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Truman Project Atlanta Chapter Calls on Governor Nathan Deal to Continue to Not Commit Georgia National Guard Involvement at the Southern Border

Atlanta, GA — Today, the Truman National Security Project's Atlanta Chapter called on Governor Nathan Deal to continue to not commit involvement of Georgia National Guard troops on the southern border of the United States in response to the Trump Administration's increasingly draconian immigration policies.

State Representative Brenda Lopez, an immigration attorney who is also a Political Partner with Truman, said:

"As a practicing immigration attorney, I have seen firsthand the shift in policies have unnecessarily created more chaos and despair in the immigration system. It is important to note that while it is within Governor Deal's power to mobilize our women and men to the U.S. southern border, this mobilization should not be used in this manufactured crisis created by Trump."

"Furthermore, the draconian immigration measures under the administration are against our U.S. moral leadership. The mobilization of the Georgia National Guard should contribute to the real work of safeguarding our national security. The 'zero-tolerance' policy and removal of prosecutorial discretion established by Trump actual works against our national security by the ill utilization of our government resources and personnel. Border security should focus on combating individuals trafficking drugs and humans or other real safety threats and not individuals seeking asylum and refuge from violence. In fact, border crossings have been and are now at an all-time low."

"Particularly, we should not support policies of criminalizing families as they flee harm and seek U.S. humanity and compassion, and in the process of criminalization families are separated and children incarcerated. There is no law requiring border officials to force family separation; this has been the sole policy established by Trump. Moreover, his executive order purportedly ending separations has too many loopholes, does not address reunification of children already separated, and ensures that children (with their families) will now be incarcerated for an undetermined time."

"Congress and the administration have failed to work together to fix our broken system and pass real comprehensive immigration reform with a focus on both security and pathway to legalization in a manner that upholds the values of this great country. Congress and the president need to work to pass a clean immigration bill and not be fiscally irresponsible by insisting on funding for walls and draconian enforcement measures that do not make the U.S. safer."

"Therefore, we urge Governor Deal to continue to not commit the Georgia National Guard to any involvement at the border."

Truman is a nationwide membership of diverse leaders inspired to serve in the aftermath of 9/11 and committed to shaping and advocating for tough, smart national security solutions. The full text of the open letter sent to Governor Deal is below.

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26 June 2018

The Honorable Nathan Deal
Office of the Governor
206 Washington Street
111 State Capitol
Atlanta, Georgia 30334

Dear Governor Deal,

As members of the Truman National Security Project's Georgia Chapter—including national security policy experts, political professionals, military veterans, and civilians who have served on the frontlines of conflict zones around the world—we are writing to urge you to stand against the Trump Administration's draconian immigration policy specifically by refusing to send Georgia National Guard personnel and material to the southern border.

The past few weeks have seen upheaval and outrage as a particularly harmful policy enacted by the Trump Administration has resulted in the devastating separation of families. In April, Attorney General Jeff Sessions announced a "zero tolerance policy," which focused on charging more people with illegal entry; since those charged are then sent to federal prison where their children cannot join them, more than 2,300 children were consequently separated from their parents.

Though the president signed an executive order regarding the issue this week, it actually worsens the situation by calling for *entire families* to be kept in detention facilities indefinitely while awaiting prosecution. This latest executive order also does not end the zero tolerance policy, failed to address how the administration will reconnect the thousands of children already separated from their parents, and directs the Department of Defense to aid in running these new facilities.

In opposition to these and other policy failures, multiple governors have rightly chosen to withhold or recall their National Guard troops from border deployments, whether those deployments were urged by the Trump Administration or not. Given President Trump's failure to address these crises of his own making, we urge you to continue to refuse that the Georgia National Guard be sent to the border so as to carry out any more of the administration's cruel and ineffective immigration policy—especially detentions at the southern border.

Our National Guard is made up of trained warfighters, not law enforcement or border control officers. They have too many critical missions around the world to deploy along a

nearly 2,000 mile border; such a deployment is not an efficient or strategic use of people, funding, or material resources. Moreover, because units of the National Guard are made up of troops from across state lines but deployed to the border in different groups, these deployments undermine training efforts, unit cohesion, and readiness. Put simply, continuing to deploy the National Guard to the border will leave them with fewer resources and less preparation for lethal combat abroad and humanitarian work at home.

Moreover, our state's National Guard should not be asked to assist in any way in the implementation of policies that ultimately do nothing for our national security. There exists not a single national security argument for tearing parents from children or detaining families indefinitely—especially when those concerned are fleeing extreme violence in search of a better life. The United States has in place the systems and structures to vet those who arrive at our borders; those who do so illegally should be the concern of local law enforcement, not the U.S. military.

The Trump Administration's zero tolerance policy is a moral failure and abdication of American values, but it is far from an isolated incident. Since taking office, the president has demanded an ineffective border wall at the American taxpayer's expense, abruptly rescinded the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program without an alternative in place, ended multiple Temporary Protected Status programs for people whose home countries are still devastated by natural disasters, slashed the number of refugee admissions to historic lows, unconstitutionally sought to punish sanctuary cities, and launched increasingly cruel and expansive immigration raids countrywide. This is all part of a coordinated effort to move U.S. immigration policy backwards, and our state should play no part in supporting it.

Please take action today. By refusing to send our family, friends, and neighbors in the National Guard to enforce this and other Trump Administration immigration policies, you will send a message against these atrocious policies that do nothing to keep us safe and in favor of traditional American values of diversity, inclusion, and strength through moral leadership.

Very respectfully,

Truman National Security Project's Atlanta Chapter