July 7, 2026

By email only

Governor Gretchen Whitmer
P.O. Box 30013
Lansing, Michigan 48909

Dear Governor Whitmer:

The undersigned organizations urge you to withdraw Michigan National Guard forces from Washington, DC, where they have joined the thousands of other out-of-state Guard forces patrolling the streets of the city as part of the Trump administration's "summer surge."

President Trump requested National Guard assistance pursuant to 32 U.S.C. § 502(f), a provision that authorizes governors to make their Guard forces available for federal missions at the request of the president or secretary of defense. Governors who receive such requests are free to decline them and have done so repeatedly over the past year. We were therefore surprised and disappointed by your decision to augment the already massive military presence in DC with Michigan's Guard forces.

Governors aligned with the president have sent nearly 5,000 National Guard forces to DC to patrol neighborhoods throughout the city, purportedly for the purpose of controlling street crime, against the will of the people and the local government. As the State of Michigan recognized when it joined an amicus brief in litigation challenging the deployments, this show of military force for the purpose of policing civilians is unprecedented, dangerous, and unlawful. The use of the military to support civilian law enforcement should be a last resort in cases where emergencies have overwhelmed civilian authorities. That is clearly not the case in DC.

The official purpose of the deployment from Michigan may be to assist with crowd control and similar functions during the events to mark the 250th anniversary of the declaration of independence ("250 events"). Previous presidents have requested assistance from out-of-state Guard forces during major events in DC, and such requests

would normally give little cause for concern. But there is nothing normal about the way President Trump has used National Guard forces in the nation's capital or other cities across the country, and no reason to trust his administration to use your Guard forces appropriately or even lawfully. While past presidents have been careful to strictly limit Guard forces' activities at major events to avoid even the appearance of overstepping military bounds, Guard forces performing event-security functions under this administration might well be asked to assist in suppressing peaceful protests at 250 events or arresting attendees who "touch water" on the National Mall. Even if the administration were using Michigan's Guard forces only in connection with 250 events, the potential for misuse in that role is unacceptably high.

Moreover, and regardless of any assurances you may have received from the administration, it is clear that Michigan's Guard forces are not being used solely to assist with 250 events. At the time the first group of Michigan Guard forces came to DC, the only major event that was on the near horizon was the June 16th Democratic primary election. Guard forces from Michigan have been observed patrolling neighborhoods far from any 250 event. Although the major crowd-drawing events of the July 4th weekend are now behind us, we understand that Michigan's Guard forces are slated to be in DC through the end of August. (Other governors who sent Guard forces to assist with 250 events, including Governors Beshear, Stein, Moore, and Walz, have either withdrawn those forces from DC or plan to do so this week.)

Tellingly, Michigan's Guard forces have been assigned to Joint Task Force - District of Columbia (JTF-DC), the task force that was created in August 2025 for the purpose of coordinating National Guard support to local and federal law enforcement operations in DC. They are thus in the same operational group and under the same chain of command as those Guard forces who are participating in the summer surge, raising the question of whether it is even feasible to prevent mixing of functions. Those of us who are based or have constituents in DC can attest that residents perceive no distinction among the Guard forces deployed in their city.

Perhaps most worrisome, the addition of Michigan's Guard forces to the thousands of troops President Trump has already brought to DC threatens to normalize the misuse of the military perpetuated by this administration and allied governors. That normalization poses heightened risks as we move toward the November elections.

We trust that none of this is your intent, but it is the impact every day Michigan's Guard forces are deployed pursuant to Trump's request and acting at his direction. We urge you to exercise your legal option under 32 U.S.C. § 502(f) to recall your Guard forces from DC.

Sincerely,

About Face: Veterans Against the War
Advance Maryland
Advancement Project
American Federation of Teachers (AFT)
Brennan Center for Justice at NYU School of Law
The Chamberlain Network
Common Cause
Common Defense
Democracy Forward
Detroit Disability Power
Family Values @ Work Action
Free DC
Indivisible
Jewish Community Action
League of Women Voters of Michigan
League of Women Voters of the United States
MoveOn
NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc.
The PROACTIVE Project, Inc.
Protect Democracy
Public Citizen
SEIU - Local 500
Stand Up America
Vet Voice Foundation
Win Without War
Women's March