

Go Go GoFund.gov!

Brian Kolfage supported US president Donald Trump's proposal for a wall on the the US-Mexico border. He was frustrated that Congress still refused to fund the wall (as I write this, we're in the early hours of "government shutdown" theatrics over that very argument).

Unlike most Americans, Kolfage did something above and beyond voting and complaining to assuage his dissatisfaction: He started a campaign to raise \$1 billion in voluntary funding for the wall, using "crowdfunding" site GoFundMe. As of December 23, the campaign had raised more than \$16 million.

Personally, I consider the border wall one of the dumbest and most evil ideas since disco, but I applaud Kolfage's initiative. I think he's on the right track when it comes to funding government generally.

I see two big problems with this particular campaign.

One problem is technical: Apart from a few discrete areas like gifts to pay down the national debt, the executive branch can only spend money appropriated by Congress for specific purposes. A group of us can't just decide we want a war with Pitcairn Island, write the president a check, and expect him send forth a carrier strike group or launch some Tomahawks. Or at least it's not supposed to work that way (it does for Raytheon and Lockheed Martin).

A second problem is moral: Much of the land on which the border wall would be built is owned by people (that is, it's not "government property"). That land would have to be bought, and some owners don't want to sell. Which means it would have to be stolen through the process of "eminent domain." On that end, this effort is like crowdfunding a bank robbery spree.

But I still like the general principle. It reminds me of an old antiwar saying along the lines of how beautiful it would be if the Air Force had to hold a bake sale every time it wanted to buy a new bomber.

If instead of collecting taxes, Congress simply approved project goals and appropriated "as much money as is voluntarily donated toward" those goals, it would constitute a giant step toward a free society.

Instead of an Internal Revenue Service, the federal government could contract with GoFundMe to setup and operate GoFund.gov.

It will never happen because too many people are too intent on taking other people's money for their pet projects. But it's a beautiful dream, isn't it?