

**SOCIETY OF  
ARCHITECTURAL  
HISTORIANS**

14 February 2020

The President  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20500

Re: Opposition to the Border Wall Construction within the Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument

Dear Mr. President:

The Society of Architectural Historians (SAH) expresses strong opposition to the construction of the border wall in the Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument.

Construction activities began in February 2020 in preparation for the construction of a portion of the border wall within Arizona's organ Pipe Cactus National Monument. Of great concern is the fact that blasting is taking place on Monument Hill, sacred to the Tohono O'odham Nation. Blasting was approved and began outside of consultation with the Nation. This action is contrary to both the spirit and the letter of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, the Archaeological Resources Protection Act, and the Environmental Protection Act, and is disrespectful of the cultural and spiritual concerns of the Nation. Prehistoric and historic cultural and burial sites are located on public land within the Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument, immediately adjacent to the Tohono O'odham reservation. Arizona Congressman Raúl Grijalva, Chairman, House Committee on Natural Resources, whose district includes this public land, wrote to the Department of Homeland Security on 7 January noting his concerns with the project, and urging government-to-government consultation with the Tohono O'odham Nation before beginning construction. This consultation has yet to begin. We note that Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument is also a designated UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, created in 1976 for the conservation of the unique resources of the Sonoran Desert ecosystem. This fragile ecosystem is also endangered by blasting and construction.

Created in the wake of 9/11, the REAL ID act of 2005 granted to the federal government broad power to waive laws deemed to stand in the way of national security. The Real ID waiver has been enacted 21 times since 2005; it is instructive to note that 16 of those instances – over 75% - have occurred in the last two and a half years. The waiver has been used to suspend laws that protect the rights of all citizens (such as the Environmental Protection Act) as well as those of America's tribal communities. As well, in Arizona most construction is taking place on public land in the complete absence of public disclosure and consultation. To invoke a vague threat to public safety as an excuse to trample the rights of Native and non-Native citizens alike is, at best, completely disingenuous and not befitting a truly democratic society.

The Society of Architectural Historians strongly opposes the to the construction of the border wall in the Cactus Pipe National Monument, and encourages government to government consultation with the Tohono O'odham Nation so that future generations may appreciate this landmark.

Sincerely,



Bryan Clark Green, Ph.D., LEED AP BD+C  
Chair, Society of Architectural Historians Heritage Conservation Committee

cc: Mr. Kenneth Breisch, Ph.D.; Mr. Jeffrey Cody, Ph.D.; Mr. Anthony Cohn, AIA; Ms. Phyllis Ellin; Mr. David Fixler, FAIA; Mr. Sandy Isenstadt, Ph.D.; Mr. Theodore H. Prudon, Ph.D., FAIA, Ms. Pauline Saliga; Ms. Deborah Slaton; Members SAH Heritage Conservation Committee.

Chairman Ned Norris, Jr.  
Tohono O'odham Nation  
ADDRESS

The Honorable Raúl Grijalva  
Chairman  
House Committee on Natural Resources  
ADDRESS

CC Distribution:

**Tabor Academy**

John Quirk, Tabor Academy Head of School, [jquirk@taboracademy.org](mailto:jquirk@taboracademy.org)

Christopher Boucher, Tabor Academy Director of Facilities, [cboucher@taboracademy.org](mailto:cboucher@taboracademy.org)

**Tabor Academy Trustees (very incomplete list):**

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Peter Douglas, [peter.douglas@davispolk.com](mailto:peter.douglas@davispolk.com)

Meg Steinberg, [bmjb@comcast.net](mailto:bmjb@comcast.net)

**Sippican Historical Society**

Frank McNamee, President, [frank@marionantiques.com](mailto:frank@marionantiques.com)

David Pierce, Vice President, [dpierce@taboracademy.org](mailto:dpierce@taboracademy.org)

Will Tiftt, Treasurer, [willtiftt@gmail.com](mailto:willtiftt@gmail.com)

Jeffrey Miller, PhD, Executive Director, [jeffreyallenmiller@gmail.com](mailto:jeffreyallenmiller@gmail.com)

Pete Smith, Curator, [sippicanpete@verizon.net](mailto:sippicanpete@verizon.net)

General Email: [info@sippicanhistoricalsociety.org](mailto:info@sippicanhistoricalsociety.org)