

STATEMENT BY

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BEFORE THE

SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON DEFENSE

SECOND SESSION, 113TH CONGRESS

ON

ARMY POSTURE

APRIL 30, 2014

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THE SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

Opening Remarks

Chairman Durbin, Vice Chairman Cochran, members of the subcommittee; I am honored to appear before you today, representing more than 354,000 Soldiers in the Army National Guard. For 377 years our Citizen Soldiers have been central to how the nation defends itself at home and abroad. Through resolve and readiness, Army National Guard Soldiers deliver essential value to our nation and our communities.

The men and women of the Army National Guard continue that history and contribute immeasurably to America's security. They have been an integral part of the Army, supporting the National Military Strategy and Army commitments worldwide. In more than a decade of fighting two wars, the Army National Guard has successfully expanded the capacity and capabilities of our Army, conducting every mission assigned.

Since September 11, 2001, Guard Soldiers have completed more than 525,000 mobilizations in support of federal missions. The Army National Guard mobilized more than 17,300 Soldiers for service around the world during fiscal year 2013, a number substantially lower than our peak years of 2003 and 2004, when we mobilized more than 80,000 per year. Currently, we have nearly 15,000 mobilized, of which 6,500 are deployed to multiple locations in the U.S. and around the world defending our national interests.

There is a direct and powerful connection that begins with the Army National Guard's organization, equipment and training for overseas missions and leads to our unequaled capacity to complete domestic missions. On the home front, the Army National Guard continues to fulfill its centuries-old obligations to the communities in which we live and work. Guard Soldiers live in each congressional district, playing a vital role as the military's first domestic responders and linking national efforts to local communities. In fiscal year 2013 Army Guard Soldiers served nearly 388,000 duty days under the command of the nation's governors assisting our fellow citizens during domestic emergencies. Yet, despite a large call up for Hurricane Sandy, FY 2013 was historically a slow year. The current fiscal year has already seen state activations for ice storms in the south, unusually high levels of snow throughout the country, floods in several states, and a major water contamination disaster in West Virginia. Whether at home or abroad, the National Guard lives up to its motto – Always Ready, Always There.

The Army National Guard of 2014 remains at peak efficiency in manpower, training, equipping, leadership and experience. We haven't arrived at this level by accident. This is a direct result of the resourcing and legal authorities that Congress has dedicated to this purpose over the past decade-plus of conflict, and a tremendous effort by the Total Army to reach this level of operational capability. I can assure you that this effort has not only been worthwhile, but that the results have

brought an excellent return on the taxpayers' investment. The National Guard delivers proven, affordable security and we do it on an as-needed basis.

The Army National Guard, the active Army and the Army Reserve, ensure the Total Force remains capable of providing trained and ready forces for prompt and sustained combat, in support of the nation's security strategy.

The transition from a strategic reserve to an operational force means the Army Guard is resourced, trained, ready, and used on a continual basis. When properly resourced we can conduct the full spectrum of military operations in all environments as a part of the Total Force.

The fiscal constraints imposed by sequester level reductions under the Budget Control Act, though temporarily eased by the Bipartisan Budget Agreement, will lead to inevitable reductions in funding in years ahead. The Army Guard will share in these cuts; however, it is in these challenging times that the inherent value of the ARNG to the American taxpayer comes most clearly into focus. As numerous studies both internal and external to the Department of Defense have demonstrated, a reserve component service member costs a third of his or her active component counterpart when considering the fully burdened cost over the lifetime of the individual. Because Congress has already invested in the training and equipping of the Army National Guard over the past 13

years of war, it now takes only a continued modest investment to maintain an operational force when compared to the strategic reserve the nation had prior to 9/11. But that investment is more than made up for in the responsiveness, flexibility and readiness resident in a reserve component where 84 percent of the personnel serve in a part-time status.

Accountability

We must protect the nation's investment by insuring that the ARNG is an effective and accountable steward of public resources. We continue to encourage and implement innovations to improve efficiency to sustain hard-won readiness gained over the last decade. Despite having a lean headquarters we have followed the Secretary of Army directive to decrease our headquarters staff by 20% by FY 2019. We will continue to actively advance our methods of increased accountability as we hold ourselves to the highest standards of ethics and integrity. We must ensure that the American people feel confident that our actions are above reproach.

