



National Guard Association of the United States

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September 18, 2023

The Honorable Jack Reed
Chairman
U.S. Senate Committee on Armed Services
228 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Mike Rogers
Chairman
U.S. House Committee on Armed Services
2216 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Roger Wicker
Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Committee on Armed Services
228 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Adam Smith
Ranking Member
U.S. House Committee on Armed Services
2216 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Reed, Chairman Rogers, Ranking Member Wicker, and Ranking Member Smith,

On behalf of the 40,000 members of the National Guard Association of the United States (NGAUS) and the 450,000 soldiers and airmen of the National Guard, we write to outline specific provisions we believe will significantly impact the National Guard as you formulate the final Fiscal Year 2024 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). We appreciate your consideration of our views as we continue our work to benefit the men and women of our National Guard while simultaneously improving their training, retention, and readiness.

1. House Section 514 and Senate Section 525: Grade of Vice Chief of the National Guard Bureau and Senate Section 524: Alternating Selection of Officers of the National Guard and the Reserves as Deputy Commanders of Certain Combatant Commands.

We request you retain House Section 514 and Senate Section 525, which would appoint the Vice Chief of the National Guard Bureau to serve in the grade of general. The Vice Chief of the National Guard Bureau is the second highest-ranking member of the National Guard. Since the Chief of the National Guard Bureau has been brought up to serve on the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Vice Chief must be brought on par to serve at the same level as the other service branch Vice Chiefs as well.

We also request you retain Senate Section 524, which would require the Secretary of Defense to alternate appointments of deputy commanders for certain combatant commands between an officer of the National Guard and an officer of the Reserves no less frequently than every two terms.

2. House Section 701: TRICARE dental plan for the Selected Reserve

We request you retain House Section 701, which provides zero-cost dental for National Guard service members. Medical readiness is crucial to ensuring a unit can respond at a moment's notice. Guard and Reserve members have frequent shifts in dental care. These changes would provide the Department of Defense with a powerful recruiting and retention tool, as well as a significant employer incentive to retain talented individuals in gainful civilian employment.

3. House Section 159: Limitation on Termination of Fighter Squadrons.

We request you retain House Section 159, which prohibits the Secretary of the Air Force from terminating Air National Guard fighter flying missions until 180 days after the submission of a fighter recapitalization plan. The Air National Guard fighter fleet continues to deteriorate and requires modernization and recapitalization with new equipment to effectively support and meet the readiness and lethality requirements of the National Defense Strategy. The proposed roadmap is an important first step.

4. House Section 951: Establishment of Space National Guard.

We request you retain House Section 951, which establishes the Space National Guard. This legislation is crucial for resolving ongoing disconnects that continue to impact unit and personnel readiness. It delivers the most cost-effective solution to the nascent Space Force - delivering unit-equipped/surge-to-war capacity and human talent management options that seek to retain trained and qualified active-duty talent via a continuum of service. Most unit members have an average of 7-10 years of space and technology experience, and an estimated 67% work full-time in engineering, aerospace, and the cyber industries.

The cost of establishing a Space National Guard is substantially less than previously reported. Gen. Daniel R. Hokanson, the chief of the National Guard Bureau, testified in May 2021 that, "The actual cost is about \$200,000 and that's just to change the name tapes of their uniforms, the sign outside their buildings, and the flags of the units. The units already exist, they are already performing the mission today. We don't need any additional MILCON or infrastructure. We're basically just taking the folks doing the mission today and instead of Air Force it'll say Space Force on their name tag."

5. House Section 601: Parental Leave Parity for Members of Certain Reserve Components of the Armed Forces.

We request you retain House Section 601, which aligns National Guard and Reserve parental leave eligibility with active-duty standards leave eligibility to include both parents welcoming a new child into their lives, through either birth, adoption, or long-term foster care. Active-duty parents received expanded parental leave eligibility in the Fiscal 2021 National Defense Authorization Act.

6. House Section 702 and Senate Section 701: Sergeant First Class Michael Clark TRICARE Reserve Parity Act.

We request you retain House Section 702 and Senate Section 701, Sergeant First Class Michael Clark TRICARE Reserve Parity Act, which will bring parity for guard and reserve survivor benefits to that of active-duty personnel by amending the existing statute and extending the six-month window to three years.

Once again, we appreciate your consideration of our perspectives as we work together to ensure National Guard soldiers and airmen have the necessary tools and benefits to continue to carry out their role in the Total Force mission. Thank you for your continued support of the National Guard.

Sincerely,



J. Roy Robinson
Brigadier General (Ret.), U.S. Army
President, NGAUS