



Nevada Division of Emergency Management / Homeland Security

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Friday, September 24, 2021

Chief Samuels,

Thanks for taking my call this afternoon. As we discussed, I am sorry but I have to deny this request for assistance. I want to let you know that the State does not take lightly the need to continue in-person learning for our school children nor our responsibility to support our local governments. We have both been great friends and great partners through my time as the DEM Chief, so I want to share with you how I reached that decision, something I think I owe to you and your community. I base my decision to deny the request on the following reasons:

1. I cannot make a solid tie to COVID FEMA public assistance funding for this request. We estimate that this request will cost \$500,000 for 50 soldiers/airmen for 30-days. With it not meeting the COVID public assistance funding outline from FEMA, DEM does not have a funding stream for the project. Since it doesn't meet COVID, I also cannot make the connection to the County and State Disaster Declaration which provides the Governor and DEM Chief abilities under NRS 414;
2. The Nevada National Guard, while having a transportation unit, does not have a large number of personnel who possess the licensing that Ms. Vobis indicated would be required: CDL, air brakes, and passenger. They drive US Government vehicles under the authority of the US Government and not under the driving laws of Nevada, for which the school bus driving mission would require them to be qualified;
3. LTC Compston, LTC Grush, and I spoke about risk management of using soldiers and airmen as school bus drivers in a very urban setting. While the Guard may have personnel able to drive large vehicles, the risk versus benefit of having them with such precious cargo as our state's children on busy highways could not be mitigated in a short period of time to make them an effective force. The driving practice, both on the streets and on the cone course for them to be competent probably is not achievable in a time frame to be adequate for your needs;
4. We do not feel we would have sufficient quantity of voluntary Guard sign ups. The Guard recently sent notices for wildland firefighting assignment and was unable to fulfill the 50 personnel they were looking for that mission. We do not want to get into the discussion for involuntary activation, which would pull these Guard members from their other civilian positions; and
5. We see this as a larger issue than School Bus drivers: it is supply chain related. As the news today showed, some major retailers are limiting the quantities of products a consumer can buy because they have insufficient stock. Speaking with our DHS CISA partners, this is related to supply chain and a lack of CDL drivers. We have experienced the same issue in regards to vehicle fuel on wildland fires on the west coast: insufficient drivers.

While I am denying the request, we are doing a couple of items to try to assist. These items are:

1. We are working with CCSD to see which of their employees we may have on state active duty related to the COVID response so we can return them to their civilian positions. We don't expect this to be many, but it appears any number of additional staff members will assist the school district.



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2. We are querying NDOT to find out the number of CDL, air brake, P endorsed personnel. They employee seasonal snow plow drivers, which may provide some contacts for the school district to reach out to offer positions.

I've always appreciated our relationship, and the one that Chief Steinbeck had with Caleb before us. I am hopeful, as we discussed, that this denial does not create a divide between Clark County and the State of Nevada. We are all in this together and much be collaborative partners. If you see something I missed in our assessment, please let me know. We will continue to look for ideas that may assist not only Clark, but also Washoe who seems to be expressing a similar concern for school bus drivers.

I am always available for questions or comments.

Thanks,

Dave

David Fogerson, MPA, CEM
Nevada's Emergency Manager and Homeland Security Chief



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