Status of the Force

Guard Soldiers continue to demonstrate a strong willingness to serve this great nation and their communities. This appetite for service continues to draw America's youth to the Guard's ranks. To meet our obligation to the great men and women who step forward to serve, everyone – general officer to private – must adhere to and embody the ethical standards articulated in our core values. By remaining focused

on ethical standards and our core values we will continue to attract and retain Citizen Soldiers.

The Army Guard achieved 98.5 percent of its recruitment goal of 45,400 new Soldiers. Overall, our retention rate during FY 2013 was 86.3 percent, as 51,145 Guard Soldiers extended their enlistments; of note, this was a 3.8% increase over the previous five years.

For active component Soldiers who choose to leave active duty, the National Guard continues to offer an excellent opportunity to remain in service to our country and for the country to retain the investment in developing the skills of these veterans. More than 4,600 Soldiers joined the Guard last year directly from the active Army, which surpassed the Guard's goal (105.9 percent). As future end strength cuts loom, the Guard stands ready to retain combat-proven Soldiers in the Army. But this talent cannot be retained if there is no place to put it. By maintaining sufficient force structure in the Guard, the Army can provide service opportunities for combat-proven Soldiers, as well as saving some of the costs incurred in training new recruits.

Those Soldiers who join the Guard from the active component are signing up with a well-trained, seasoned cohort. Nearly 50 percent of our Soldiers today are veterans of a deployment with the Army National Guard, many having served multiple tours. Retaining a corps of experienced troops not only sustains the Guard's readiness, but becomes an overwhelming benefit to the Total Army. A total of 303,282 Soldiers,

or 85 percent of our force, have joined the Army National Guard since 9/11, knowing they were likely to deploy overseas. This is a special class of people that we want to hold on to, and improving on the retention rate last year was important for us. The likelihood of deploying on operational missions overseas is not nearly as great as it was six years ago, and money for training and equipment will not be as readily available. So keeping these Soldiers interested and engaged – and thus willing to stay in our ranks – is becoming a significant challenge not just for our retention personnel, but for leaders at every level.

Certainly, bonuses and incentives play an important role in keeping Soldiers in uniform, but we know that the desire for relevant training and utilization at home and abroad play a significant role in their decisions to stay. A key component of the operational reserve is that it is a force that sees regular use, through a progressive readiness model – such as Army Force Generation – that prepares Soldiers and units for deployment. Regular employment ensures unit readiness remains high. It provides Soldiers, their families and civilian employers the predictability they need to plan their civilian lives and careers. Also, it develops critical leadership skills, while exercising our systems to ensure we can rapidly deploy when needed.

Accessibility

In the 2012 National Defense Authorization Act, Congress addressed concerns about accessing the reserve components for

domestic or overseas missions in situations short of war or a national emergency. The authority granted in Title 10, section 12304(b) removed a significant impediment to maintaining an operational reserve that can be flexibly employed by combatant commanders as required. Title 10, Section 12304(a) likewise removed an impediment to employing all federal reserve capabilities for domestic emergencies at the request of the governors. There remain no significant statutory barriers to accessing the Army National Guard for either domestic or overseas missions, though consistent budgeting for use of these authorities remains an issue to address. The Army National Guard is accessible and ready to meet the needs of the nation.

An Operational Force that Fights America's Wars

The Army National Guard has demonstrated this capability in full during the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Citizen Soldiers have been mobilized in units ranging in size from two-to-three man teams, to Brigade Combat Teams, to Division headquarters exercising command and control over multiple Brigade Combat Teams and supporting forces. Guard BCTs performed every mission in Iraq and Afghanistan their active component counterparts performed except the initial invasion. Guard BCTs successfully performed a wide variety of missions including security force, counter-insurgency operations, and advising and assisting host nation military and police forces in both countries.

In fiscal year 2013, more than 17,300 Army National Guard Soldiers were mobilized in support of a multitude of ongoing missions around the world. Approximately 10,300 served in Afghanistan, while others served in the Horn of Africa, Kosovo, the Sinai, Honduras, the Philippines, and mobilized for operational missions within the United States.

