



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CONTACT: Sito Negron

915.351-3500 (o) / 915.227.0360 (m)

FINAL TALLY on "Gifts for Good" Drive

El Paso - The Office of Texas State Sen. José Rodríguez has collected and processed 2,921 soccer balls for children detained in the tent camp at Tornillo, Texas.

The drive officially launched Dec. 6th, when the Senator's Office issued a press release that started circulating on Twitter and was picked up by media across the country. It began because of conversations between the camp operator, BCSF, and the Senator's Office about ways people can show support for the detained children. People from the El Paso and Trans-Pecos communities in SD 29, and for that matter, from across the country, asked for an opportunity to send gifts or cards, or provide educational or social services. Until the soccer ball drive, the children had not been allowed visitors, gifts of any kind, or even hugs.

In addition to the soccer balls, the Senator's Office was given permission to collect handmade holiday cards, an effort that was less publicized because of the prescriptive nature of the messages and the logistical challenge of checking each card to ensure it complied. While the exact number of cards is still being calculated, **the Senator's Office has collected more than 4,000 cards made by students from across El Paso County. The call also inspired students from schools across Texas and beyond to New Jersey, New York, Michigan, California, and Massachusetts.**

The Tornillo facility initially held less than 400 children; at last census, the facility now holds approximately 2,800 unaccompanied minors. Each child will be able to receive a ball, especially given the recent policy change that should result in children uniting with the sponsors more quickly, and reducing what has been a steady growth of the size of the camp.

"I'm grateful for the overwhelming support that we received. It reflects the spirit and generosity of our border community and our country," said Rodríguez. "We all know children should not be detained in tent facilities where they're separated from family and friends and without appropriate educational and mental health services. I hope these gifts give them a little something to smile about during the holidays and let them know they are not alone."

The Senator's Office and other volunteers will distribute the soccer balls and holiday cards to the children on Christmas Day.

José Rodríguez represents Texas Senate District 29, which includes the counties of El Paso, Hudspeth, Culberson, Jeff Davis, and Presidio. He represents both urban and rural constituencies, and more than 350 miles of the Texas-Mexico border. Senator Rodríguez currently serves as the Chairman of the Senate Democratic Caucus, and is a member of the Senate Committees on Natural Resources and Economic Development; Transportation; Veteran Affairs and Military Installations; and Agriculture, Water, and Rural Affairs (Vice Chairman).