**For Release Wednesday, August 4, 2021**

**Capitol View
Commentary by J.L. Schmidt**

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**Where Have All the Nebraska State Troopers Gone?**

 A few weeks ago, I made my first post-pandemic road trip across Nebraska driving from Lincoln to Scottsbluff and then back to Lincoln a couple days later. It was great to see the crops growing, the traffic whizzing by and even the billboards beckoning me to stop and see what I had been missing all these months.

About that traffic whizzing by, have you ever asked yourself out loud “where’s a cop when you need one?’ It dawned on me; I had seen few, if any Nebraska State Troopers. They weren’t in their usual spots in the medians or the on-ramps. When you travel statewide like I did for years, you tend to remember those spots.

So, where were the Troopers? Gone to Texas, 25 of them to help protect the border with Mexico in what has been variously described as a mutual aid request or an overblown case of political grandstanding.

When he announced the deployment, Governor Pete Ricketts said, “Nebraska is stepping up to help Texas respond to the ongoing crisis on their border with Mexico. The disastrous policies of the Biden-Harris Administration created an immigration crisis on the border. While the federal government has fallen short in its response, Nebraska is happy to step up to provide assistance to Texas as they work to protect their communities and keep people safe.”
 That sounds like political posturing. But Ricketts’ spokesman Taylor Gage said the decision to send troopers to Texas was answering another state’s request for assistance. “We were asked by a fellow State for help, and we want to help,” he said. “This is similar to requests for assistance that we’ve received in Minnesota around the George Floyd verdict and in North Dakota during pipeline protests.”

So, the troopers went to Del Rio, Texas, while the Patrol said it wouldn’t impact operations at home. Spokesman Cody Thomas said the Patrol has adequate staffing for the

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deployment and no overtime was planned to cover the shifts of those who had gone to Texas.

If things died down on the home front during the deployment, they heated up again when the operation was completed, and it was learned that the cost to send the Nebraska Patrol Troopers to Texas was $500,000. That’s half a million dollars folks, and no one was quite sure who was going to pay for it.

After some finger pointing that Democrats in the Texas Legislature were going to hold up any reimbursement, the Nebraska State Patrol said it had the funds available to cover the cost. Those are taxpayer funds and you and I are footing the bill.

State Patrol Capt. Jason Scott, who led the Nebraska state troopers in Texas, joined State Patrol Superintendent Col. John Bolduc and Ricketts at a news conference to describe a border that is being breached by an influx of illegal immigrants with resulting drug and human trafficking issues, including sex offenses against minors and child exploitation. They said many of the people fleeing across the border into Texas are in desperate need of water, food and shelter.
 According to Bolduc, the deployed troopers assisted with 500 traffic stops and 25 commercial vehicle inspections, which led to several arrests. Meanwhile, in Nebraska, the state patrol made 500 fewer traffic stops during the time the troopers were gone.

As the dust settles, I must agree with the editorial boards of the Lincoln and Omaha newspapers that have decried the whole thing saying spending Nebraska’s money for a Texas project with no legislative approval is an outrage in itself. Equally as disturbing, in using the officers to support a headline-grabbing stunt by Texas Gov. Greg Abbott, Ricketts has politicized the patrol in an overreach of his authority.
 Yes friends, we call that a “waste of taxpayers’ money.”
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*J. L. Schmidt has been covering Nebraska government and politics since 1979. He has been a registered Independent for more than 20 years.*