While this contribution is noteworthy, there is significantly more capacity within the Army National Guard should the nation require a surge of forces. For example, at one point during 2005 more than 100,000 Guardsmen were mobilized and eight of 15 Brigade Combat Teams in Iraq were Army National Guard. Later that same year, with 80,000 Soldiers still mobilized, the Army Guard surged more than 50,000 Soldiers in the span of a week to deploy to the Gulf Coast in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. In summary: in the year in which the Army National Guard underwent its largest mobilization since the Korean War, it also experienced the largest domestic response in its history. This capacity and capability continues to reside in your Army National Guard.

Response time is a critical consideration when determining the right mix of forces to meet planned or unanticipated contingencies. The past 13 years of war have demonstrated that even the largest Guard formations can be trained to the Army standard, validated and deployed well within the timelines required by combatant commanders. The experience of deploying repeatedly over the past decade has honed this

training regimen and reduced post-mobilization training time considerably since 2003. As the Office of the Secretary of Defense validated in its December 2013 report to Congress, “Unit Cost and Readiness for the Active and Reserve Components of the Armed Forces,” even the most complex Guard formations, the Brigade Combat Teams, take only 50-80 days after mobilization to be ready for deployment when they are mobilized at company-level proficiency, or 110 days when mobilized at platoon-level proficiency. The ability of the Army National Guard to respond to worldwide contingencies provides tremendous flexibility to the nation as we seek to achieve defense goals with a constrained budget.

In FY 2015, the ARNG is programmed to return to its pre-9/11 strength of 350,200, a reduction of 4,000 in end strength from FY 2014 and 8,000 from our wartime high of 358,200 between 2008-2013. If Budget Control Act level cuts are re-imposed in 2016, the Army will face even tougher choices and challenges in managing risk and balancing readiness, modernization and end strength. Under these conditions, the Secretary of Defense has announced that ARNG end strength will have to be further reduced to 315,000 by FY 2019. This will mark a significant reduction in the strategic hedge against uncertainty that the Army Guard affords the nation for unforeseen contingencies. It will also undoubtedly impact domestic response times. While the Guard will always respond to a domestic emergency, response times may suffer as readiness centers

are shuttered, equipment maintenance is deferred, and training is reduced.

An Operational Force That Protects the Homeland

In fiscal year 2013, Citizen Soldiers responded to hurricanes, winter storms, floods, tornadoes, search and rescue missions, and the bombing of an iconic sporting event in one of our nation's oldest cities. There were 52 major disaster declarations in 24 states and territories in 2013, but the biggest response of the year came in its first month. Super Storm Sandy devastated communities along the east coast in late October, and Guard members from 21 states responded, with many remaining on duty for several weeks. At the height of the response, more than 11,900 Guardsmen were activated. These were joined by active component Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, as well as Army Reservists, all of whom fell under dual status commanders in New York and New Jersey. Both dual-status commanders were National Guard brigadier generals, successfully integrating DoD capabilities under state and federal control to more effectively serve our citizens in their time of need.

Warmer weather did not mean the National Guard would have the rest of 2013 off. On the afternoon of May 20, an EF5 tornado packing winds above 200 mph tore into the Oklahoma City area. The suburb of Moore was severely impacted. Dozens of people were killed, entire neighborhoods were flattened, and homes and businesses were

destroyed. Elementary school children were trapped in what remained of their schools, and Army National Guard members assisted in rescuing survivors. In total, more than 530 Army National Guard members supported the relief effort, performing search and rescue and security support missions.

The ARNG's largest rescue operation last year was in response to the floods that wiped out numerous roads and bridges, devastating communities in Colorado in Sept. 2013. Thousands of citizens were stranded in the mountains of the Front Range. Eight people were killed, 218 were injured, and thousands of commercial and residential buildings damaged or destroyed. More than 750 National Guard members with a total of 21 helicopters and 200 military vehicles were joined by active component Soldiers and aircraft from Fort Carson. More than 3,233 Civilians and 1,347 pets were rescued and evacuated. In the aftermath, Army National Guard engineers from Colorado and several neighboring states quickly restored miles of highway that were washed out in the floods before winter snows would have made reconstruction impossible.

