



Transmitted via email

The Honorable Patrick Morrissey
Governor of West Virginia
Patrick.J.Morrissey@wvago.gov

August 21, 2025

Dear Governor Morrissey,

The NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund, Inc. (LDF)¹ submits this letter to respectfully urge you to reverse your decision to send your state's National Guard troops to the District of Columbia pursuant to President Trump's request. Contrary to his declaration of a crime emergency in Washington D.C. on August 11, 2025,² there is no such emergency. Moreover, as we have seen in Los Angeles and now in D.C., the presence of National Guard troops in support of federal or local law enforcement is ineffective and counterproductive to promoting public safety. Rather, it invokes fear among residents and needlessly escalates tensions between residents and law enforcement.³

There is no crime emergency in Washington, D.C. In actuality, crime in D.C. was down thirty-five percent in 2024 from the previous year.⁴ This marks a thirty-year low.⁵ In addition to an overall reduction of violent crime, homicides are down 32%; robberies are down 39%; armed carjackings are down 53%; and assaults with a dangerous weapon are down 27% when compared with 2023 levels, with the District reporting the fewest assaults with dangerous weapons and burglaries in over 30 years.⁶ More recent data from the District of Columbia also shows that violent crime is down in 2025 compared to 2024.⁷

The deployment of your National Guard troops to D.C. will not improve the safety of D.C. residents and visitors but may, in fact, make it worse. The President has already activated roughly 800 members of the D.C. National Guard. Additional National Guard troops from Louisiana, Mississippi, Tennessee, West Virginia, South Carolina, and Ohio would join an estimated 500 federal agents from Homeland Security Investigations, the Drug

¹ LDF is the nation's first and foremost civil rights legal organization. Founded in 1940 under the leadership of Thurgood Marshall, who subsequently became the first African-American U.S. Supreme Court Justice, LDF has advocated through litigation, policy, and community organizing to protect the rule of law and the rights guaranteed to all Americans under the United States Constitution.

² Brett Samuels, *Trump activates National Guard, names DEA commissioner to lead DC police force*, The Hill (August 11, 2025), <https://thehill.com/homenews/administration/5446128-trump-to-take-control-of-dc-police-activate-national-guard/>.

³ Shawn Hubler, *Trump's National Guard Troops are Questioning Their Mission in L.A.*, New York Times (July 16, 2025) <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/07/16/us/trump-national-guard-california.html>.

⁴ *Violent Crime in D.C. Hits 30 year Low*, U.S. Attorney's Office, District of Columbia (January 3, 2025), <https://www.justice.gov/usao-dc/pr/violent-crime-dc-hits-30-year-low>.

⁵ *Id.*

⁶ *Id.*

⁷ *District Crime Data at a Glance: 2025 Year-to-Date Crime Comparison*, Metropolitan Police Department (August 19, 2025), <https://mpdc.dc.gov/dailycrime>.

Enforcement Administration, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation.⁸ The current militarized and heavy law enforcement presence in D.C. has made young residents feel *less* safe due to reasonable fears that they will be subjected to aggressive policing.⁹ This fear will only increase if, as reported by media, National Guard members are armed with weapons.¹⁰ In Los Angeles, the presence of National Guard troops inflamed tensions between residents and law enforcement,¹¹ and caused internal conflict between National Guard leaders and federal officials.¹²

Military interference in domestic affairs is inherently anti-democratic and a threat to people's civil liberties and rights. National Guard troops are generally prohibited, subject to certain exceptions, from engaging in domestic law enforcement under the Posse Comitatus Act—and for good reasons.¹³ Military troops are ill-equipped to engage in domestic affairs because, among other things, they have neither the training to engage in local law enforcement practices nor sufficient knowledge about the local laws they are enforcing.¹⁴ At best, this military deployment is a wasteful and performative exercise that could cost taxpayers millions of dollars.¹⁵ At worst, it serves to intimidate and harm residents in the D.C. metro area with a politicized show of military force akin to authoritarian regimes.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge you to decline President Trump's call for deployment of your National Guard troops to the District of Columbia. Any real improvement in the public safety of D.C. residents requires evidence-backed programs that are developed by stakeholders themselves in partnership with their locally elected leaders. Deploying your state's National Guard troops threatens, rather than promotes, those efforts, and will spread fear

⁸ Max Matza, *National Guard troops appear in Washington DC as mayor rejects Trump's 'authoritarian push'*, BBC (August 13, 2025), <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cy7ypm6zxp20>; Lindsay Whitehurst and Ashraf Khalil, *DC residents protest as White House says federal agents will be on patrol 24/7*, Associated Press (August 13, 2025), <https://apnews.com/article/washington-police-takeover-trump-crime-national-guard-6afb751c7691e8f184057d8a16ddb7>.

⁹ Meg Anderson, *Teenagers in Washington, D.C., say the federal police takeover makes them feel unsafe*, NPR (August 16, 2025), <https://www.npr.org/2025/08/16/nx-s1-5501528/federal-police-takeover-washington-dc-teenagers>.

¹⁰ Ellen Mitchell, *Trump adds firepower to National Guard presence in DC*, The Hill (Aug. 19, 2025) <https://thehill.com/policy/defense/5458527-national-guard-dc-troop-increase/>.

¹¹ Kinsey Crowley, *Trump sent the National Guard to LA in June. It was the busiest protest month in 5 years*, USA Today (Aug. 18, 2025) <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2025/08/18/trump-protests-june-record/85614463007/>.

¹² Kyle Cheney, *Trial exposes internal tension over Trump's use of National Guard in LA*, Politico (Aug. 11, 2025), <https://www.politico.com/news/2025/08/11/california-national-guard-trial-00504664> (“Intelligence, Sherman recalled, showed a minimal threat to federal immigration agents, and the proposed operation would have sent military vehicles through the center of the park. But when he expressed misgivings, Gregory Bovino, the chief patrol agent of the Customs and Border Patrol's El Centro sector — who has taken on a leading role in the Los Angeles immigration crackdown — pushed back strongly, Sherman recalled. Asked by a lawyer for California if Bovino questioned Sherman's loyalty to the U.S. over the issue, Sherman answered simply “yes” and did not elaborate.”).

¹³ Joseph Nunn, *The Posse Comitatus Act Explained*, The Brennan Center (June 11, 2025), <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/posse-comitatus-act-explained>.

¹⁴ Sam Kosmas, *DC Council Chairman Mendelson reacts to Trump's federal takeover of DC police* (Aug. 12, 2025), <https://www.fox5dc.com/news/dc-council-chairman-mendelson-reacts-trumps-federal-takeover-dc-police>.

¹⁵ *Troops deployed to LA will cost \$134M, Pentagon Predicts*, Politico (June 10, 2025), <https://www.politico.com/news/2025/06/10/troops-deployed-to-la-will-cost-134m-pentagon-official-says-00396632>.



within our Nation's capital and across the country—not only about the safety and security of D.C. resident and visitors, but also about the future of our democracy.

Sincerely,

/s/ Jin Hee Lee

Jin Hee Lee
Director
Strategic Initiatives Department

Puneet Cheema
Project Director
Justice in Public Safety Project

Kimberly Saltz
Legal Fellow
Justice in Public Safety Project

NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc.