

VERONICA ESCOBAR
16TH DISTRICT, TEXAS



WASHINGTON OFFICE:
1505 LONGWORTH HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
(202) 225-4831

HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON MILITARY PERSONNEL
SUBCOMMITTEE ON READINESS

HOUSE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE CONSTITUTION,
CIVIL RIGHTS AND CIVIL LIBERTIES
SUBCOMMITTEE ON IMMIGRATION
AND CITIZENSHIP

EL PASO OFFICE:
221 N. KANSAS STREET, SUITE 1500
EL PASO, TX 79901
(915) 541-1400

<http://escobar.house.gov>

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

February 7, 2019

The President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, Northwest
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President,

At your State of the Union address, you falsely claimed that El Paso, Texas “used to have extremely high rates of violent crime — one of the highest in the entire country,” and said we were once one of the country’s “most dangerous cities.” Further, while you acknowledge that El Paso is one of the safest communities in the country, you falsely claim that this happened only after a wall was built (2008-2009). This is erroneous, the fact is that from 1993 to 2007, the violent crime rate in El Paso dropped 62 percent, and from 2005-2007, El Paso consistently held the third lowest violent crime rate among 35 U.S. cities with a population over 500,000.

The FBI’s Uniform Crime Reporting Program, which I have attached, discounts your claims. I have also attached newspaper articles that document this further. El Paso has never been one of the most “dangerous cities” in the country, and our safety and security has long been a point of pride. These distortions about our vibrant community are harmful to our reputation and degrade our spirit.

Yesterday, we learned that you intend to visit El Paso next week. I urge you to treat this visit as your opportunity not only to correct the record and ensure that the misinformation you stated on the national stage is retracted, but also an opportunity to apologize to El Pasoans for the disparagement of our community.

While you are visiting the safe and vibrant border community I call home and have the honor to represent in Congress, I invite you to tour the community and hear from local stakeholders.

- First, you must visit the location where Felipe Alonzo Gomez was apprehended. As you know, Felipe, the young boy who fled Central America with his father and died in U.S. custody, was apprehended in the El Paso sector where fencing already exists. If you visit that part of the wall, you will see that a wall does not stop asylum seekers. In fact, the wall is several feet away from the actual U.S./Mexico boundary line and when asylum-seekers turn themselves into Border Patrol agents, they are already on U.S. soil. Your proposed wall will not change that and they have a right to claim asylum once on U.S. soil.

- Next, I suggest you visit our ports of entry. The visit would demonstrate how vital they are to the American economy and show you that investments in infrastructure and modern technology, not a wall, will allow Customs agents to do their jobs swiftly and with more accuracy. I am happy to help arrange a sit down with local business and trade groups from El Paso to brief you on the infrastructure needs of our border community and the ports of entry. They will tell you that your proposed \$5.7 billion dollars for a down payment on a wall would better be spent improving our ports of entry. As a former businessman, I would hope you could appreciate that investment in infrastructure leads to better commerce.
- In addition to your visits with federal law enforcement, you should meet with human rights and legal advocates who work with these same migrant populations. A visit to our local non-profit Annunciation House would allow you to see the collaboration that exists between the federal government and our NGOs on the ground who provide respite to families on their way to meet sponsors. While there, you should speak with asylum seekers who have traveled thousands of miles fleeing violence and poverty in search of refuge, only to be denied lawful entry at our ports. Hearing their stories will allow you to see the human toll your harmful policies and practices have on families.
- Finally, I recommend you visit the El Paso Processing Center where at least 9 detainees who have been on a hunger strike have had a tube forced down their nose to be force-fed in what many of us believe is tantamount to torture.

