process and detain those who should not be admitted is stressed to the breaking point. Alarming numbers of UAC and families are crowded into U.S. Border Patrol stations that were never intended to be long-term shelters. U.S. Border Patrol personnel no longer have the ability to identify, process, and transport all of those apprehended at the border to safe and secure facilities designed to house them, but have instead been increasingly pressed into providing critical humanitarian, medical, and transportation services for this population.

Additionally, immediate emergency action is required to ensure that the Federal Government can provide the infrastructure and personnel required to safely, securely, and humanely process and care for this at-risk migrant population. At the direction of the President, and under available authorities, numerous Federal agencies are coordinating and contributing resources and personnel in response to the overwhelming humanitarian crisis at the United States southern border. As the situation continues to unfold and escalate, the Administration believes additional Federal resources are necessary to sustain critical and life-safety missions.

At this time, the Administration requests an appropriation of \$4.5 billion in emergency funding to respond to the humanitarian and security crisis at the southern border of the United States. This amount includes \$3.3 billion for humanitarian assistance, \$1.1 billion for border operations, and \$178 million for mission support.

The humanitarian assistance request includes \$2.8 billion for HHS to ensure that its Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) is able to provide all UAC with critical child welfare services and high-quality shelter care, in accordance with programmatic and legal requirements. The funding will enable ORR to increase shelter capacity to approximately 23,600 total beds in order to accommodate the high number of UAC anticipated to be referred to ORR through the remainder of the fiscal year. Given that current referral trends are likely to continue into next fiscal year, this amount also provides ORR the ability to maintain a high bed capacity through December.

There is a significant likelihood that the UAC program will exhaust all of its resources in June. If Congress fails to provide HHS this additional funding, the expected continuation of current trends may require HHS to divert significant resources from other programs that serve vulnerable populations – such as refugees and victims of trafficking and torture. In addition, UAC services that are not necessary for protection of human life, such as education and legal services, as well as recreational activities, would likely need to be canceled or scaled back. Should reallocated funds be exhausted, it is highly unlikely that HHS would be able to acquire the additional shelter capacity it would likely need to continue to accept UAC referrals from DHS in a timely manner, meaning that children would likely stay in DHS facilities for longer than 72 hours following a determination that the child is a UAC. In the worst-case scenario, thousands of children might remain for lengthy periods of time in facilities that were never intended to be long-term shelters, rather than being expeditiously transferred to HHS custody, where they would receive case management and other services that address their unique needs.

The request also includes \$1.1 billion for the Department of Homeland Security. It would provide \$391 million for humanitarian assistance, including for temporary, semi-permanent, and permanent migrant processing facilities at the southern border where families and UAC will receive timely and appropriate medical attention, food, and temporary shelter before being transferred to other residential locations; \$530 million for border operations, including surged personnel expenses, as well as increased transportation and detainee housing and processing capacity; and \$178 million for operations and support costs, including pay and retention incentives for critical operational personnel, and for information technology (IT) support and upgrades to improve the performance of and help alleviate stress on overtaxed IT systems.

The request also includes \$377 million for the Department of Defense, National Guard for Operation Guardian Support and for active components to provide logistical and administrative, aerial surveillance and other border-related intelligence support to CBP. Finally, the amount includes \$155 million for Federal Prisoner Detention at the Department of Justice to accommodate significant increases in detained populations, including criminal aliens.

The additional resources hereby requested will enable Federal agencies to address the immediate humanitarian and security crisis at the southern border of the United States. Because the need for this funding arises from an unprecedented rise in the numbers and composition of the migrant population, consisting largely of families and UAC, these resources should be provided as emergency funding.

Further, during his April visit to the our southern border, the President emphasized that he is anxious to work with the Congress to close loopholes in the United States immigration system and secure meaningful asylum reform, without which border security will deteriorate and immigration enforcement costs will soar. Overall, President Trump is committed to working with the Congress to enact legislation that will give our Nation a secure, coherent, rational, and merit-based immigration system.

Thank you for your consideration of these funding needs. I urge the Congress to take swift action to provide the additional funding requested to address the humanitarian and border security crisis at the United States southern border. I also urge the Congress to complete its work to provide supplemental funding for disaster recovery to get those affected regions and military installations the support they need to rebuild. I stand ready to work with you to achieve these goals.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R. Vought", with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Russell T. Vought
Acting Director

Identical Letter Sent to:

The Honorable Michael R. Pence
The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
The Honorable Mitch McConnell
The Honorable Charles E. Schumer
The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
The Honorable Richard C. Shelby
The Honorable Nita Lowey
The Honorable Patrick J. Leahy
The Honorable Kay Granger