



March 27, 2019

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

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

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

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

Dear Chairman Inhofe, Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Reed, and Ranking Member Thornberry,

On behalf of the Adjutants General Association of the U.S. (AGAUS), the Air Force Association (AFA), the Association of the U.S. Army (AUSA), the Enlisted Association of the National Guard of the U.S. (EANGUS), the National Governors Association (NGA), the National Guard Association of the U.S. (NGAUS) and the Reserve Organization of America (ROA), we write to you in support of our joint legislative priorities for the 116th Congress.

The priorities listed below directly correspond with the National Defense Strategy to restore readiness and build a more lethal force. They will enhance reserve component operational readiness while continuing to promote the goals of Total Force integration.

TRICARE Reserve Select (TRS) Expansion:

Our organizations continue to hear from our members that maintaining continuous health care coverage remains a problem when they deploy. Duty status reform may reduce the problem of continuity of care, but the issue will still exist. The services completed an assessment of non-deployable forces and most of this group had a temporary or permanent medical condition. Although TRS is a successful program for reserve component medical readiness and retention, more than 20 percent of our reserve component service members remain uninsured. First and foremost, by increasing access and guaranteeing medical coverage for all National Guard and Reserve members, you will ensure they meet the medical standards required of a deployable force. Additionally, these changes will provide the Department of Defense with a powerful retention tool and significant employer incentive as we provide operational reserve support.

We ask that you consider the expansion of TRICARE Reserve Select to federal employees as well as study the feasibility of eliminating service member premiums.

Modernization and Recapitalization of Reserve Component Equipment and Platforms:

As we continue to rely upon the reserve component in the defense of our nation, both at home and abroad, ensuring the interoperability of equipment and platforms between the active and reserve components is a key priority for our associations. As a ready and capable operational force, National Guardsmen and Reservists, like their active component Army and Air Force counterparts, continue to face equipment shortfalls that threaten their readiness, safety and desired lethality.

We ask for your continued efforts in providing robust funding to ensure that the Total Force, including reserve component legacy platforms and equipment, is modernized with updated technologies.

Maintain Consistent NGREA Funding:

Our organizations greatly appreciate robust National Guard and Reserve Equipment Account (NGREA) funding for the reserve component in the Fiscal Year 2019 Defense Appropriations legislation. These funding levels will allow us to continue to address equipment shortfalls and ensure compatibility across all components. Put simply, it is through your continued support of NGREA that fiscal resources are leveraged to outfit the Total Force with equipment and weapons systems that maintain a lethal and deployable force.

We ask that you continue to provide robust NGREA funding in the 116th Congress.

Increase Full-Time Support:

In addition to part-time forces, the reserve component relies heavily on full-time support (FTS) in order to train, administer and maximize readiness in reserve units. These critical full-time personnel support mission-critical roles. This includes:

- Facilitating rapid response during domestic operations by preparing service members and equipment;
- Organizing, administering, training and instructing fellow soldiers and airmen; and
- Maintaining reserve facilities, relationships with the local community and day-to-day unit continuity.

Along with the active component, the reserve components experienced commensurate decreases in FTS due to end strength drawdowns during the last 10 years. Congress has begun to increase authorized end strength levels--this makes sense to combat a more hostile threat environment and increased operational tempo. However, reserve component FTS levels should increase commensurate with the end strength changes. This will ensure our reserve force structure remains ready and deployable.

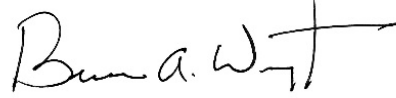
We ask for your support by providing increases to FTS end strength levels.

We appreciate your consideration of our priorities as we work together to ensure our reserve component service members have the tools and funding needed to continue their role in the Total Force mission. We look forward to discussing these issues with you in the coming weeks. Thank you, as always, for your continued support of the men and women of the National Guard and Reserve.


Sincerely,



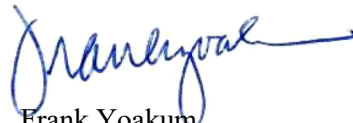
Glenn Curtis
Major General, U.S. Army
President, AGAUS



Bruce Wright
Lieutenant General (Ret.), U.S. Air Force
President, AFA



Carter F. Ham
General (Ret.), U.S. Army
President & CEO, AUSA

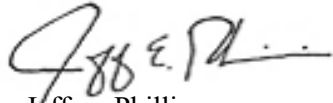


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