One event that has long been an annual requirement for the Massachusetts National Guard was anything but routine last year: the 117-year old Boston Marathon. Massachusetts Guardsmen have long supported state and federal law enforcement at the event, providing traffic control, area security, and a standby Civil Support Team. Their familiarity with the marathon was extremely helpful, and indeed

lifesaving, last year. Approximately 250 Guard members were on State Active Duty supporting the Boston Marathon on April 15 when two improvised explosive devices detonated near the finish line. This attack killed three spectators and injured hundreds more. National Guardsmen on site immediately provided lifesaving aid and conducted security cordons and traffic control operations to assist emergency responders with their coordinated response. The 1st Civil Support Team of the Massachusetts National Guard quickly determined that no chemical agents had been used in the bombing. By the next morning, approximately 1,000 National Guard members were called to State Active Duty to assist civil authorities. In addition to Massachusetts, the states of Rhode Island, New Hampshire and New York provided Citizen Soldiers for this response. In the days to come, armed National Guard military police used armored Humvees to facilitate the tactical movement of law enforcement personnel.

The Army National Guard's support to the U.S. Border Patrol along the Southwest border continued into 2014, although at a reduced rate than in years past. Approximately 220 Guard members from 34 states or territories served on this ongoing mission along the 1,933-mile border of California, Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas. The current mission focuses on criminal analysis and aerial detection and monitoring. Still, during the 2013 calendar year, ARNG aviation personnel flew more than

10,635 flight hours in support of this mission, assisting in the seizure of 40,264 pounds of marijuana and 139 pounds of cocaine.

Army National Guard aviation was particularly active in the domestic arena, flying more than 19,100 hours supporting civil authorities in natural disasters, conducting medical evacuations, and conducting preplanned activities such as counter drug missions. Army Guard aircraft hauled nearly 422,000 pounds of cargo, transported more than 18,000 passengers and worked with multiple law enforcement agencies on a regular basis, assisting in the seizure of an estimated \$5.03 billion in drugs during the course of the year. Most importantly, Army Guard aircraft rescued 1,604 citizens in Search and Rescue and medical evacuation missions.

An Operational Force that Builds Partnership

One of the National Guard's greatest strengths is building partnerships. In 2013, the Army National Guard provided 12,265 Soldiers to support 72 military exercises in 76 countries. The Guard's experience with the warfight, domestic disaster response, our Soldiers' wide variety of civilian professional and educational experiences, and close community connections to many civilian institutions such as hospitals and universities, ideally position the National Guard for building partnerships that are multi-dimensional.

Today, the National Guard Bureau's State Partnership Program (SPP) consists of 68 partnerships with a total of 74 partner countries.

SPP promotes security cooperation activities for military-to-military training, disaster response, border and port security, medical, and peacekeeping operations. Calendar year 2013 marked the 20th anniversary of this innovative program, which continues to produce immense benefits for both the United States and partner nations at minimal cost. In support of the Chief of Mission and the US Department of State, and at the request of the regional combatant commanders, SPP is conducted jointly by Army and Air Guard forces in the states, territories and the District of Columbia under the leadership of the respective adjutants general. As such, SPP is the perfect complement to the Army's Regional Alignment of Forces concept and Chief of Staff of the Army's effort to shape the security landscape, but with unique advantages. Because of the relative stability of a Guard Soldier's career, which in most cases remains within a single state, that Soldier has the opportunity to forge enduring relationships with his or her counterparts in one or two foreign nations over long periods of time. In some cases, the crucial bonds have been cultivated and maintained for more than two decades.

These bonds have borne fruit on the battlefield. Since 2003, sixteen partner nations deployed units to Iraq and Afghanistan more than 87 times alongside Guard men and women from their partner states. Additional benefits of the State Partnership program include

economic co-development, educational exchanges, agricultural growth to build food security, and support to other federal agencies.

Resourcing the Operational Force

The FY 2015 Budget submission represents a significant reduction in appropriations for the Army National Guard in both Operations and Maintenance (OMNG) and Personnel (NGPA) accounts compared to FY 2014. OMNG funding for FY15 reflects a 12% reduction from FY 2014. This will only allow the ARNG to provide minimal training for units, with no additional funding to allow for combat training center rotations in FY 2015. In addition to the decrease in OPTEMPO funding, the ARNG assumes risk in such areas are Base Operations Support, modernization to infrastructure, and depot maintenance of equipment and vehicles.

