



TEXAS GENERAL LAND OFFICE  
COMMISSIONER DAWN BUCKINGHAM, M.D.

March 11, 2024

U.S. Customs and Border Protection  
Office of Facilities and Asset  
Management 13311 Pennsylvania Ave.  
NW, Suite 1555N  
Mail Stop 1102  
Washington, DC 20229-1102  
Attn: Mr. Timothy Smith  
Email: [BPAMNEPA@cbp.dhs.gov](mailto:BPAMNEPA@cbp.dhs.gov)

Dear Mr. Smith:

As Commissioner of the Texas General Land Office (GLO), I appreciate the opportunity to comment on the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) proposed acquisition of land for construction, operation, and maintenance of a new Joint Processing Center (JPC) for use by the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) in the Laredo area of Webb County, Texas. The GLO serves the schoolchildren, veterans, and environment of Texas by exercising prudent stewardship of State lands, minerals, and natural resources. The GLO is responsible for managing over 13 million acres of state lands and mineral interests dedicated to the Permanent School Fund, including roughly 180,000 mineral acres in Webb County alone.

In my role as Land Commissioner, I've seen firsthand the disaster unfolding at the southern border. Using CBP data, it has been reported that over 9 million migrants have crossed into the United States illegally during the Biden administration.<sup>1</sup> Since 2021, the number of immigrants encountered crossing the southern border exceeds the population of 36 U.S. states and exceeds 1/4 of the total population of the State of Texas. These eye-popping numbers represent a complete dereliction of duty by the Biden administration and the Secretary of DHS, Alejandro Mayorkas. While I commend CBP on their tireless efforts to police the border, the proposal for DHS to spend tens of millions of dollars (or more) to build a JPC which accommodates "500 non-citizens in processing" is an expensive Band-Aid on a gunshot wound. What this crisis demands is improved CBP facilities *coupled with* real federal leadership by DHS and the Biden administration on the underlying border issues.

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<sup>1</sup> Aggregate of the ~7.3 million border encounters plus the estimated 1.8 million known "gotaways".  
<https://www.gop.gov/news/documentsingle.aspx?DocumentID=728>.

The GLO, along with the Texas National Guard and the Texas Department of Public Safety, has taken control of Fronton Island in the Rio Grande, which was formerly a bastion of cartel activity and smuggling. Texas has built its own state border wall on GLO property in South Texas and the GLO has worked with various state partners to fill the void left by the Biden administration and DHS. Texas Governor Abbott recently announced that Texas will build a military base at the southern border to bolster state enforcement efforts. Texas' strong leadership – taken together with infrastructure improvements like the state military base or the proposed JPC – should be a model for the Biden administration to follow. Instead, the administration insists on lawsuits and bureaucratic sabotage to prevent the State of Texas from protecting our border. Without a change in the Biden administration's lawless approach to the border, the proposed JPC will have no significant impact on this crisis.

Thank you for your careful consideration of these comments.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D. Buckingham", written in a cursive style.

DAWN BUCKINGHAM, MD  
Commissioner, Texas General Land Office