March 20, 2019

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

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

Dear Chairman Smith and Ranking Member Thornberry,

On behalf of the members of the Enlisted Association of the National Guard of the U.S. (EANGUS), which represents the interests and concerns of well over one million members of the Army and Air National Guard, their family members, Veterans, and survivors, we would like to share with you four priorities as you consider input to the Fiscal Year 2020 (FY20) National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). Founded in 1972, EANGUS is dedicated to the principles of providing adequate national defense and promoting the status, welfare, and professionalism of the men and women of the Army and Air National Guard by supporting legislation that provides adequate staffing, pay, benefits, entitlements, equipment, and installations for the National Guard.

TRICARE Reserve Select (TRS) Expansion

Our organization continues to hear from our members that maintaining continuous health care coverage is a problem. While ongoing duty status reform initiatives may minimize lapses in coverage, continuity of care problems will still exist. The services have also completed an assessment of nondeployable forces and most of this group was because of medical issues. Although TRS has proven a remarkably successful program for Reserve Component medical readiness and retention, over 20 percent of our constituency are uninsured. Increasing access and guaranteeing medical coverage would ensure Reserve Component members meet the medical standards required as a deployable force. Additionally, these changes would provide the Services with a powerful retention tool and significant employer incentive. As you provide input to the House Armed Services Committee, please consider incorporating H.R. 613, The TRICARE Reserve Select Improvement Act, into the FY20 NDAA.

Early Retirement Credit for 10 U.S.C. §12304b Service

Our membership is concerned with the disparity in benefits currently not attributed to Guard and Reserve Servicemembers deploying under 10 U.S.C. §12304b status. Since its creation in 2012, to give Combatant Commanders authority to utilize the Reserve Component, 12304b has been a mechanism used at increasing man hour rates per year. While our constituency wants to serve in any capacity (state or federal), we believe that they should be afforded parity in benefits. Fortunately, Congress helped solve two benefits disparities: transitional healthcare access and Post-9/11 G.I. Bill benefits. However, we still need help with early retirement credit currently not funded under 10 U.S.C. §12304b status. Furthermore, we feel it appropriate to retroactively extend retirement credit to Servicemembers that recently deployed under 10 U.S.C. §12304b status, and who failed to receive these earned benefits.
National Guard and Reserves members deploy in support of operational support to the nation, and should receive the same benefits and entitlements as those serving alongside them on active duty.

**Military Student Identifier (MSI)**

EANGUS would like to see the 116th Congress amend the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 to expand requirements for the military student subgroup making it inclusive, with the addition of students with a parent serving in Reserve Components of the Armed Forces. The current law directs the military student identifier only towards the children of Active Duty families, leaving out the nearly one-half million children of the Reserve Component. Please consider amending Section 1111(h)(1)(C)(ii) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 6311(h)(1)(C)(ii) requiring that state and local educational agencies identify and report all military-connected students. EANGUS is optimistic that the House Education and Labor Committee will grant a waiver to allow the FY20 NDAA to be a vehicle for advancing this change.

**TRICARE Coverage Upon Early Retirement Separation**

Beginning in 2008, Members of the Army and Air National Guard could earn early retirement credit for combat deployments. Some of our membership deployed enough times that they became eligible to retire from the National Guard at fifty-seven years old. However, their early retirement points only earned them retired pay, not TRICARE. This population of retirees must pay for TRICARE Retired Reserve (TRR) until the age of sixty. EANGUS would like to see health care coverage aligned with retired pay and enable this cohort to take TRICARE before the age of sixty.

**Reserve Component DD214**

Currently, Reserve Component (RC) Servicemembers do not receive a DD214 unless they are on active duty orders for more than 90 consecutive days. There is no capstone document that summarizes Active Component and RC service. The lack of a DD214 inhibits RC Servicemembers from claiming earned benefits and proving the full scope of their military service. For example, an RC Servicemember serving less than 90 days on Active Duty cannot prove eligibility for Federal Veteran benefits such as the G.I Bill, Veteran’s preference for Federal employment, and military funeral benefits without a comprehensive DD214. The EANGUS membership asks that you consider a provision in the FY20 NDAA that directs the Secretary of Defense to require each of the Services issue a DD214 to all Servicemembers, upon separation or discharge, regardless of time of service.

We appreciate your consideration of these priorities. It is essential that members of the Army and Air National Guard have the tools and funding needed to continue their role in the Total Force mission. If you would like to discuss these issues, please contact Scott Bousum at scott.bousum@eangus.org. Thank you, as always, for your continued support of the members of the Army and Air National Guard, their family members, Veterans, and survivors.

Sincerely,

Frank Yoakum  
Sergeant Major (Ret)  
Executive Director, EANGUS

cc: Members of the House Armed Services Committee