

**Testimony of
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**Chairman of the Board
National Guard Association of the United States**

and

Adjutant General, State of Indiana

Commission on the National Guard and Reserves

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Chairman Punaro, members of the Commission, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. I am MG R. Martin Umbarger, chairman of the board of the National Guard Association of the United States (NGAUS), and Adjutant General of the State of Indiana. I have served in the Indiana National Guard for 37 years, 34 of which were as a citizen soldier.

The National Guard Association of the United States has spoken on behalf of the members of the National Guard for 128 years and it seems fitting that we would offer our perspective on any discussion of “empowerment” of the National Guard or its leadership. Our mission remains the same today as it has from the birth of our organization, “.....united representation before the Congress.”

NGAUS applauds the determination of the Commission as they take on the challenge of defining the future of the reserve components in the years ahead. We embrace our comrades in the federal Reserve and the active force. Together we have accomplished much in these most demanding times. Each of the components celebrates its individuality but we all share certain common principles. Having said that, it is important to note that The constitutionally mandated dual-mission status of the National Guard clearly sets it apart.

My purpose today is to convince this congressionally-charged commission that the time has come to create new relationships between the National Guard and the

Department of Defense and to offer a solution to assist in the direction and administration of this most valuable defense resource.

In April of this year, bold and innovative members of the Senate and House introduced S.2658 and its companion H.R.5200, The National Guard Defense Enhancement and National Guard Empowerment Act of 2006. This legislation offers potential relief of the frictions between the Guard and the active components.

We appear before this commission today because the Congress has referred to your attention the concepts raised in the Empowerment Act. While our association was confident that the creative and common sense approach contained in this legislation would easily carry the day in the 109th Congress, it was not to be. You now have an opportunity to embrace these solutions with a favorable report to the 110th Congress in March of 2007.

NGAUS sees the timing of your deliberations as an opportunity to leverage both the new leadership in the Department of Defense with the selection of Dr. Robert Gates as our new Secretary, and the possibility of a strong, fresh and energetic Congress. We believe the conditions are right to make new beginnings.

At the Air National Guard Senior Leadership Conference in Baltimore earlier this week, Dr. Michael Hammer, noted author and expert in process reengineering, spoke to the senior officer and enlisted force of the Air National Guard about the way ahead. Dr.

Hammer's impressive client list includes the United States Air Force and the U.S. Marine Corps but he pulls no punches in arguing the concept of business process. Dr. Hammer said, "The way DoD operates simply doesn't make it anymore." Organizations that do not adapt or change go the way of the dinosaurs. The status quo doesn't work anymore. We believe empowerment legislation to be the way ahead.

The introduction of the Empowerment Act was met by the Department of Defense with a blanket rejection to all of its sections on the grounds that neither the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs or the Secretary of Defense believed change was necessary or warranted. It is our understanding that this continues to be their position.

Unfortunately, this Pentagon position is extremely disappointing to us in the Guard and is the very reason that empowerment legislation is needed. Pentagon officials have said that the Guard has been, and is "at the table", and that except for a few isolated instances, their inputs are being regularly factored into strategic decision making.

As an Adjutant General, let me give you some personal observations about the Guard's seat at the table and the decision making process. In a January 2006 budget decision, the Army endeavored to reduce Army National Guard force structure by 18,000 soldiers. In a simultaneous budget action, the Air Force announced its reduction plan to lower the Air National Guard force structure by 14,000 airmen. On February 2, 2006, 75 members of the U.S. Senate sent a letter of protest to defense Secretary Rumsfeld. On February 3, 2006, 51 governors signed a letter of protest to the President. The governors

ultimately prevailed and budget support for existing force structure was restored. It not need be this difficult.

All of us know the stress that exists on our armed forces today. As a nation at war, no one disputes the Guard's value and contribution to winning our war on terrorism. Let's be clear, NGAUS understands that the competition for scarce resources puts tremendous pressure on the services to do more with less. In these times, to seriously consider a reduction in the National Guard absolutely makes no sense. And it's not a good business decision.

Empowerment is NOT just about creating a 4-star general. It is NOT just about adding another seat on the Joint Chiefs of Staff. More importantly, it IS about recognizing the unique nature of the National Guard in providing for the security and well-being of the citizens of the several states as well as prosecuting the nation's wars and overseas commitments.

The Chief of the National Guard Bureau has provided the Commission with a detailed assessment of each of the provisions of the Empowerment Act of 2006. NGAUS agrees with the Bureau chief, that while the Joint Chiefs speak with informed authority on Title 10 prosecution of the nation's wars and provision of advice to the President and the Secretary of Defense, there is no question that the chief of the National Guard Bureau is a subject matter expert with respect to the defense and security of our homeland.

I would remind the Commission that the national defense strategy articulated in the 1-4-2-1 model identifies the most important of our defense commitments as the defense of the homeland. The Army and Air National Guard are “forward deployed” in more than 3,000 communities across this nation as America’s first line of defense. We know the nation’s “first responders” by name.

The Chief has said, “ The grade of the Chief of the National Guard Bureau should be determined by the level of work performed.....and the scope and effect of the actions taken.” We agree that the officer charged with responsibility for 450,000+ soldiers and airmen (larger than the strength of all other reserve components combined) merits 4-star rank.

Let me also suggest that more recent service decisions on sweeping resistance to post-mobilization training suggestions has failed to recognize the unique nature of the National Guard. And now the Army has raised their latest concern, the “unfettered accessibility” of the Guard.

The Army National Guard has not refused to accept a single mission and it has met every call. The American people simply will not swallow the myth that the Guard is not accessible. If Guard leadership recommendations on shortening the length of post mobilization training for the Guard had been followed from the earliest days of the War

on Terror, the Army would not find itself as severely constrained for manpower. This is not an accessibility problem, it is a management problem.

Logic suggests that the National Guard has a perspective that merits senior leadership participation in more than an ordinary way. Empowerment legislation IS a bold step to codify in law, what has heretofore been left to policy interpretation by the Defense Department, the Army and the Air Force. Each of the provisions of the 2006 Empowerment Act sought to speak to identified weaknesses in the current process

The leadership of the Guard does not seek confrontation or espouse disloyalty. They want a professional, collegial relationship with their parent services and the Department of Defense. Adjutants general bring a wealth of experience found nowhere else in the defense establishment. While the concept of “jointness” is now common parlance, it has been a way of life in the Guard for 60 years. NGAUS believes it is unconscionable not to harness this power in a predictable way. An integral part of implementing empowerment should be the utilization of Guard general officers, including adjutants general, into appropriate Army and Air Force billets where they have the requisite skills.

Mr. Chairman, NGAUS will continue to work with you on perfecting appropriate empowerment legislation and I would be happy to respond to questions from you and the members of the commission.

