

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 13, 2018

Lieutenant General Timothy J. Kadavy
Director Army National Guard
National Guard Bureau
111 S. George Mason Dr.
Arlington, VA 22204

Dear LTG Kadavy,

We write to respectfully request your support for the Military Funeral Honors (MFH) program and coordinator resourcing in each state National Guard. As you consider proper resourcing to administer the MFH program, we believe that each state National Guard must be allocated at least one MFH coordinator and states with increased workload should receive additional resources as the National Guard Bureau (NGB) determines appropriate.

Providing professional military funeral honors to our veterans is a service tradition that demonstrates our nation's gratitude to those who have faithfully defended and protected our country. These ceremonial honors demonstrate our nation's respect to each veteran's next of kin and surviving loved ones during their tremendous time of loss. MFH coordinators are critical to the proper rendering of honors to our veterans and their families. While their primary responsibility is to determine the eligibility and appropriate honors for the deceased veteran for their service, their responsibilities are far more encompassing as the face and primary point of contact for the Department's MFH program. To accurately characterize the functions of the MFH coordinator, we urge you to consider the full breadth of their responsibilities including: training service members who perform the military funeral honors; the coordination with Veterans Service Organizations (VSO) and units within the state that are key partners in performing MFHs; and providing immediate attention (24/7/365) to families in need of assistance, referrals and follow-up services regarding a variety of family-related issues and benefits.

We were disappointed to learn that earlier this year, the NGB announced a plan to eliminate the MFH coordinator positions in eight states (ID, KS, ME, NH, RI, WY, SD, and WV) based on the recommendations of a 2016 Army Auditing Agency (AAA) audit that does not take into account the totality of coordinator responsibilities we have outlined. Eliminating these positions provides no tangible benefit to the NGB and would negatively impact the Department's ability to properly perform the statutory requirement of providing military funeral honors to veterans in these states. As you know, the 2016 AAA audit found that of the funerals sampled, the Department failed to perform honors for 88 deserving veterans. One missed service is one too many and eliminating these coordinator positions will only increase the risk that additional veterans do not receive the honors they have earned.

Our veterans deserve the best our nation has to offer and their families deserve to lay them to rest with military funeral honors that are coordinated and executed faithfully. We do not believe there is any justification that would validate the removal of these positions and urge you to resource each state with at least one MFH coordinator.

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Thank you for your consideration of this matter and for all you do to ensure our veterans and their families are properly honored.

Sincerely,



Senator Jerry Moran



Representative Roger Marshall, M.D.



Senator Pat Roberts



Senator Mike Crapo



Senator Jim Risch



Senator Joe Manchin III



Senator Shelley Moore Capito



Senator M. Michael Rounds



Representative Lynn Jenkins



Representative Alex Mooney



Representative Kevin Yoder



Representative Ron Estes