



NATIONAL GUARD ASSOCIATION OF THE UNITED STATES

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July 16, 2010

The Honorable Frank Lautenberg
324 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Lautenberg:

Thank you for introducing legislation that would improve mental health care members of the Individual Ready Reserve (IRR) and the Inactive National Guard (ING) who have been deployed.

As our members reintegrate into their civilian communities and prepare for possible future deployments, many show no signs of physical injury but suffer from the psychological effects of traumatic stress requiring treatment. These psychological effects may range in severity from behavioral readjustment concerns to post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) with some conditions not manifesting themselves until months or even years after returning from deployment. The sooner behavioral and PTSD issues can be diagnosed, the more successfully they can be treated.

Members of the IRR and ING who return from deployment are for the most part geographically isolated from the units with whom they have served. Because they are electronically assigned to a centralized data base, they will likely not benefit from mental health programs provided at the unit level. Their families may also have been isolated from family support services offered at the local unit level which can create additional stress for the deployed member. It is essential both for reintegration and future medical readiness purposes that we reach out to these members of the IRR and ING after their deployments to provide counseling and appropriate mental health evaluations.

NGAUS strongly supports your legislative efforts that would establish mental health outreach services to members assigned to the IRR and ING who have been deployed that would include telephonic counseling and, if appropriate, mental health evaluations.

Our young men and women in the IRR and ING who have been deployed deserve appropriate and timely mental health screenings and care similar to what their counterparts in the active forces are receiving.

Sincerely,

Gus Hargett
Major General, USA, (Ret)
President