



April 19, 2016

Honorable John McCain
Chairman
Committee on Armed Services
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Honorable Mac Thornberry
Chairman
Committee on Armed Services
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Honorable Jack Reed
Ranking Member
Committee on Armed Services
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Honorable Adam Smith
Ranking Member
Committee on Armed Services
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman McCain, Chairman Thornberry, Ranking Member Reed, and Ranking Member Smith:

The undersigned organizations represent the interests of over one million members of the Reserve Component, their families and survivors, and retirees. We write to inform you about our views on the Fiscal Year 2017 legislative proposals delivered to you by the Department of Defense.

Section 521 – Inclusion of Reserve Service on Active Duty for Preplanned Missions as Service that Qualifies as Active Duty for Post-9/11 Educational Assistance and Section 641, Inclusion of Active Duty Service for a Preplanned Mission as Eligible Service for Reduction of Eligibility Age for a Non-Regular Retirement. Considering the Department’s increased request for 12304b man hours in its FY17 budget proposal, we believe it imperative that our members receive the benefits granted under any other involuntary status; the same benefits highlighted when our members were recruited to join the Armed Services. The military services are reducing their presence in Iraq and Afghanistan but ramping up use of servicemembers to combat terrorism in other parts of the world. This is being done by increased use of Title 10 USC 12304b. We ask your continued support of the proposed sections as the bill progresses.

Section 631 – Benefits for Survivors of Members Dying While on Inactive-Duty Training Status.

Following the tragic 2015 Blackhawk helicopter crash in Florida, our associations are pleased to see the Department’s recognition that a Servicemember who gives their life in the line of duty should be treated

equally and fairly regardless of the duty status orders they were serving on at the time of their death. This issue is particularly important for Reserve Component families, because the loss of a mother or father results in the loss of two incomes, the compensation for their service in the National Guard or Reserves and their full-time civilian salary. We encourage your committees to swiftly adopt this recommendation.

Thank you for your time and consideration on these important proposals.

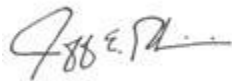
Respectfully,



Frank Yoakum
Sergeant Major, US Army (retired)
Executive Director
Enlisted Association of the National Guard



Gus Hargett, Maj Gen, USA (Ret)
President
National Guard Association



Jeffrey E. Phillips
Executive Director, ROA
Reserve Officers Association