



Could Zero Cost TRICARE Save Money for the National Guard and Reserve Components?

The Enlisted Association of the National Guard of the United States (EANGUS), representing over 440,000 Guardsmen across the 50 states, three territories, and the District of Columbia urges Congress to legislate a study that would identify all TRICARE spending throughout the National Guard.

According to the cost estimate of H.R. 3512, the Health Care for Our Troops Act, introduced into the 117th Congress on May 25, 2021, if it had passed, we would need to spend less than \$720 million per year to provide TRICARE to all National Guard and serving reservists, which would include health care, dental care, and early pay eligible retirees. This is substantially less than what the government is currently spending and providing TRICARE to all reservists makes financial sense.

The National Guard needs TRICARE for all to maintain our force's readiness and improve recruiting and retention efforts. Guardsmen are always ready to respond to natural disasters, domestic emergencies, and overseas wartime operations. They also play a peacetime role, providing support to local communities and training for future conflicts.

To assure mission accomplishment, the military provides service members access to the latest medical care, technology, and treatments. However, the National Guard's current medical care budget does not reflect its commitment to providing its members with the best possible care. The money is used to provide a wide range of services, from preventive care to emergency treatment, and yet it is not wisely spent.

The National Guard spends around \$3.6 billion on medical care annually; this includes \$2.1 billion for TRICARE and \$1.5 billion for other medical expenses (such as prescription drugs and medical equipment). We can assume that these numbers will likely double with the addition of the other reserve components.

Although a substantial amount of this spending will be for retirees, we know that there are approximately 370,000 retired guardsmen, and about 60% of them receive TRICARE benefits. Therefore, about 222,000 retired guardsmen are estimated to receive TRICARE benefits, which is less than half of the 440,000 currently serving guardsmen today. Even after dividing the figure in half, we would still have \$1.05 billion in TRICARE spending from the National Guard alone.

The National Guard's medical care budget is a critical investment in the health and well-being of its members. By providing zero cost TRICARE for the National Guard and other reserve components, their members will be ready to serve their communities and their country.

For more information regarding this issue or any other issues concerning the National Guard, contact the EANGUS legislative team at legislative@eangus.org.