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SENATOR KEVIN DE LEÓN

PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE EMERITUS

April 5, 2018

The Honorable Edmund G. Brown Jr.
Governor of California
State Capitol, Suite 1173
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Governor Brown:

I am deeply troubled by the Trump Administration's plan to militarize the United States-Mexico border and write to urge you to reject requests to deploy the California National Guard to assist in an ill-defined mission to address a nonexistent threat.

All evidence indicates that this is a manufactured crisis. We are not experiencing an inordinate influx of immigrants, as officials in the Trump Administration have claimed, citing a caravan of immigrants coming from Central America. In actuality, the caravan is one of many annual religious processions called the Viacrucis intended to draw attention to the plight of immigrants. Only a fraction of those participating in the caravan intend to reach the United States-Mexico border, and in those instances, it is to submit themselves to immigration officials and ask for asylum to escape the life-threatening conditions in their native countries. That the Trump Administration points to this group of asylum-seekers as evidence of a border crisis denotes the callous indifference with which it treats immigrants turning to the United States for protection, as exhibited further by new policies to indefinitely detain pregnant immigrant women.

The Trump Administration's memorandum, "Securing the Southern Border of the United States," states that the "anticipated rapid rise in illegal crossings as we head into the spring and summer months threatens to overwhelm our Nation's law enforcement capacity." What the memorandum fails to mention is that there is an annual increase in border crossing during the spring and early summer because of weather conditions and seasonal work opportunities for immigrants. It is a predictable temporary uptick that U.S. Customs and Border Patrol manage every year without the need for military support. The reality is that border crossings have plummeted in the last decade and are at the lowest level since 1971. Puzzlingly, despite claims of crisis at the border, Mr. Trump has himself admitted publicly that border crossings are at a 46-year low, which raises questions about the necessity to deploy the National Guard to the border at this time.

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I am also concerned that this hastily contrived proposal to militarize the border will unnecessarily spark tensions with our southern ally, Mexico. Already Mr. Trump's proposal, along with recent tweets, has become a prominent issue in the current presidential election in Mexico with the leading candidates warning that they will consider the deployment of troops to the border a hostile act. Following a long string of insults directed at Mexico and its residents, this proposal seriously jeopardizes the cooperation we rely upon from Mexico for drug interdiction and bolstering border security.

In addition to unnecessarily inflaming tensions with Mexico, this "plan" will undoubtedly carry significant costs to taxpayers if actually implemented. Past use of the National Guard for border enforcement has proven costly and inefficient. Operations under President Bush and President Obama had a combined cost of more than \$1.3 billion. That is taxpayer money that can be much better spent improving education, expanding access to healthcare, or raising the wages of our underpaid military service members.

The Trump Administration's disingenuous request comes amid efforts to deport a veteran who was honorably discharged after being caught in an immigration dragnet involving a fake university set up by the Department of Homeland Security despite promises by Defense Secretary Mattis that noncitizen troops and veterans would not be deported. This Administration has exhibited a pattern of deceit that should cause pause when considering any sort of collaboration on immigration enforcement efforts.

I am confident that you will thoughtfully weigh the interests of Californians as you evaluate this request from the federal government. I trust that you will recognize that the Trump Administration's proposal is ill-conceived, unnecessary and counterproductive. Sadly, it seems its true intent is not to protect us, but to further divide us.

Sincerely,



Kevin de León
President pro Tem Emeritus
California State Senate