



January 10, 2025

Senator Ron Paul  
Chairman  
U.S. Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs  
340 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Paul and Members of the Committee,

We are the [National Guard Working Group](#), a coalition of former National Guard Bureau chiefs, Adjutant Generals, and other retired civilian defense and military leaders. Our [mission](#) is to ensure that the National Guard is adequately prepared for missions, maintains its readiness for military operations, and honors the public's trust.

We write to share considerations related to the National Guard that we believe are relevant to the nomination of Governor Kristi Noem to be Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security.

While Governor Noem would not be in the chain of command for the National Guard as Secretary of Homeland Security, she will be well-positioned to answer questions about her plans to request the Guard's assistance to ongoing and future immigration enforcement missions. She also has experience with the National Guard as commander-in-chief of the South Dakota National Guard.

During the Biden, Trump, and Obama administrations, National Guard deployments for immigration-related missions, including at the U.S.-Mexico border, increased. These operations often extended beyond the Guard's traditional roles in disaster response, homeland defense, and civil authority support. During these missions, the Guard has provided surveillance, aerial and infrastructure support, and administrative assistance, enabling Customs and Border Protection to focus on law enforcement. While these missions were lawful and intended to address complex challenges, they have raised concerns about the long-term effects on the Guard's readiness, morale, and public trust.

In June 2021, Governor Noem accepted a private donation to fund a National Guard deployment to the southern border. This decision blurred the line between public service and private interests, raising concerns about transparency and the potential erosion of the Guard's credibility. Using private funds for a mission with national political implications sets a troubling precedent, risking future misuse of deployment authority and undermining the Guard's nonpartisan role. It is critical that the Guard remains shielded from political debates and operates in a manner that preserves its integrity, morale, and readiness.

As the Senate considers the future of the Department of Homeland Security, we respectfully urge the Committee to seek clear assurances that she will uphold the National Guard's nonpartisan and mission-focused principles when weighing whether to seek National Guard support for the Department of Homeland Security's operations. Such commitments are essential to maintaining the traditions and responsibilities of this vital institution.

As retired defense and military leaders, we approach this issue with the utmost concern for the men and women who serve our nation and the constitutional values we have sworn to defend. Thank you for your thoughtful consideration and your commitment to preserving the strength and integrity of the National Guard.

Signed,

**Co-chairs, National Guard Working Group**

General Joseph Lengyel (Ret.), 28th Chief of the National Guard Bureau

General Craig McKinley (Ret.), 26th Chief of the National Guard Bureau

Admiral Thad Allen (Ret.), 23rd Commandant of the Coast Guard

Major General Daryl Bohac (Ret.), Former Adjutant General for the Nebraska National Guard

Secretary Sean O'Keefe, 69th Secretary of the Navy

Major General Timothy Orr, 27th Adjutant General of the Iowa National Guard

Brigadier General Allyson Solomon (Ret.), Former Assistant Adjutant General for the Maryland Air National Guard

Dr. Paul Stockton, Former Assistant Secretary of Defense for Homeland Defense and Americas' Security Affairs

Count Every Hero is a nonpartisan initiative of retired admirals and generals and former service secretaries of the U.S. Armed Forces who have served under both Democratic and Republican administrations. Count Every Hero has three primary focus areas: promoting the understanding of the importance of a strong democracy to our national security; promoting civic literacy and civic participation; and protecting the voting rights of our active-duty servicemembers, our veterans, and their families.