**For Release Wednesday, August 16, 2023**

**Capitol View**

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**First the State Patrol, Now Some Nebraska National Guard Members Have Gone to Texas**

In May, 10 Nebraska State Patrol troopers went to Texas for two weeks to help with drone surveillance of the border with Mexico. Recently, 60 Nebraska National Guard members went to Texas for a month for a similar assignment.

Is this a Nebraska problem? Or is this part of the national Republican Party agenda to allow Republican governors to take shots at the policies of President Joe Biden and blame Texas border woes on his administration.

What's in it for Nebraska? Certainly not money. The trooper deployment was the third for Nebraska and has already cost an estimated $600,000 or more from the patrol budget. The Guard will apparently get some federal funds funneled through the Texas Emergency Management agency. But it’s doubtful that money will cover a lot of incidental costs.

Again, I ask, what's in it for Nebraska? Governor Jim Pillen said the Guard would be aiding Texas authorities in their efforts to counter immigration and drug trafficking there. They are being sent to the border to provide "additional observation and reporting near the border" to assist Texas law enforcement involved in "Operation Lone Star," Pillen's office said.

Texas Gov. Greg Abbott launched the operation in March 2021 to deploy resources from the Texas Department of Public Safety and the Texas National Guard to the border to secure the area. The operation has been ongoing since.

“This mission is critical to the security of Nebraska as well as other states,” Pillen said in a news release.

“We need to maintain the safety of our citizenry and stem the ongoing influx of illegal drugs, weapons and criminals into our borders.”

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Is that Nebraska’s job? Last time I checked, we are responsible for enforcing laws within the borders of this state. Is there evidence that the drug problem in Nebraska has increased or violent crime has spiked because of an influx of people coming across the border from Mexico illegally?

Pillen's team noted Nebraska's participation in the operation comes at the request of emergency management officials in Texas. Federal funds "directed through the Nebraska National Guard would cover costs associated with this deployment," the governor's office said.

Where does that federal money come from? Wait for it … you and me? So, who’s paying for this? Where does the State Patrol budget come from? All together now, you and me!

In announcing the Guard deployment, Pillen's team pointed to President Joe Biden's "ineffective" border policies as the impetus for Nebraska's presence at the border. The Governor said failing to address the situation at the border "only opens the door to threats that we can’t fully recognize yet.”

Help me out here Governor. What threats? Drugs, weapons and criminals have been identified as threats. What am I missing? Using statistics from Governor Abbott's office, Pillen's team said authorities working on Operation Lone Star have apprehended nearly 400,000 illegal immigrants, made 31,800 criminal arrests resulting in 29,300 felony charges, and seized 422 million doses of fentanyl.

Were those immigrants headed to Nebraska? How about the drugs? Can we prove it? Is there a solution that would specifically benefit the safety and well being of Nebraskans? Perhaps our money would be better spent on that.

"Our nation has a serious and unchecked threat on its hands following President Biden's decision to end Title 42," said **Governor Pillen.** "Nebraska is committed to using every tool in its toolbox to help stop the influx of illegal immigration at our southern border. Illegal immigration hurts our nation's security, undermines the rule of law, and threatens the wellbeing of our state."

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Nice boilerplate language that makes good sound bites. But I want details. Asking again, how is this Nebraska’s problem?

On May 12, 2023, Gov. Abbott renewed the disaster declaration he issued initially in May of 2021 noting that the “surge of individuals unlawfully crossing the Texas-Mexico border posed an ongoing and imminent threat of disaster for a number of Texas counties and for all state agencies affected by this disaster…”

Subsequently, he sent a letter to fellow governors requesting support through the emergency management network. In addition to Nebraska, Idaho and Florida have also responded, by announcing similar deployment of personnel.

Sorry friends, I just don’t get it. This sounds more political than helpful. Sadly, we should not be surprised.

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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.*