

February 16, 2021

President Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

On behalf of the Reserve Organization of America, representing members, families, and veterans of the Reserve Components, we thank you for your strong support of our Reserve and National Guard. ROA looks forward to working with you, Vice President Harris, and your administration in addressing ways to help our servicemembers, their families, and employers.

In 2020, the Reserve Components were activated throughout the U.S. to support the nation's COVID-19 response; they continue to assist in 2021 with the delivery of COVID immunizations. While supporting this mission, they also deployed to Europe, Africa, Southwest Asia, and other worldwide locations. To be able to support deployments, on their behalf, ROA asks your assistance in moving legislation forward on duty status reform.

Unfortunately, after the Department of Defense identified legislative changes for the reform it was put on hold for the last few years. Without this reform we will continue to see problems for the National Guard and Reserve, such as not knowing if they qualify for health care when on orders. We would also like your support for Hazardous Duty Incentive Pay to be paid at a monthly rate rather than the current 1/30th standard. This makes sense as Reserve Component servicemembers meet the same requirements for this pay as those in the Active Component.

As you can imagine, health care is an important issue for those in the Reserve Components – ROA sees it as a readiness issue, as well as a quality-of-life issue. When these servicemembers perform duty it is not unusual for them to be on different types of orders or orders that are extended several times during the deployment. *Reserve and National Guard members and their families may then experience a disruption in health care coverage. One way to fix this would be to establish a continuous health care program that does not change regardless of orders.*

Congress has moved in this direction with legislation that extends TRICARE Reserve Select to all servicemembers; unfortunately, it is not expected to be funded until fiscal year 2030. We ask your support to maintain medical readiness and encourage recruiting and retention by prioritizing funding for TRS in fiscal year 2022.

We cannot overlook the support that employers provide: this enables Reserve Component members to be citizen-soldiers. America's employers are a patriotic force; they have shown their support of those citizen-warriors in their ranks! Every time a servicemember deploys, an employer experiences disruption in the workplace by their absence. In accommodating a planned deployment, an employer can build funding into the budget for a temporary hire.

President Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
Page 2

Frequently, however, the Reserve and National Guard have little notice before being brought on orders for unexpected events, national disasters, or global emergencies. Employers are left scrambling to fill the void. ROA believes tax credits will help employers overcome unplanned funding requirements because of deployment vacancies. We also believe such credits will encourage hiring and retention.

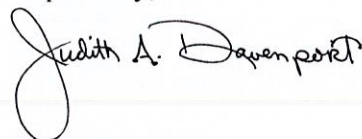
ROA is writing to ask for support with DoD to include the National Guard and Reserve for active and inactive duty in the Congressionally directed study, *Report on Feasibility of Implementation of Flexible Spending Account Options for Members of the Uniformed Services and Their Families*, that was directed in the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2022 (H. Rept. 116-442). Our Reserve Component families are challenge with childcare because unexpected deployments can completely change the needs of their families. Then on drill weekends they are extra challenged to find childcare when most daycares are closed. A Flexible Spending Account for childcare would help them with these costs.

Another important issue is the need to fund equipment for modernization and compatibility with the Active Component. In particular, the Navy Reserve, Marine Corps Reserve, Air Force Reserve and Air National Guard need the C-130J aircraft for strategic and tactical mission requirements that include real-time in-cockpit situational awareness systems. The equipment priority for the Army National Guard is the Heavy Expanded Mobility Tactical Truck (HEMTT) Wrecker and for the Army Reserve the Joint Light Tactical Vehicle. ROA asks for your support to get the Department of Defense National Guard Reserve Equipment Report for fiscal year 2022 sent to Congress which did not occur in fiscal year 2021.

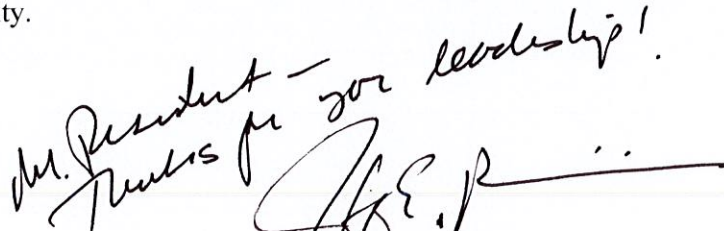
The CARES Act formally established a U.S. Public Health Service Ready Reserve. Sustained funding is needed by establishing a FY 2022 Reserve budget line item which would also give transparency to Congress. ROA believes there is an opportunity for a partnership with the Department of Defense, such as with the COVID response. This could help as DoD reconfigures the medical force to a deployment-focused force. There are many changes that will need to be made with statutes for their reserve force. For example, we recommend their Ready Reserve retirement account use the same accrual system as DoD to ensure they receive retirement benefits during a government shutdown. Another issue we believe would benefit USPHS recruiting and retention is to offer TRICARE Reserve Select and the TRICARE Dental Program.

Mr. President, ROA adds its congratulations to the many others you have received upon your having taken the oath of office. We ask you to consider the Reserve Components and USPHS for fiscal year 2022 authorizations and appropriations. We appreciate your support of America's Reserve and National Guard, whose members, families, and employers – as you know so well – are playing a role of unprecedented importance in our nation's security.

Respectfully,



Judith A. Davenport
Colonel, U.S. Army (Ret.)
National President



Jeffrey E. Phillips
Maj. Gen., U.S. Army (Ret.)
Executive Director