

October 10, 2025

Office of the Governor
The Honorable J. Kevin Stitt
Governor, State of Oklahoma
Oklahoma State Capitol
2300 N Lincoln Blvd.
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma 73105

Governor Stitt,

As retired national security leaders—former service secretaries and four-star admirals and generals—we write to express our gratitude for your principled defense of state sovereignty and the apolitical nature of the National Guard.

When the Texas National Guard was recently deployed into Illinois without the consent of the Governor of Illinois, your public remarks underscored the importance of respecting state sovereignty and the constitutional framework that governs the use of the National Guard. Your plain statement reaffirmed foundational principles that help maintain the Guard's unique role in our system of government.

Our nation's founders came of age at a time when British soldiers patrolled the streets policing speech and commerce and rightly feared incursions by the central government into state affairs and military power unleashed on civil society. Our founding documents warned against the power of standing armies to suppress individual freedoms, seize private property, and otherwise dominate society.

While the federal government has the authority to federalize the National Guard under Title 10, the domestic deployment of the National Guard should only be done in times of extraordinary need. Otherwise, domestic deployments harm civil-military relations — and the unwanted intrusion of one state's Guard in a sister state erodes the principle of equal sovereignty. In order to maintain the apolitical nature of our Armed Forces and to preserve our federalist system, it is vital that other governors follow your lead and speak honestly about actions that violate core tenets of our country and exercise discretion to preserve the Guard's readiness to handle their primary missions. The decision to deploy our men and women in uniform should never be motivated by politics. If we abandon this promise, we risk a dangerous erosion in the public's well-earned trust in the National Guard, which could weaken the ability of the Guard to respond effectively to domestic emergencies.

Governors play a vital role in safeguarding both the operational readiness of their Guard forces and the public's confidence in their nonpartisan service. By elevating these constitutional principles in the face of recent events, you have helped reinforce the Guard's integrity and the federalist balance that has long protected liberty and security.

We are grateful for your leadership on this important issue.

Very Respectfully,

Admiral Steve Abbot, USN (ret.), *former Acting Homeland Security Advisor to the President*
Admiral Thad Allen, USCG (ret.), *23rd Commandant of the U.S. Coast Guard*
Secretary Louis Caldera, *17th Secretary of the Army*
General Michael Hayden, USAF (ret.), *2nd Director of the Central Intelligence Agency*
General Craig McKinley, USAF (ret.), *26th Chief of the National Guard Bureau*
Secretary Sean O'Keefe, *69th Secretary of the Navy*
Admiral Bill Owens, USN (ret.), *3rd Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff*