

Donald Trump: The wall will save hundreds of billions of dollars - many many times what it's going to cost!



Visiting California for the first time since assuming the presidency, President Donald Trump has called his wish for a border wall with Mexico a national necessity, as he accused the state of putting the "entire nation at risk" by not dealing with illegal immigration.

"If you don't have a wall system, we're not going to have a country", Mr Trump said.

The President was touring eight wall prototypes, erected near the border in the San Diego area, that stand as the chief concrete progress towards one of his central campaign promises. Congress has so far not allocated the billions of dollars needed to build the larger structure, with the Trump administration seeking \$18bn (£12.9bn) for the first phase.

But Mr Trump, who has sought to secure funding as part of a larger immigration deal, continued to press for a barrier as a means to prevent "a lot of problems in Mexico" from flowing into the United States.

"They reestablished law and order in San Diego when they put up a wall", Mr Trump said, referencing an existing structure.

While Congress has so far proved unreceptive to Mr Trump's wall funding request, the President argued that the structure would ultimately be a boon to taxpayers by reducing crime and strain on public services.

"The wall will save hundreds of billions of dollars - many many times what it's going to cost", Mr Trump said. "I want to again call on Congress to deliver a budget that protects our homeland", he added.

In a speech to military personnel at a Marine Corps facility, Mr Trump reiterated his description of the wall as a national security safeguard, saying "we don't have a choice" in building it.

California has been a regular target for the Trump administration, with Mr Trump and other officials assailing so-called "sanctuary" laws that limit cooperation with Immigration and Customs Enforcement. Mr Trump took aim at those laws and at California Governor Jerry Brown, who last week responded to the Department of Justice suing his state by lambasting the Trump administration as "full of liars".

Governor Brown had sent Mr Trump a letter the day before saying "California thrives because we welcome immigrants and innovators from across the globe" and urging Mr Trump to tour construction of a planned high-speed rail line. Mr Brown responded to the President's broadside on Twitter.

Jerry Brown

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@JerryBrownGov

👋 Thanks for the shout-out, @realDonaldTrump. But bridges are still better than walls. And California remains the 6th largest economy in the world and the most prosperous state in America. #Facts

"I think Governor Brown's done a very poor job running California", Mr Trump said.

"They're the best friend of the criminal," Mr Trump said of Mr Brown. "That's what exactly is happening. The criminals take refuge in these sanctuary cities and it's very dangerous for our police and enforcement folks."

Mr Trump tweeted about California's immigration policies as he flew to the state aboard Air Force One.

California's sanctuary policies are illegal and unconstitutional and put the safety and security of our entire nation at risk. Thousands of dangerous & violent criminal aliens are released as a result of sanctuary policies, set free to prey on innocent Americans. THIS MUST STOP! he wrote.

Demonstrators from both ends of the political spectrum massed in anticipation of Mr Trump's visit. Some of them heralded the President's visit, unfurling American flags and lofting signs with phrases like "DEPORT ALL ILLEGALS".

Others denounced the President and called his visit unwanted, underscoring Democrat-dominated California's role as a hub of opposition to Mr Trump. Demonstrations were held at the San Ysidro port of entry in San Diego where protesters chanted, "No ban! No wall!". Protests were also held on the Mexican side, in Tijuana.

At a rally that featured faith and labour leaders, Democratic Assemblywoman Lorena Gonzalez Fletcher called the proposed wall "a symbol of hatred and racism and xenophobia". Rep Juan Vargas, a San Diego Democrat, drew cheers as he noted he had repeatedly voted to impeach Mr Trump. "I'll vote, when we have the majority, to impeach him" Mr Vargas said.