



National Guard Association of the United States

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March 19, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Senate Majority Leader
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
1236 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Senate Democratic Leader
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
House Republican Leader
2468 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Majority Leader McConnell, Speaker Pelosi, Leader Schumer, and Leader McCarthy,

On behalf of the 450,000 members of the National Guard, we respectfully urge Congress to support mobilization of National Guard servicemembers on federally funded Title 32 orders in response to the COVID-19 outbreak instead of the current use of "State Active Duty" (SAD) orders. As the primary uniformed military first responders to homeland emergencies such as the current crisis, National Guard Soldiers and Airmen deserve full federal support and benefits.

As of March 19, all 54 states and territories have declared emergencies in response to COVID-19 and more than 2,000 members of the National Guard across 27 states were activated by their individual governors. Reports indicate further spread of COVID-19 among the American people and more National Guard servicemembers are expected to activate as a result.

While SAD is an effective way to quickly mobilize the National Guard in absence of a federal emergency declaration, it is an inferior duty status given the lack of typical federal military support and benefits. Additionally, as these orders are 100% state funded, this financially discourages states from mobilizing critical National Guard assets. This will particularly hamper smaller states from mobilizing the number of troops required to provide essential services should the caseload increase as predicted. This will prove even more true if states are forced to divert funds to shore up hospitals if demand spikes.

Title 32 orders would allow a governor to place National Guard servicemembers in a full-time duty status and they will remain within the command and control of the State, but their mission would be directly funded with federal dollars. Title 32 status would also provide Guardsmen with:

- TRICARE medical coverage
- Access to military hospital facilities
- Federal workman's compensation
- Death gratuity
- GI Bill accrual
- Retirement points for service

We are particularly concerned that should one of our young men or women contract the virus on duty responding to COVID-19, they will not have access to immediate military medical care. Under SAD orders, National Guard servicemembers not only do not have access to TRICARE but they are not granted access to Active Duty military treatment facilities. Currently, if a servicemember gets sick or injured it would be up to the state to put the servicemember in civilian health care under the state medical system, adding yet another burden to our over-extended state governments.

The Trump Administration declared a COVID-19 national emergency on March 13 and we strongly believe the time has come to move all National Guard servicemembers to Title 32 orders. It would provide a more effective National Guard response while protecting the health and wellbeing of our servicemembers and their families.

As always, thank you for consideration of this request and for your continued support of the men and women of the National Guard during this current national emergency.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. R. Robinson", with a stylized flourish at the end.

J. Roy Robinson
Brigadier General (Ret.), U.S. Army
President, NGAUS