



LEGGIT

NGAUS Legislative Update
9 April 2009

Gates Unveils FY 2010 Budget

Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates made lawmakers and defense industry representatives sit up and take notice this week when he unveiled key provisions in the Pentagon's budget for FY 2010. He advocates cutting some weapons systems and restructuring other priorities. Here are the highlights he outlined:

- Accelerate the purchase of F-35 fighters built by Lockheed Martin;
- Cut off production of Lockheed Martin's F-22 at 187, four more than the current number;
- Restructure missile defense programs;
- Cancel Lockheed Martin's VH-71 presidential helicopter;
- Cancel a \$15 billion competition for new Air Force search-and-rescue helicopters;
- Slash the Army's \$159 billion Future Combat Systems (FCS) by eliminating funds for replacements for 72-ton tanks and Bradley Fighting Vehicles;
- Buy 31 more F/A-18 fighters built by Boeing;
- Cancel the \$26 billion transformational satellite program;
- Increase the Special Operations force by 2,800 troops;
- Spend \$2 billion more on intelligence and surveillance programs used heavily in Iraq and Afghanistan;
- Add \$500 million to increase the number of helicopter maintenance crews and pilots in Afghanistan; and
- Spend \$11 billion to pay for the increase in the size of the Army and Marine Corps

There will be more to come, as the details of the proposed defense budget are published in the coming weeks.

U.S. Rep. Ike Skelton, D-Mo., House Armed Services Committee chairman, called Gates' plan "a good-faith effort." But he also asserted Congress' authority over how defense money is

spent by indicating that "the buck stops with Congress."

Heated debate regarding the changes proposed by Gates is sure to follow in both chambers of Congress.

NGAUS will keep you posted as we learn more.

Expectations High For New GI Bill

Veterans Affairs Secretary Eric K. Shinseki and Bill Carr, the deputy undersecretary for military personnel policy, expect this summer's rollout of the Post-9/11 GI Bill to have an impact as monumental as that of the original World War II-era GI Bill.

Many veterans who served after Sept. 11, 2001, will be eligible for full tuition and fees, a new monthly housing stipend and an annual stipend of up to \$1,000 for books and supplies. National Guard and Reserve members who have been activated for more than 90 days since 9/11 will have access to these same benefits. And for the first time, those enrolled in the Post-9/11 GI Bill program will be able to transfer unused educational benefits to spouses or children.

"Enormous interest has been expressed in the transferability provision and how it would work, because so many in the force have families," Carr said. He noted that half of the military force is married. By the time troops have served six years, about two-thirds of them have families.

To qualify for transferability under the Post-9/11 GI Bill, service members must have served six years on active duty or in the National Guard and Reserve and must commit to another four years. But Carr said the rules could be worked out soon to allow mid- or late-career troops to qualify, even if they can't sign on for another four years of duty due to service restrictions.

What's Happening at NGAUS?

The NGAUS legislative staff is working with the office of U.S. Sen. Russ Feingold, D-Wis., on a bill that would allow Guard and Reserve members to be treated at home for injuries while awaiting medical and physical evaluation boards.

The bill would also allow a civilian doctor to diagnose an unreported service connected injury in the Post-Deployment Health Assessment (PDHA) and possibly initiate a recall of the soldier or airman to active duty and, if needed, the medical and physical evaluation board process.

The intent of the bill is to provide friendlier settings for our members with pending physical evaluation board cases, and to enhance the post-deployment reporting, diagnosis and treatment of service connected injuries, which for a variety of reasons are not being discovered at the demobilization sites.

View 131st Conference Resolutions

Standing Resolutions for the 131st National Conference have been posted on the NGAUS Web site under the Legislative/Resolutions section.

The current *NGAUS Resolutions Guidelines and Procedures*, along with several other memos outlining recent improvements to the resolutions process, are available in the same location. Please take time to review these materials carefully because the resolutions process is the foundation of the NGAUS legislative agenda.

Check www.ngaus.org often to review draft resolutions, which will be posted as we receive them from state associations.

Responses to Legislative Alerts for 2009

- Economic Stimulus and National Guard MILCON #09-01—2,477
- Economic Stimulus and National Guard MILCON #09-02—1,049
- Reducing the Age to Collect Retirement Pay for Members of the Reserve Component #09-03—7,764
- TRICARE for Life (TFL) #09-04—4983
- National Guard Youth ChalleNGe #09-05—1,159
- Army National Guard Black Hawk Modernization #09-06—539
- Army National Guard Black Hawk Modernization #09-07—564

- TRICARE for Gray Area Retirees #09-08—1,557
- National Guard Youth ChalleNGe #09-09—266

“Write to Congress” Update

Messages sent in 2009

This week –272

This year – 22,689

Top Five States

1. *Georgia* – 2,565
2. *Tennessee* – 1,945
3. *Mississippi* – 1,501
4. *Texas* – 1,116
5. *Massachusetts* – 861

Help put your state on this list by using our Web site's Write to Congress feature to voice your concerns and priorities.

**Our goal for 2009: 54,000 messages
Only 31,311 messages to go!**

Rich Green, Director

Pete Duffy, Deputy Director

Vacant - Army Programs

Emily Breitbart, Air Programs

Bernie Phelps, Senior Legislative Analyst

Dixie Ross, Legislative Analyst