



RICK PERRY WANTS MEETING WITH OBAMA, NOT HANDSHAKE

By Colleen McCain Nelson
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When President Barack Obama arrives in Austin, Texas, on Wednesday, Gov. Rick Perry won't be there to greet the commander in chief.

The Texas governor's office said the White House had invited Mr. Perry to meet the president on the tarmac in Austin. But in a letter Mr. Perry sent Monday, he told the president: Thanks, but no thanks.

Instead, Mr. Perry suggested the two meet privately to discuss the surge in children and other migrants from Central America illegally crossing the U.S. border.

"I appreciate the offer to greet you at Austin-Bergstrom Airport, but a quick handshake on the tarmac will not allow for a thoughtful discussion regarding the humanitarian and national security crises enveloping the Rio Grande Valley in South Texas," Mr. Perry wrote in a letter to the president Monday. "I would instead offer to meet with you at any time during your visit to Texas for a substantive meeting to discuss this critical issue."

While Mr. Perry deemed an airport greeting insufficient, some previous tarmac meetings have included more than just photo-op handshakes. In 2010, Mr. Perry met the president at the airport in Austin and also handed off a letter requesting more border security to a White House adviser. In 2012, Arizona Gov. Jan Brewer tried a similar maneuver, but her tarmac encounter turned tense when she and Mr. Obama exchanged words about the governor's book and Ms. Brewer memorably was photographed pointing a finger at the president's face.

Mr. Perry's letter to the president is the latest volley between the White House and the Texas governor, who has publicly prodded the president to visit the border during his Texas trip this week. White House Press Secretary Josh Earnest repeated Monday that Mr. Obama doesn't plan to add a stop to his Texas itinerary, which includes events in Dallas and Austin.

"The president's well-aware of what's happening along the southwest border, and that is why you've seen the wide range of steps from the authority the president already has to enforce the law," Mr. Earnest said.

Mr. Perry has been a vocal critic of the president, and Mr. Obama's trip this week has provided the Texas governor with a platform and plenty of air time to take aim at the administration's immigration policies. On Sunday, Mr. Perry suggested to ABC News that the White House is either "inept" or has ulterior motives for not doing more to secure the border.

Last week, Mr. Earnest said, "it's hard to take seriously Governor Perry's concerns," adding

that Mr. Perry could most effectively help by urging Texas Republicans in Congress to pass legislation overhauling immigration laws.

Monday's correspondence is just the most recent in a long series of letters Mr. Perry has written to the administration about border security and related issues. None of the letters has yielded a sit-down meeting with the president, but Mr. Perry underscored Monday that he would be flexible – within limits.

"With the appropriate notice, I am willing to change my schedule to facilitate this request," Mr. Perry wrote to the president.