NGPA funding for FY 2015 is 1.2% below FY 2014 levels. While this fully funds statutory requirements of inactive duty training, annual training, and initial entry training, the ARNG has assumed risk with significant reductions in funding for training and schools as compared to last year.

These reductions will begin to degrade the readiness that the Guard has built up over the past 13 years, limiting how rapidly ARNG units may be operationally employed. The reductions for FY 2015 will pale in comparison, however, to the reductions that are forecast to take place beginning in FY 2016 when the Army returns to the sequestration levels of funding imposed by the Budget Control Act.

Quite simply, the Army National Guard can be as ready as it is resourced to be. The Guard will achieve desired levels of responsiveness if properly resourced – and it will do so by maximizing taxpayers’ investment in programs directly contributing to Army National Guard readiness.

Maintaining the Operational Force: Support to Soldiers and Families

People are the Guard’s most precious resource, and the ARNG sponsors a wide variety of programs intended to enhance coping skills in Soldiers and their families – skills with an application to everyday life as well as the military.

Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention

The Army National Guard SHARP program reinforces the Total Army’s commitment to eliminating incidents of sexual harassment and assault utilizing education, disciplinary action, and victim-centered response services. In FY 2012, the ARNG assigned a full-time program manager to each state and territory and the District of Columbia; during this past fiscal year the ARNG assigned 93 full-time victim advocates within each state and territory and the District of Columbia. In addition to full-time support personnel, the ARNG has trained more than 2,400 collateral duty Sexual Assault Response Coordinators and Victim Advocates at the brigade and battalion level. The Army National Guard’s minimum goal was to train 1,864 SHARP personnel to DoD Sexual

Assault Advocate Certification Program standard. With 2,309 certified, we are at 127 percent of that goal.

Suicide Prevention

Calendar year 2013 saw a record 119 suicides of Guard Soldiers. Combating suicides has been a persistent challenge for the Army Guard, since leaders typically only see the majority of their Soldiers during a single drill weekend each month. This limits a leader's ability to intervene in a crisis. That's why the Army Guard is focusing on training and programs to increase resilience, reduce risk, and increase leadership awareness. In September 2013, the ARNG awarded a national contract to provide a Suicide Prevention Program Manager (SPPM) in every state. The SPPM manages state suicide prevention efforts, training, and suicide surveillance. The ARNG trained 120 trainers in the Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST) program in FY 2013, bringing the total to 517. These personnel trained 4,042 gatekeepers in advanced suicide intervention skills. Gatekeepers are trained to recognize someone in crisis, intervene to keep them safe, and provide referrals to assistance. The goal in FY 2014 is to train an additional 120 ASIST trainers who will, in turn, train approximately 11,000 gatekeepers. The Army National Guard is also participating in Army studies of suicide trends in an attempt to determine if prevention resources can be better focused to particular units, states, or at-risk Soldiers. Even one suicide is one too many; however, the trend is improving. Thus far in 2014, the number of

completed suicides is below the pace of 2013 – a trend we are working hard to sustain.

In fiscal year 2013, ARNG behavioral health counselors provided informal behavioral health consultations to more than 30,000 Soldiers and family members; 2,939 of these consultations identified emergent situations leading to critical psychological care. The ARNG reported 876 command interventions in suicide attempts (including expressed desire to commit suicide) in the 2013 calendar year. The ARNG reports 172 ideations as of mid-March 2014. We will continue to work collaboratively to address this heart breaking challenge.

Directors of Psychological Health

Prior to last year, one Director of Psychological Health (DPH) was provided for each of the 50 states, three territories and the District of Columbia. The National Defense Authorization Act for 2014 authorized funding for an additional 24 DPHs, increasing the ARNG's total from 54 to 78. In accordance with NDAA 2014, the 24 new DPHs were assigned to high-risk states. The ARNG has seen a significant increase in usage rates addressing emergent and high-risk cases. Command consultation, follow-up and multidisciplinary team consultations went from 13,525 to 26,766, and behavioral health case management went up from 3,556 to 10,264. We are grateful that Congress allocated \$10M for additional Guard behavioral health counselors in the FY 2014 budget.

