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Rep. Lucille Roybal-Allard (D-Calif.) voiced objections to funneling disaster aid money to immigration enforcement. | Chip Somodevilla/Getty Images

IMMIGRATION**DHS to siphon \$155M in disaster aid to bolster immigration enforcement**

By **CAITLIN EMMA** | 08/27/2019 04:13 PM EDT | Updated 08/27/2019 05:41 PM EDT

The Trump administration plans to divert \$271 million from various Department of Homeland Security accounts to beef up funding for Immigration and Customs Enforcement, including \$155 million in federal disaster aid.

In a recent letter to acting Homeland Security Secretary Kevin McAleenan, Rep. Lucille Roybal-Allard (D-Calif.) said the administration hasn't provided an adequate justification for funneling money from FEMA's disaster fund to an account that supports facilities for immigration court proceedings.

The administration also plans to shift \$116 million to pay for more detention beds, Sen. Jon Tester of Montana said in a similar letter.

Tester, the ranking Democrat on the Senate subcommittee that funds DHS, said the administration plans to pull funds from the Coast Guard, TSA and Customs and Border Protection to expand detention capacity, potentially hampering "passenger and cargo inspections at the border during peak travel times," in addition to causing other problems.

Roybal-Allard, who chairs the House Homeland Security spending panel, said the move would come "despite a significant reduction in single adults crossing the border since early June."

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"It is of great concern that during the course of this administration, there has been a growing disconnect between the will of Congress, as represented by ICE funding levels in enacted appropriations bills signed by the president, and the department's immigration enforcement proceedings, which often lack justification," she wrote.

The letters come after the Trump administration notified Congress earlier this month that it intends to pour more money into ICE by shifting funds out of other Department of Homeland Security accounts.

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DHS confirmed the plan to reshuffle \$271 million in a statement.

“Given the rise of single adults crossing the border, ICE has already had to increase the number of detention beds above what Congress funded,” the agency said. “Without additional funding for single adult detention beds and transportation from the U.S. Border Patrol to ICE detention facilities, ICE will not be able to support the influx of migrants from U.S. Customs and Border Protection apprehensions.”

While the administration doesn’t require congressional approval to shift the funds, Roybal-Allard urged DHS to work with the House Appropriations Committee “to restore the partnership we once had in support of the Department’s many important missions.”

The administration made a similar move last year when it redirected \$200 million from various DHS accounts into ICE by pulling from the Coast Guard, TSA aviation security and more. Nearly \$10 million was diverted from FEMA at the start of hurricane season, sparking congressional backlash.

The federal government has already spent hundreds of billions of dollars in recent years to help states and territories recover from record-breaking storms. Puerto Rico declared a

state emergency on Tuesday, with Tropical Storm Dorian threatening to reach hurricane strength.

Ted Hesson contributed to this report.

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