

Trump seeks \$18 billion to extend border wall

SAN DIEGO (AP) — The Trump administration has proposed spending \$18 billion over 10 years to significantly extend the border wall with Mexico, providing one of its most detailed blueprints of how the president hopes to carry out a signature campaign pledge.

The proposal by Customs and Border Protection calls for 316 miles of additional barrier by September 2027, bringing total coverage to 970 miles, or nearly half the border, according to a U.S. official with direct knowledge of the matter.

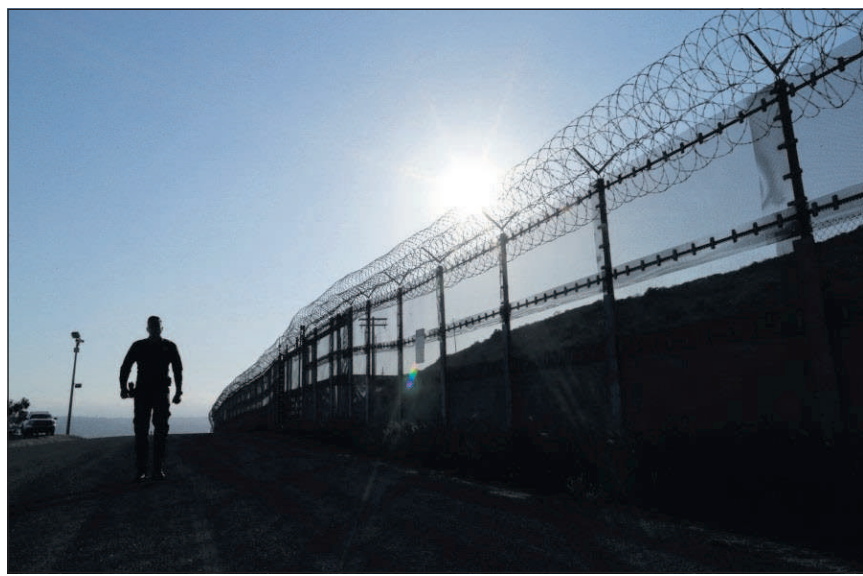
It also calls for 407 miles of replacement or secondary fencing, said the official, who spoke to The Associated Press on the condition of anonymity because the plan has not been made public.

Trump has promised “a big, beautiful wall” with Mexico as a centerpiece of his presidency but offered few details of where it would be built, when and at what cost. His administration asked for \$1.6 billion this year to build or replace 74 miles of fencing in Texas and California, and officials have said they also will seek \$1.6 billion next year.

The 10-year plan, first reported by *The Wall Street Journal*, resulted from discussions with senators who asked the agency what it would take to secure the border, the official said.

It comes as the administration intensifies negotiations in Congress on a package that may include granting legal status to about 800,000 people who were temporarily shielded from deportation under an Obama-era program, Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals.

Trump said last year that he was ending DACA but gave Congress until March to deliver a legislative fix.



In this June 2016 file photo a Border Patrol agent walks along a border structure in San Diego, Calif.

The plan on border security came in response to a request by U.S. Sen. Jeff Flake, said Jason Samuels, a spokesman for the Arizona Republican.

An administration official confirmed the document was prepared at the request of congressional negotiators and said funding for the wall and other security measures must be part of any legislative package on immigration. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because the plan has not been made public.

Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen told The Associated Press on Tuesday that the wall would be “first and foremost” in any package that includes new protections for DACA recipients. She also said the administration wanted to close “loopholes” on issues that include handling asylum claims and local police working with immigration authorities.

Nielsen called the \$3.2 billion requests for fencing during the administration’s first two years a down payment.

“This is not going to get us the whole wall we need, but it’s a start,” she said.

Mexico has steadfastly rejected Trump’s demand that it pay for the wall and few doubt that U.S. taxpayers will foot the bill if the wall is built.

The Customs and Border Protection document calls for a total of \$33 billion in new border spending, including \$18 billion for the wall, \$5.7 billion for technology gear, \$1 billion for road construction and maintenance and \$8.5 billion for 5,000 new Border Patrol agents, 2,500 border inspectors and other personnel, the U.S. official said.

The document doesn’t specify where the extended wall should be built.

BRIEFLY

Medical marijuana at risk following move by Sessions

SALEM (AP) — When U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions green-lighted federal prosecutions of marijuana lawbreakers, the vast majority of U.S. states that allow some form of medical marijuana were unexpectedly placed at risk of a crackdown and are warily watching developments.

Forty-six states — including Sessions’ home state of Alabama — have legalized some form of medical marijuana in recent years, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures. Eight of those states also allow recreational marijuana.

Among the guidance that Sessions rescinded was the so-called Ogden Memorandum of 2009 that instructed federal prosecutors not to pursue cases against medical marijuana patients and distributors who complied with state laws.

expected to hash out the order in which they plan to tackle two top White House priorities: a long-delayed infrastructure drive and welfare reform.

Trump’s White House setting records for early departures

WASHINGTON (AP) — Already setting turnover records, President Donald Trump’s White House is bracing for even more staff departures and an increasing struggle to fill vacancies, shadowed by the unrelenting Russia probe, political squabbling and Trump’s own low poll numbers.