Guard Resilience Training

Resiliency training offers strength-based, positive psychology tools to aid Soldiers, leaders, and Families in their ability to grow and thrive in the face of challenges and to recover from adversity in our communities. Soldiers complete the Global Assessment Tool annually to measure and track a Soldier's resilience over time. Master Resilience Trainers (MRTs) provide training to units and Families, serving as the commander's principal advisors on resilience. In FY 2013, the ARNG obligated \$10.4 million for the resilience program, which trained more than 1,550 MRTs and 4,600 Resilience Trainer Assistants.

In late 2011, the Army National Guard teamed with the Office of the Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs and the Air National Guard to launch a highly successful phone-and Internet-based help line, Vets4Warriors. This help-line, which is operated by Rutgers University Behavioral Health Care, provides peer-to-peer support from a staff of more than 30 veterans representing all branches of service and family members. They can provide referrals as appropriate, resilience case management and outreach services to help overcome an individual's or a family's daily challenges. Vets4Warriors initially served only reserve component members, but in November 2013 it was made available to all active duty military service members and their families, wherever they are located. Since its inception, the Vets4Warriors support line received more than 41,000 calls and conducted nearly 1,900 live online chats.

Family Readiness Groups are essential to creating a bond within units that facilitates assistance and reduces unnecessary stress. Family Readiness Support Assistants provide a great return on investment by helping our commanders create and sustain those groups, and by providing volunteer and resilience training at the unit level. Family Assistance Centers serve family members of all military components and are located in 396 communities around the nation. We are now facing reductions in the Family Assistance Center, Family Readiness Support Assistance and Child & Youth Program personnel currently provided to the states and territories. Family Readiness Support Assistants provide logistics to 312 brigade and troop commands in support of the Unit Readiness Program, and are the ARNG's key training asset for volunteers, family readiness and resilience initiatives. Funding is projected to be cut from \$15.5M in FY 2014 to \$10.9M in FY 2015. This, in combination with cuts to Family Assistance Center funding, will potentially result in a reduction of FRSA's from 312 to approximately 165.

Strong Bonds

Strong Bonds is a unit-based, chaplain-led program that assists commanders in building Soldier and family member readiness and resilience through relationship education and skills training. The Army National Guard provides the 50 states, three territories and the District of Columbia with information, guidance and training related to this program. In FY 2013 the ARNG held 544 Strong Bonds events serving

22,284 Soldiers and family members throughout the Army Guard. With a budget of just over \$6M, the ARNG's cost per person is \$269. A variety of Strong Bonds programs are available focusing on building strong relationships for married couples, single Soldiers, and families taught by certified chaplains.

Substance Abuse Program

The ARNG's Substance Abuse Program (SAP) provides a continuum of substance abuse services, including prevention, assessment, and brief intervention services. In September 2013, the ARNG awarded a national contract to provide Alcohol and Drug Control Officers and Prevention Coordinators in every state and territory and the District of Columbia. The SAP has also partnered with the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration to pilot the Substance Abuse Services Initiative, which will provide Soldiers with a voucher for substance abuse assessments. In FY 2013, more than 135,000 Soldiers completed the Unit Risk Inventory (URI), which is an anonymous survey measuring many of the stressors that contribute to substance abuse, suicide, and sexual assault. Utilizing the URI results, units receive prevention training, resources, and interventions tailored to their unit.

Employment Assistance

The Army National Guard has been, and remains, deeply concerned with the civilian employment status of its Soldiers. The ability of Guard Soldiers to gain and maintain civilian employment is essential

to retaining these Soldiers in the ARNG. While unemployment remains most acute immediately following redeployment, employment challenges extend beyond those returning mobilized Soldiers. The Guard continues to work diligently to find solutions to assist its geographically dispersed population, working closely with the states to spread best practices from each state across the country.

The Veterans Opportunity to Work (VOW) Act of 2011 mandates the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) for all Soldiers separating from a Title 10 active duty tour of more than 180 days. The Army National Guard is working closely with the Department of the Army and OSD to implement the transition mandates set forth in the legislation. States report 34,162 demobilized ARNG Soldiers since November 2012 with 26,999 (79 percent) exempt from the Department of Labor Employment Workshop (DOLEW) due to full-time employment or student status. Of the remaining 6,998, some 5,477 (78 percent) completed the DOLEW at one of 268 workshops conducted. In FY 2014 compliance has improved through February 2014 with 2,342 Soldiers requiring the DOLEW and 2,153 (92 percent) compliant. The ARNG will continue to promote and leverage an array of employment programs and resources to support VOW mandates and reduce Soldier unemployment.

