

Co-Chair  
Governor Asa Hutchinson  
Arkansas



Co-Chair  
Governor David Ige  
Hawaii

APPOINTED BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

August 8, 2019

The Honorable Mark Esper  
Secretary of Defense  
1010 Defense Pentagon  
Washington, DC 20301-1010

Dear Secretary Esper:

Congratulations on your recent confirmation by the Senate to serve as Secretary of Defense. As co-chairs of the Presidentially-appointed Council of Governors (Council), we want to welcome you as a lead participant in Council matters for the federal partners. Since its creation, the Council has enjoyed a strong working relationship with the Department of Defense (Department), and we look forward to working with you to build upon this enduring relationship and enhance our state-federal partnership.

As you may know, the Council was established by Section 1822 of the National Defense Authorization Act of 2008 (Public Law 110-181) and implemented by Presidential Executive Order 13528. It consists of 10 bi-partisan governors appointed by the President to focus on matters of national security, homeland defense, synchronization and integration of state and federal military activities in the United States, as well as matters of mutual interest pertaining to the National Guard and civil support activities. Current members of the Council include:

Governor Asa Hutchinson, Arkansas – Co-Chair	Governor Tim Walz, Minnesota
Governor David Y. Ige, Hawai'i – Co-Chair	Governor Mike Parson, Missouri
Governor Doug Ducey, Arizona	Governor Steve Bullock, Montana
Governor Ned Lamont, Connecticut	Governor Pete Ricketts, Nebraska
Governor JB Pritzker, Illinois	Governor Mike DeWine, Ohio

The Council helps to provide for the successful exchange of information and discussion in advance of any formal request, submission or implementation of federal proposals relating to changing laws, regulations or policies affecting the National Guard or military operations in support of State and domestic authorities.

As you know, governors are responsible for the safety and welfare of our citizens and are the commanders-in-chief of the National Guard forces in our respective states. It is critical for the Department to work collaboratively with us on matters that could affect our National Guard forces. The benefits of such consultation and coordination are reflected in many of the Council's accomplishments. Since its inception, the Council has:

- Elevated the Chief of the National Guard Bureau to a four-star position and a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, with the support of the National Governors Association (NGA) and the National Guard Association;

- Established the appointment of Dual Status Commanders, clarifying who is in command of responding National Guard and federal military forces during domestic emergencies, and reinforced that military forces are to operate in support of the governor and the state adjutant general;
- Approved a joint action plan for cybersecurity, establishing a framework to guide state-federal discussions in areas such as information sharing, operational coordination and incident response;
- Implemented a budget consultation agreement, ensuring governors can inform Department budget proposals affecting the National Guard;
- Successfully opposed plans to cut the Army and Air National Guard, advocating for alternatives that would save costs while maintaining military capabilities;
- Provided alternative recommendations for maintaining Air National Guard force structure and an evaluation of the Air Force's proposal in the Fiscal Year 2014 President's Budget;
- Preserved combat capabilities by securing the continued use of Apache helicopters by the Army National Guard;
- Supported the creation of national commissions to study and make recommendations on the future of the Air and Army National Guard and;
- Established the State-Federal Catastrophic Disaster Working Group charged with identifying opportunities to improve the response to catastrophic incidents and develop recommendation related to processes, reimbursements, pay, benefits and protections for National Guard members and the use of Title 32, U.S. Code.

At our recent July 24, 2019 plenary meeting, Council governors and federal partners met to discuss priority issues for consideration and action over the next 18 months. As a group, we agreed to several priority issues, to include the following:

- Cybersecurity
- Disaster Response and Disaster Mitigation
- Reserve Component Duty Status Reform and National Guard Full Time Support

Additionally, we will review the foundational documents of the Council of Governors, to include the Council Charter and the Consultative Budget Agreement. As we move forward on these critically important issues, we ask for your continued support and leadership.

Again, congratulations on your confirmation. We welcome an opportunity to speak to you soon and look forward to formally meeting you in person at the next plenary meeting of the Council in February 2020.

Sincerely,



Asa Hutchinson  
Governor of Arkansas  
Co-Chair



David Y. Ige  
Governor of Hawai'i  
Co-Chair