Entering a grueling year that is sure to bring fresh challenges at home and abroad, Trump faces a brain drain across a wide swath of government functions, threatening to hamstring efforts to enact legislation or conduct even basic operations. Some departures are expected to come from senior ranks — the staff churn that makes headlines — but more are likely among the lesser-known officials who help to keep the White House and Cabinet agencies running.

In Trump’s first year, his administration’s upper-level officials have had a turnover rate of 34 percent, much higher than any other in the past 40 years, according to an analysis by Kathryn Dunn-Tenpas, a non-resident senior fellow at the Brookings Institution. The study found that 22 of the 64 senior officials she tracked have resigned, been fired or reassigned.

Anecdotal evidence among more junior officials suggests similar departure rates, and White House aides acknowledge difficulty filling roles in the administration.

Trump to huddle with Hill’s top Republicans at Camp David

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump will huddle with congressional Republicans, Cabinet secretaries and aides at Camp David this weekend to discuss their 2018 legislative priorities.

A long list of high-stakes topics are on the agenda, including the budget, infrastructure, immigration, welfare reform and the 2018 midterm elections.

“We’re going to Camp David with a lot of the great Republican senators, and we’re making America great again,” Trump said Friday afternoon as he left the White House for the presidential retreat in Maryland’s Catoctin Mountains. He will be joined by Vice President Mike Pence, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell and House Speaker Paul Ryan, among others.

Republicans are beginning the new year with newfound optimism after finally scoring a win by passing the tax bill at the end of last year.

They face a pile of unfinished business that was punted into this year during the push on taxes. Just two weeks remain until a Jan. 19 government funding deadline, and there is little visible progress on several contentious issues, including a budget deal to boost spending on both the Pentagon and nondefense agencies and to extend protections for immigrants brought to the country illegally as children.

Talks are also expected to touch on a range of other issues, including the opioid epidemic and health care. And lawmakers are

FBI probing Clinton Foundation corruption claims

WASHINGTON (AP) — The FBI is investigating whether the Clinton Foundation accepted donations in exchange for political favors while Hillary Clinton was secretary of state, two people familiar with the probe confirmed Friday. The revelation comes as President Donald Trump and congressional Republicans have been urging the Justice Department to look into corruption allegations involving the foundation.



In this 2016 file photo, then-Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton, and her husband former President Bill Clinton, greet supporters after voting in Chappaqua, N.Y.

It is unclear when or why the probe began, but the sources told The Associated Press it has been ongoing for several months, with prosecutors and FBI agents taking the lead from their offices in Little Rock, Arkansas, where the foundation has offices. The people were not authorized to discuss the investigation publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity.

The *Hill* newspaper first reported the probe.

Critics have accused

the Clinton family of using the foundation to enrich themselves and give donors special access to the State Department when Hillary Clinton was secretary of state. But public corruption prosecutors in Washington expressed disinterest in working with the FBI on a Clinton Foundation-related

investigation in 2016, saying they had concerns about the strength of the FBI’s evidence.

A spokesman for the foundation, Craig Minassian, said it had been “subjected to politically motivated allegations, and time after time these allegations have proven false.”

Trump has repeatedly called for an investigation into Clinton, her aides and the foundation, harping on Attorney General Jeff Sessions for not taking action. Democrats say Trump is trying to steer attention away from investigations examining whether his campaign was involved with Russian attempts to influence the 2016 election.

Sessions in November directed senior federal prosecutors to evaluate a number of Republican grievances and determine whether a special counsel should be appointed to look into allegations that the Clinton Foundation benefited from an Obama-era uranium transaction involving a Russian state company.

In a letter to the House Judiciary Committee, Sessions said the prosecutors would also make recommendations into “whether any matters currently under investigation need additional resources.”

Trump’s directive on recusal adds to obstruction questions

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump’s effort to keep Attorney General Jeff Sessions, a vocal and loyal supporter of his election bid, in charge of an investigation into his campaign offers special counsel Robert Mueller yet another avenue to explore as his prosecutors work to untangle potential evidence of obstruction.

The federal investigation into possible coordination between the Trump campaign and Russia already

includes a close look at whether Trump’s actions as president constitute an effort to impede that same probe. Those include the firing of FBI Director James Comey, an allegation by Comey that Trump encouraged him to end an investigation into former national security adviser Michael Flynn and the president’s role in drafting an incomplete and potentially misleading statement about a 2016 meeting with Russians.

The latest revelation

— that Trump directed his White House counsel, Don McGahn, to tell Sessions not to recuse himself from the Russia investigation — is known to Mueller’s investigators, who have interviewed many current and former executive branch officials. It adds to the portrait of a president left furious by an investigation that he has called a hoax and suggests that he worked through an intermediary to keep the inquiry under the watch of an attorney general he expected

would be loyal.

Three people familiar with the matter confirmed to The Associated Press that McGahn spoke with Sessions just before he announced his recusal to urge him not to do so. One of the people said McGahn contacted Sessions at the president’s behest.

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