Maintaining the Operational Force: Medical Readiness

Medical Readiness is a foundational requirement to maintaining the Army National Guard as an operational force; fully medically ready

Soldiers are the key to ready and relevant units. Medical Readiness is an area in which congressional resourcing and leadership focus have made dramatic improvements. The Army Guard improved from a fully medically ready percentage of 51% in July 2009, to 85% as of October 2013. That is the highest percentage of medical readiness we've ever recorded, and higher than either the active Army or the Army Reserve at that time.

However, this is an area in which readiness will rapidly slip if resources are reduced. For example, because a substantial number of Soldiers were not able to conduct Periodic Health Assessments that were scheduled for October 2013 due to the government shutdown, medical readiness slipped three percent to 82 percent in a single month. It took us four months just to climb back to 83 percent. It doesn't take long for our medical readiness to slip dramatically in a short period of time, but, turning things around is a much slower, more deliberate process. This not only requires funding, but a tremendous amount of time—time that we can never get back. Sustaining medical readiness is far cheaper than rebuilding it; and most importantly, it allows the capability and capacity for medically ready Soldiers to respond when needed for domestic or overseas missions.

Maintaining the Operational Force: Equipping the Force

The Army National Guard has received significant investments in equipment, increasing Equipment on Hand (EOH), Critical Dual-Use

equipment (CDU – equipment that is of use for domestic response as well as for war fighting missions), and the overall modernization levels.

Army National Guard EOH for Modified Table of Organization and Equipment units is currently at 91 percent, an increase from 88 percent last year and from 85 percent two years ago. Overall CDU EOH is 93 percent, an increase from 90 percent last year and a significant increase from 65 percent in 2005, when the Guard responded to Hurricane Katrina. Of the total quantity of equipment authorized, 85 percent is on-hand and considered modernized, up from 70 percent last year. This dramatic increase was partly due to new equipment purchases, but principally due to the Army re-defining in the past year what models of equipment it considers as modern. The steady improvement of equipment on hand, particularly CDU, can in part be traced to the continued appropriation of the National Guard and Reserve Equipment Account funds (NGREA), which has allowed the Army Guard a degree of flexibility in procurement, enabled it to meet training readiness goals, and improved modernization levels.

Maintaining the Operational Force: Installations

The Army National Guard has facilities in more than 2,600 communities, making it the most dispersed of any military component of any service. In many towns and cities these facilities are the only military presence, with the Guard serving as the most visible link between hometown America and the nation's armed forces. These

readiness centers, maintenance shops and training centers serve as platforms for mobilization during times of war as well as command centers and shelters during domestic emergencies. Providing quality facilities across 50 States, three Territories and the District of Columbia has been an on-going challenge. The Army National Guard transformed from a strategic reserve to an operational force over the past 13 years, but many of our facilities have not been updated in decades. The average age of Army Guard readiness centers is 44 years. More than 30 percent of them are 55 years old or older, the limit to what is considered “useful life” for that type of facility. Many fail to meet the needs of a 21st century operational force, cannot accommodate modern equipment and technology, are poorly situated, and are energy inefficient. Facilities are critical to readiness and support unit administration, training, equipment maintenance, and storage.

This wide array of uses makes Military Construction and Facilities Sustainment, Restoration and Modernization funding a critical matter directly impacting unit readiness and morale, continuity of operations and domestic preparedness.

Closing Remarks

With our nation operating during an era of budgetary pressure, the Army National Guard is structured to efficiently provide capacity and capabilities our nation requires in a dangerous world. With committed Citizen Soldiers as our foundation, the Army National Guard represents

tremendous value to the nation at large and within American communities where we live, work and serve. A flexible force serving our citizens for 377 years, the Guard's history shows that it has always adapted to change in America and around the world and risen to the challenge. The last 13 years have demonstrated these traits in full. That is why the National Guard has been and will remain "Always Ready, Always There" for our nation.

I want to thank you for your continued support for the Army National Guard and I look forward to your questions.