



## **Enlisted Association of the National Guard of Tennessee**

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As we approach the end of the calendar year, it provides us an opportunity to look back and review the **Accomplishments** and upcoming **Priorities** of the Enlisted Association of the National Guard of Tennessee (**EANGTN**) and the Enlisted Association of the National Guard of United States (**EANGUS**). Your membership in these organizations is vital to our success in representing all the Soldiers and Airmen of the Tennessee National Guard at both the state and federal level. Thank you for your continued support of YOUR associations!

SFC Paula J. Vaden  
President, EANGTN

### **ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

#### **The Issue**

National Guard members have deployed under 12304b orders since 2012 for preplanned missions in support of combatant commands, but, unlike other overseas mobilizations, were not provided access to pre-deployment TRICARE and transitional health-care benefits.

#### **The Fix**

Access to pre-deployment TRICARE and transitional health care for National Guard members serving under 12304b orders was authorized by the fiscal 2018 National Defense Authorization Act.

#### **The Issue**

National Guard members have deployed under 12304b orders since 2012 for preplanned missions in support of combatant commands but, unlike other overseas mobilizations, were not provided Post-9/11 G.I. Bill benefits.

#### **The Fix**

Post-9/11 G.I. Bill benefit accrual for National Guard members under 12304b orders was authorized by the Harry W. Colmery Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2017.

#### **The Issue**

State tuition assistance funding is not sufficient to meet the needs of Tennessee National Guard members.

#### **The Fix**

The Tennessee STRONG Act provides tuition reimbursement to members of the Tennessee National Guard seeking their first Bachelor's degree.

#### **The Issue**

Since 2008, National Guard members earn limited Post-9/11 G.I. Bill benefits when serving on active duty.

#### **The Fix**

The Harry W. Colmery Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2017 expanded Post-9/11 G.I. Bill eligibility for National Guard members, including:

- Increased benefit accrual for reserve-component members who serve fewer than 36 months on active duty
- For service members on active duty between 90 days and six months, benefit accrual increased from 40 percent of the full benefit to 50 percent of the full benefit
- For service members on active duty between six to 12 months, benefit accrual increased from 50 percent of the full benefit to 60 percent of the full benefit
- Elimination of the 15-year cap on using G.I. Bill benefits
- Increased ability to reallocate transferred benefits to other beneficiaries if sponsor or dependent passes away

**The Issue**

The Army National Guard Black Hawk helicopter fleet continues to age, with many units operating aircraft over 25 years old.

**The Fix**

The fiscal 2018 Omnibus Appropriations bill designated 20 new UH-60M Black Hawks for the Army National Guard, five more than in fiscal 2017.

**The Issue**

NGREA funding is vital to maintaining the readiness and relevance of Army and Air National Guard equipment and weapons systems.

**The Fix**

The fiscal 2018 Omnibus Appropriations bill provided \$1.3 billion in NGREA funding, including:

- \$429 million for the Army National Guard, which is \$181.5 million more than fiscal 2017 levels
- \$429 million for the Air National Guard, which is \$181.5 million more than fiscal 2017 levels

**The Issue**

Cyber training pipelines are overloaded for all military components, which slows training and operational capacity.

**The Fix**

The fiscal 2018 Omnibus Appropriations bill provided:

- \$12 million for National Guard Cyber Protection Team training
- \$4 million for Persistent Cyber Training Environments, which impacts the active and reserve components

**The Issue**

National Guardsmen and Reservists face unique mental-health challenges compared to active-component service members, such as limited access to timely, quality care and programs tailored to reserve-component operational needs.

**The Fix**

Congress expanded TRICARE benefits for behavioral and mental health, as well as indefinitely extended a service member's ability to make medical claims for injuries, including:

- Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)
- Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
- depression or other physiological, psychological and/or behavioral disorders
- A feasibility study to develop a pilot program on the mental-health readiness of reserve-component service members was authorized by the fiscal 2018 National Defense Authorization Act.

**The Issue**

Service members received a 2.1 percent pay increase in 2017. This is the second time since 2010 that military pay raises topped 2 percent.

#### **The Fix**

A 2.4 percent military personnel pay increase was authorized by the fiscal 2018 National Defense Authorization Act and the fiscal 2018 Omnibus Appropriations bill

### **PRIORITIES**

#### **The Issue**

Under current law, a member of the National Guard or Reserve who is also a federal employee is ineligible to enroll in Tricare Reserve Select (TRS).

#### **Recommendation**

Authorize TRS eligibility for Guardsmen who are also federal employees, including the more than 70,000 dual-status National Guard and Reserve military technicians.

#### **The Issue**

National Guard members have deployed under 12304b orders since 2012 for preplanned missions in support of combatant commands, but, unlike other overseas mobilizations, are not provided early retirement credit.

#### **Recommendation**

Authorize the full complement of benefits currently afforded to other overseas mobilizations for National Guard and Reserve members serving under 12304b orders, including:

- Providing for reduction in age for eligibility of retired pay for National Guard and Reserve members under 12304b orders.
- Accruing high deployment allowance for service, thus preventing rapid successive deployments.
- Providing protection of eligibility for training and rehabilitation services interrupted by deployments.
- Providing for no reduction in federal pay for federal employees deployed under 12304b orders.

#### **The Issue**

National Guardsmen and Reservists face unique mental-health challenges compared to active-component service members, such as limited access to timely, quality care and programs tailored to reserve-component operational needs.

#### **Recommendation**

- Increase funding for embedded psychologists and full-time chaplains within Army and Air National Guard units.
- Establish a more integrated and holistic approach to resilience and fitness across the National Guard to better assess and improve the operational readiness of Guardsmen.
- Provide funding for pilot programs to study unique behavioral-health issues among Guardsmen.
- Increase access to mental-health care for Guardsmen, including at VA veterans centers.
- Utilize emerging technologies for Guardsmen in rural areas, including telehealth services.
- In fiscal 2019, authorize and appropriate funding for a pilot program to study mental-health readiness of reserve-component service members.

#### **The Issue**

The Tennessee STRONG Act only provides state tuition assistance funding for members of the Tennessee National Guard who are seeking their undergraduate degree.

#### **Recommendation**

Funding restrictions be expanded to include pursuit of a postgraduate degree.