

December 13, 2017
The Honorable Kirstjen M. Nielsen
Secretary of Homeland Security
Washington, D.C. 20528

Dear Secretary Nielsen:

Congratulations on your confirmation to serve as Secretary of Homeland Security. Since its creation, the Council of Governors has enjoyed a strong working relationship with the Secretary of Homeland Security, and we look forward to working with you to build upon this enduring relationship and enhance our state-federal partnership.

As you may know, the Council was established by Section 1822 of the National Defense Authorization Act of 2008 and implemented by Presidential Executive Order 13528. It consists of 10 governors appointed by the President to focus on matters of national security, homeland defense, synchronization and integration of state and federal military activities in the United States, as well as matters of mutual interest pertaining to the National Guard and civil support activities. Current members of the Council include:

- Gov. Mary Fallin, Oklahoma – Council Co-Chair
- Gov. Dannel P. Malloy, Connecticut – Council Co-Chair
- Gov. Charlie Baker, Massachusetts
- Gov. John Bel Edwards, Louisiana
- Gov. Steve Bullock, Montana
- Gov. Mark Dayton, Minnesota
- Gov. Eric Greitens, Missouri
- Gov. Bill Haslam, Tennessee
- Gov. Rick Scott, Florida
- Gov. Bill Walker, Alaska

The Council provides for the exchange of information and discussion in advance of any formal request, submission or implementation of federal proposals relating to changing laws, regulations or policies affecting operations in support of State and domestic authorities.

Governors are responsible for the safety and welfare of our citizens in our respective states. It therefore is critical for the Department to work collaboratively with us on matters that affect plans and policies within our respective states. The benefits of such consultation and coordination are reflected in many of the Council's accomplishments. Since its inception, the Council has:

- Established a joint action plan for State-Federal unity of effort on cyber security to help exchange views and information to ensure the strengthening of the nation's security and resilience against cyber security threats;

- Established the appointment of Dual Status Commanders, clarifying who is in command of responding National Guard and federal military forces during domestic emergencies and that military forces are to operate in support of the governor and the state adjutant general;
- Implemented a budget consultation agreement, ensuring governors can inform Department of Defense budget proposals affecting the National Guard;
- Opposed plans to cut the Army and Air National Guard, advocating for alternatives that would save costs while maintaining military capabilities;
- Supported the creation of commissions to study and make recommendations on the future of the Air Force and Army; and

The Council will continue to work on several critical issues moving forward to include:

- Continuing coordination with the White House, Department of Homeland Security and Department of Defense on partnerships to strengthen cyber security and information sharing;
- Reviewing the policies and plans for responding to extreme natural disasters at both the state and federal levels;
- Collaboration on establishing better metrics for the effectiveness of homeland security grants program to ensure better preparedness;
- Ensuring adequate resourcing for the National Guard, to include benefits parity for all those deployed in support of national interests and defense regardless of status;

Again, congratulations on your confirmation. We look forward to formally meeting at the next plenary meeting of the Council in February 2018, but also are available to you in the interim should you wish to discuss matters pertinent to our work.

Sincerely,

Governor Mary Fallin
Co-Chair
Council of Governors

Governor Dannel Malloy
Co-Chair
Council of Governors