

# Pima County to participate in border wall lawsuit against Trump administration

- By Justin Sayers, Arizona Daily Star Nov 20, 2019 [https://tucson.com/news/local/pima-county-to-participate-in-border-wall-lawsuit-against-trump/article\\_9d6398a4-ab6e-5077-8dc5-5f28a5b927ae.html#1](https://tucson.com/news/local/pima-county-to-participate-in-border-wall-lawsuit-against-trump/article_9d6398a4-ab6e-5077-8dc5-5f28a5b927ae.html#1)

The Pima County Board of Supervisors will take part in a lawsuit aimed at [curbing construction of the border wall](#) in three Arizona preserves, arguing that the new construction potentially threatens the county's compliance with a pair of national environmental programs.

The supervisors voted 3-1 during Tuesday's meeting to participate in the litigation, which was filed by several environmental groups, including the Tucson-based Center for Biological Diversity. The groups have sued the Trump administration for waiving environmental reviews and other laws to speed up border wall construction through protected areas, including in Pima County. They have sought a decision of the Supreme Court to halt the construction in Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument, the Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife Refuge and the San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area.

The vote allows Pima County to participate amicus curiae — as an impartial adviser in the case, without becoming a party to the suit — at no cost to taxpayers. The deadline to submit the brief is March 1.

The lone dissenting vote came from Republican Steve Christy, District 4, who argued it is a “federal issue.”

“The county should not involve itself in any type of legal activity on this particular issue,” Christy said.

In response, Democrat Richard Elias, District 5, called the federal government’s actions a “giant overstep of any authority that they’ve had.”

“I think it’s somewhat naïve to say it’s a federal issue only,” he said.

County Administrator Chuck Huckelberry said the county felt the construction threatens its compliance with a national flood insurance program and the Endangered Species Act.

He said the wall could potentially exacerbate current county issues with flooding, while also threatening the county’s permit in conjunction with [Section 10 of the Endangered Species Act](#), which is designed “to regulate a wide range of activities affecting plants and animals designated as endangered or threatened, and the habitats upon which they depend.”

“The border wall divides some habitats in the Sonoran Desert system,” Huckelberry said.

“By dividing those habitats, you reduce the available amount of ecosystems that are able to survive and thrive.”

He called the decision to participate in this suit “not simply symbolic.”

“It’s a real concern to the extent that we’re a local government that does have to comply with these laws and we do have do real concerns with future compliance,” Huckelberry said.

