

WE WONT DESIGN YOUR WALL

A DAY OF ACTION BY ARCHITECTS AND ENGINEERS

MARCH 10th, 2017 - 4pm EST

www.architecture-lobby.org/project/notourwall

The Architecture Lobby, an organization of architectural workers, calls for a national day of action in opposition to the building of the southwestern border wall proposed by the Trump administration and the Department of Homeland Security. While there are innumerable reasons to stand against the immigration policies of the current administration and this project specifically, this call is motivated by the belief that the fields of architecture, and engineering are fundamentally rooted in a goal to improve our societies by producing structures that render them more just, more equitable, and more beautiful. The southwestern border wall stands in clear and direct opposition to this goal.

By participating in this day of action, architects and engineers will make clear not only to the current and future administrations, but also to themselves and each other, that their agency will not be exploited in the service of xenophobia, discrimination and racism.

The Request for Proposals

These concerns have taken on a renewed urgency. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) recently released a Request for Proposals (RFP) for southwestern border wall (SBW) prototypes to begin the bidding phase of new border wall construction. The proposal is lightning-fast, with the first round of submissions due on March 10th followed by a full proposal from those shortlisted due on March 24th. A design team for the SBW will be selected by mid-April. The DHS site has made public a list of interested vendors that might be good targets for organizing, although we believe most of them to be subcontractors looking to get work after the project has been awarded, and that the largest companies pursuing the project have not listed themselves.

A Time to Act

We are calling for a 45 minute united action for architects and engineers to leave their desks at 4pm EST and walk out to demonstrate our power to withhold our individual agency.

The goal of this Day of Action is to encourage a grassroots resistance to this project from and within architecture and engineering companies across the country, coinciding with the closure of the first round of RFPs for the DHS SBW. Additionally we have listed some suggestions and tips on a second page for possible further actions.

Take the fight to who you can, where you can, how you can.

Share a picture of your empty desks and protest using the hashtag #NotOurWall

It Doesn't Stop There

After the Day of Action, we want to hear back. What were the successes, failures, and potential paths forward for us from here? Send reports, photos, statements of support and boycott as a firm or as an individual, and summaries to notourwall@architecture-lobby.org. Note if you would like to anonymize your information or altogether refrain from posting it publicly. We'll publicize the information on our website. This the first of many steps toward building the solidarity that will make it possible to organize actions against whichever companies make the shortlist after the 10th and are awarded the bid in April.

ADD MORE ACTION TO THE DAY OF ACTION AGAINST THE WALL

In addition to walking out you might consider adding to the day of action in the following ways:

If you work in an office that is pursuing the SBW, organize a large-scale walkout.

Tips: This type concerted action is not protected under the National Labor Relations Act, but a short walkout at the end of the workday mitigates the risk of repercussion significantly. Those who are especially vulnerable or concerned can even use vacation time. At this stage, the message to employers is one of serious discontent and the possibility of future disruptions. To organize effectively, hold a planning meeting with interested employees and consider other actions if a significant portion of the workplace can't be organized to walkout. When threatening to withhold labor, strength lies in numbers.

If you work in an office pursuing the SBW, and a walkout isn't tenable, organize a meeting with upper management.

Tips: Of utmost importance in this kind of meeting is presenting a united front. To organize effectively, hold a planning meeting with interested employees and come up with a list of three main concerns surrounding the issue. Select one or two people who can most clearly communicate concerns to do the bulk of the speaking during the meeting. Depending on the position of upper management, it might be possible to elucidate demands or threaten a walkout in the future during this type of meeting.

If your office is against the SBW, encourage them to publicly pledge that they will not work on this project or pursue any contracts from the DHS.

If your office is against the SBW, encourage them to publicly announce a boycott of the firms, contractors, and subcontractors selected for the project.

Call your Senator and Congressman

Tips: Emphasize that you are a constituent concerned about the SBW and an architect or engineer. Some Republican senators have even expressed concern over the cost of the project – emphasize that a design-bid delivery method limits checks and balances in the design and construction process. This can reduce competitiveness in subcontractor selection, thereby inflating concerns of cost overruns and ensuring that this is a waste of money on an unethical project. If funds for the project are never appropriated, it will not go forward. Go to house.gov to find your representative and their contact information.

Contact local politicians and encourage them to boycott and speak against winning firms.

Tips: Many politicians stand to gain support from constituents by speaking out in this way. When you call, make it clear to them that this is the case.

Use the day of action to prepare a group of coworkers, allies, and friends for picketing and protesting at the offices and worksites of the office awarded the contract.

Tips: Again, strength lies in numbers. If you decide to organize an action of this sort, contact as many people in your network as you can, and get them all to do the same, to ensure that your demonstration is powerful, loud, and clear.

Work with your coworkers, allies, and friends to come up with another action!

Tips: Effective actions spring from your agency and power, be it as a worker, citizen, architect, engineer, or business owner. Statements of discontent that go into the void are not productive. If you write in opposition always be sure to have an "ask" of someone and collectively organize to prepare follow-through actions to hold people accountable. Likewise, bear in mind that the federal bids process is robust and in no way like an open design competition, so flooding the government with tongue in-cheek, blank, or disingenuous proposals is likely an exercise in futility and ignores the very real effects that this project will have on people's lives.