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## SENIOR REPUBLICANS PUSH TECHNOLOGY AS PART OF BORDER SOLUTION

*Sen. John Cornyn's bill, along with another House bill, signals that senior Republicans see a physical barrier as only part of the way to secure the border*

By Laura Meckler  
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WASHINGTON – Offering an alternative to President Donald Trump's vision for a border wall, a top Senate Republican is introducing legislation Thursday that urges the administration to use technology as well as physical barriers to better guard the southwest border.

The bill from Sen. John Cornyn of Texas, the No. 2 Republican in the Senate, comes as Congress considers whether to provide funding for Mr. Trump's wall. Last week, the House passed budgetary legislation providing \$1.6 billion for construction in 2018, although the provision faces opposition in the Senate from Democrats and some Republicans.

Mr. Cornyn's bill would face similar obstacles, but its mix of border security measures could garner broader support and perhaps shift debate away from Mr. Trump's single-minded focus on a wall.

Mr. Cornyn has long backed additional border security spending, but he is also one of several border-state Republicans who have been critical of the notion of an end-to-end border barrier. The border wall was one of Mr. Trump's signature campaign themes, although the [president last month tempered his proposal](#).

The Cornyn legislation would require a "multilayered tactical infrastructure" across the southern border, which could include a wall, fencing, technology or levees along the Rio Grande, according to a GOP congressional aide familiar with the legislation.

The provisions are similar to those put forward last week by Rep. Michael McCaul (R., Texas), the chairman of the House Homeland Security Committee.

Together, the moves are a signal from two senior Texas Republicans that they see a physical barrier as only part of the way to secure the border, aides said. The bills leave decisions about what approaches to employ to the secretary of Homeland Security.

"We must have physical barriers – including a wall where necessary and fencing when appropriate, the right technology and more personnel in place," Mr. McCaul said last week in introducing his bill.

The Cornyn bill would need to clear a 60-vote threshold to win Senate approval, and with only 52 Republican votes, that seems unlikely. The bill also includes tough interior enforcement measures that will likely garner support from conservatives and generate further opposition from Democrats.

One measure would change a 2008 federal law that requires cases involving children traveling alone from countries other than Mexico and Canada be heard in immigration court and that the children be placed with relatives or in other protective arrangements pending resolution.

The Cornyn bill would expedite those hearings and prohibit children from joining families until the cases are heard. Those without legitimate claims to stay in the U.S. would be swiftly deported, the congressional aide said.

Another provision would deny federal grants to so-called sanctuary cities, jurisdictions that don't honor requests by immigration officers to detain suspected illegal immigrants in jail.

The Cornyn bill is being co-sponsored by Republican Sens. John Barrasso of Wyoming, Ron Johnson of Wisconsin and Thom Tillis of North Carolina. They plan to announce it a news conference Thursday.

The Trump administration's vision for a border wall remains unclear. Neither the president nor his aides have laid out a plan or a cost estimate for the entire project. Mexico has refused to pay for it, as Mr. Trump has insisted it would.

Mr. Trump said last month that, contrary to his campaign promises, a wall won't have to cover the entire, 2,000-mile border with Mexico. He pointed to places where there are natural barriers that keep people from crossing illicitly.

"You'll need anywhere from 700 to 900 miles," he said, but it wasn't clear whether that estimate included the 654 miles of border that already have some sort of fencing on it.