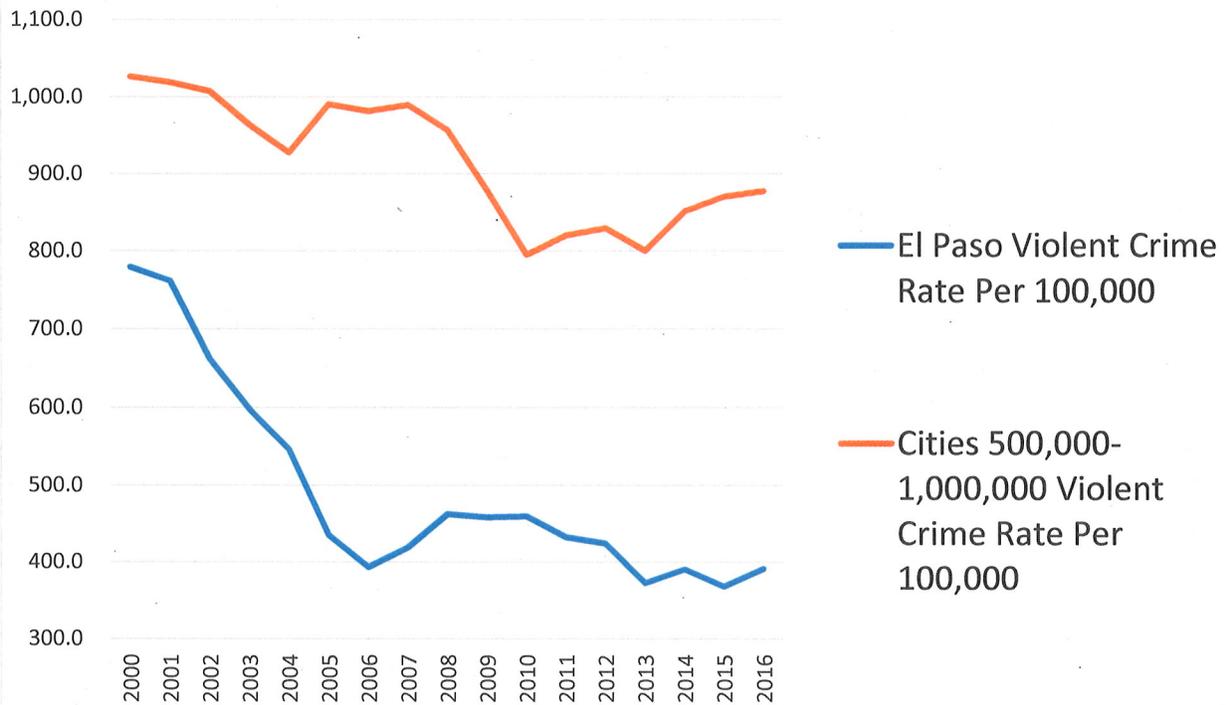
If you arrive in El Paso early enough, my office stands ready to facilitate any or all of these visits. The people of El Paso stand ready to provide the information necessary for you to get the facts, understand the truth, and correct the record.

Sincerely,



Veronica Escobar
Member of Congress

El Paso's Violent Crime Rate Compared to Cities 500,000 to 1,000,000



Wall completed in 2008

Source: FBI Uniform Crime Reporting Data

El Paso Times
May 8, 2001

Study ranks El Paso 3rd-safest large city

A private research and publishing company ranked El Paso the third-safest city with a population of more than 500,000 for 2000.

El Paso ranked 95th-safest altogether, but third-safest after Honolulu and San Jose, Calif., among cities with populations of a half million or more.

Morgan Quitno of Lawrence, Kan., studied the crime rate of 322 cities that reported murder, rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary and auto-theft statistics to the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

The safest city overall was Amherst, N.Y., population 110,918, Morgan Quitno found, and the most dangerous city was Detroit, population 975,020.

For more information:
www.morganquitno.com

— Louie Gilot

Safest cities

- ▶ 1. San Jose, Calif.
 - ▶ 2. El Paso.
 - ▶ 3. Honolulu.
 - ▶ 4. Austin.
- Most dangerous cities:**
- ▶ 1. Detroit.
 - ▶ 2. Washington, D.C.
 - ▶ 3. Baltimore.
 - ▶ 4. Memphis, Tenn.

El Paso named nation's 2nd-safest large city

By Daniel Borunda

El Paso Times

Only one major city is safer than El Paso, according to national rankings announced Wednesday.

El Paso surpassed Honolulu to become the second-safest city in the United States in the 10th annual safest-city rankings by Morgan Quitno Press, a Kansas research and publishing firm.

San Jose, Calif., kept its No. 1 ranking among 51 cities with populations of 500,000 or more.

"It's not only the Police Department. We have to (also) thank the citizens of El Paso that have become involved in community policing," Mayor Joe Wardy said.

The Morgan Quitno rankings are based on six categories — murder, rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary and auto

theft.

Police said reported crime in El Paso dropped 12.4 percent in 2002. El Paso had been ranked the third-safest city since 1997.

Wardy said the ranking should be used to promote El Paso.

"There are many cities that don't want to bring up their safety rating," Wardy said. "We need to use it to our advantage."

For Carlos Avila, 46, of the Sr-

gundo Barrio, the ranking reflected the peace of mind he has in his own neighborhood. "A lot of family members had said that it was a tough neighborhood, but it's tranquil," he said.

Among 380 cities with populations of 75,000 or more, Ambrose, N.Y., was named the safest.

Daniel Borunda can be reached at dborunda@elpasotimes.com. 757-4311.
El Paso Times
www.elpasotimes.com