

# Trump's DHS pick prioritized sending National Guard to the US-Mexico border over providing aid to flood victims

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In June Kristi Noem, the Republican governor of South Dakota, refused to send National Guard troops in response to the historic floods in her own state, citing high costs and arguing the Guard should only be called in a “true crisis.” As part of the 100th State of the State address, Noem sought to whitewash her own role in the disastrous response by praising state employees for their “heroism.”

As thousands of residents were left to fend for themselves, Noem defended her inaction, saying, “We have to be wise with how we use our soldiers.” She waited more than a month after the flooding started to request a federal disaster declaration. During this time, Noem was campaigning for Trump, following him around the country and only briefly appearing in the state to discuss the situation with the emergency manager in Union County in between media appearances. Five months after the floods, some houses and roads still lay in ruin in many of the hardest hit areas of the state, like in the McCook Lake neighborhood in North Sioux City. Many homes and businesses are still being restored.

So what is “wise” in Noem’s view? Apparently, deploying the National Guard over 1,000 miles away to Texas in order to stop the supposed “invasion” at the Southern border. Trump praised Noem for this in a November 12 statement, saying, “Kristi has been very strong on border security, citing her multiple deployments of troops to the border.” Trump lauded Noem as “the first governor to send National Guard soldiers to help Texas fight the Biden border crisis, and they were sent a total of eight times.”

This cost about \$3 million from the state’s Emergency Disaster Fund, which in the past was

typically reserved for actual natural disasters. The most recent deployment of troops to the Southern border cost about \$1 million. In 2021 \$1 million of this cost was paid for by Willis Johnson, a Tennessee billionaire and Republican donor.

The precedent that was set is that “wealthy donors are essentially given command of the U.S. military for their political motivations,” as a *Newsweek* article put it. The last deployment involved 60 soldiers, with the primary mission being to help Texas Governor Greg Abbott’s “Operation Lone Star.”

The message is clear: Vilifying desperate immigrants fleeing poverty and oppression and preventing them from seeking refuge is more important than rebuilding destroyed working class communities. This “principle” treads all over working class Americans, as well as the legacy of the American Revolution, whose leaders viewed America as “an asylum for mankind,” as Thomas Paine put it.

Noem is Trump’s pick to head the Department of Homeland Security, which is in charge of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and the Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA).

Much of the Senate confirmation hearing Friday was dedicated to Noem and both Republicans and Democrats railing against immigrants.

Noem claimed immigrants were “the number one threat to our homeland security” and that the border would be her “top priority.” She also promised to close down an app that allows immigrants to more easily schedule hearings with the Customs and Border Protection (CBP). Noem’s record on her disaster response was not brought up by either party. In fact, Noem attempted to use her record as governor as proof

she was ready to “strengthen FEMA’s capabilities.” Republicans cynically claimed Noem would have prevented the massive fires in Los Angeles, as Senator Ron Johnson claimed.

But Noem also refused to say whether she would withhold disaster aid for political purposes when asked about Trump’s threats to withhold aid from California by Senator Richard Blumenthal.

That Trump picked such a person is indicative of the character of the incoming administration and exposes the fraudulence of the “pro-worker” demagoguery espoused by corporate shills like Noem and Trump. Much like the communities left to fend for themselves while millions of dollars were wasted sending troops to the Southern border, the cost of the anti-immigrant policies will be shouldered by the working class. Trump’s own appointee for “border czar,” Tom Homan, has estimated the incoming administration’s plan to deport 13 million people will cost \$86 billion, with that figure to be wrung out of funding for disaster relief programs, schools, infrastructure, Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security.

Noem, in her confirmation hearing, refused to rule out using federal agents against domestic political opponents in response to questions fielded by Senator Elissa Slotkin. Slotkin asked, “If the president asks you to send in federal law enforcement to a state without coordination of that governor, would you support that action?” Noem evaded the question by merely saying that if nominated, her job is to “uphold the Constitution.” Noem, however, endorsed the January 6, 2021 coup attempt by Donald Trump and supports eliminating the 14th Amendment guarantee of birthright citizenship.

Furthermore, she has attempted to blame immigrants for causing the poverty on Native American reservations. She said in a January 2024 speech, “We are affected by cartel presence on our tribal reservations; by the spread of drugs and human trafficking throughout our communities; and by the drain on our resources at the local, state, and federal level.”

The real culprit for poverty on reservations is the US government, which committed genocidal acts against the Native Americans and forced the remaining tribes onto desolate parcels of land.

The pervasive poverty faced by both Native

American workers and the broader working class is above all caused by the more than four decades of attacks on jobs, living standards and social programs carried out by successive Democratic and Republican governments on behalf of the financial oligarchy. The most representative of this oligarchy is the sordid band of billionaire oligarchs composing the incoming Trump administration, whose collective net worth exceeds over half a trillion dollars and includes the richest man in the world, Elon Musk.



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