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THE NEEDS OF MILITARY FAMILIES: HOW ARE STATES AND THE PENTAGON RESPONDING, ESPECIALLY FOR GUARD AND RESERVISTS?

JOINT HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION, LABOR, AND PENSIONS
UNITED STATES SENATE

AND THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON PERSONNEL

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
UNITED STATES SENATE

ONE HUNDRED EIGHTH CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

ON

EXAMINING HOW STATES HAVE RESPONDED TO MILITARY FAMILIES' UNIQUE CHALLENGES DURING MILITARY DEPLOYMENTS AND WHAT THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT CAN DO TO SUPPORT STATES IN THIS IMPORTANT WORK

JULY 21, 2004

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THE NEEDS OF MILITARY FAMILIES: HOW ARE STATES AND THE PENTAGON RESPONDING, ESPECIALLY FOR GUARD AND RESERVISTS?

WEDNESDAY, JULY 21, 2004

U.S. SENATE,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON CHILDREN AND FAMILIES, COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION, LABOR, AND PENSIONS, JOINT WITH THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON PERSONNEL, COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES,
Washington, DC.

The subcommittees met jointly, pursuant to notice, at 2:01 p.m., in Room 430, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Lamar Alexander, Chairman of the Subcommittee on Children and Families of the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions, presiding.

Present: Senators Alexander, Dodd, Murray, Clinton, Chambliss, Dole, Nelson of Nebraska, and Bayh.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR ALEXANDER

Senator ALEXANDER. On behalf of myself and of Senator Chambliss, who is Chairman of the Armed Services Personnel Subcommittee—I am Chairman of the Health and Education Subcommittee on Children and Families—our ranking members, Senator Dodd and Senator Nelson, Senator Dole, who is here, we want to welcome everyone to this hearing today.

This is a hearing on military families. It is the seventh in a series that our subcommittees have held jointly. Our purpose is to give visibility today to some of the best practices and best ideas from those States which have especially been active in support of military families over the last several months. We want to showcase special efforts in education by a leading national organization, the Military Child Education Coalition, which has issued highest priority to military families.

We want to put the spotlight also on what the Department of Defense has been doing and is planning to do to add additional support to military families, and we especially want to focus on the special challenges that face families of National Guardsmen and women and Reservists, whose family members comprise about 40 percent of those who are serving today in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Today, more than half of the voluntary active duty military members are married and over 60 percent have family responsibilities. Sixty-five percent of military spouses are in the workforce. There

are about 1.2 million children of military families. Seventy-five percent of these families are younger than 12 years of age. Almost one-half of our troops are deployed in 120 different countries, many in combat circumstances. Those who live in the United States move very often, and all of this puts strain on any families, including military families.

Our hearings, the seven hearings that I have talked about, some of which have been around the country at posts and bases and some of which have been here, have presented a picture of fewer warriors, more missions, longer deployments, more frequent moves, more marriages, more spouses working, and more children. We have also learned that the military deserves some real credit for being ahead of the curve and ahead of many parts of our society in dealing with family issues. We have also learned, and the military has been among the first to point this out, that there is more work to do.

There are 400,000 spouses and over 500,000 children associated with activated members of the Reserves and National Guardsmen from the military. I just mentioned that their family members comprise about 40 percent of those in Iraq and Afghanistan. These aren't just statistics.

A few weeks ago, early in June, at the end of a week when we were celebrating the 60th anniversary of Normandy, I went to Knoxville in Tennessee, my home State, to attend a ceremony where 3,000 members of our National Guard were being mobilized, sent to Mississippi for a few months of training, then to California for a little more training, and then to Iraq for a year. As I looked across that audience of 3,000 men and women in the Guard, I saw that I knew a lot of them. They weren't abstract names.

They were from all the communities in East Tennessee where I live. They were members of the Knox County Sheriff's Office. They included the McMinn County School Superintendent. They were Casey Boring, Tony Loveday, Kevin Fuller, Roger Lawson, and Randy Cruz, all from the Blunt County Sheriff's Office in my hometown. They are our fathers, our brothers, our sons, our sisters, our daughters. They are not all 24, 26, or 30, either. Some of them are in their 30s. Some are in their 40s. A few were in their 50s. Those are many of the men and women who are either in Iraq and Afghanistan or on their way today.

Reenlistment is important, both in the active service and in the Guard and Reserve service, and the reenlistment decision will often be made at the kitchen table. To continue to attract a talented volunteer force, we must make sure our families' needs are addressed.

Military families have the same dreams and aspirations as all Americans. During our hearings last year, we heard important and moving testimony from many military spouses and military parents. We learned that the top issue for families includes education, child care, health insurance, housing, career support for spouses, communication and counseling for family members. And we learned that several of the important issues families struggle with can be more easily addressed by States and by Governors and across State lines.

Since our hearings began, there has been some considerable progress that we have recognized. For example, Congress has made

sure that an amendment, which I helped sponsor, protects military families who are eligible for certain Federal benefits, such as the school lunch program and Head Start, to make sure that they don't lose those benefits when the service member in the family receives extra pay for deployment. Also, Congress expanded health care, TriCare, to Guard and Reservists. Also, in the private sector, something called Operation Child Care began, launched by the National Association of Child Care referral services. Over 5,000 child care providers have said to Guardsmen and Reservists that they will give them free child care when they are home on leave and need extra family time.

To date, 47 States have developed plans for supporting troops and families. We will hear more about that in a few minutes. And the Department of Defense has launched new initiatives, including one called USA for Military Families.

Our first witness today, first on our panel, we have two Governors. We wanted to put the spotlight on the States, where a lot has been happening. One is Governor Jeb Bush of Florida. One is Governor Joe Kernan of the State of Indiana. I will introduce them in just a moment. We will also be hearing from the Department of Defense, from the National Governors Association, from the Military Child Education Coalition, and from Holly Petraeus, who has been a leader at Fort Campbell when she was there, although she has been many places, who is an advocate and helper of military families.

I want to introduce our first witnesses and then I will call on Senator Nelson, who is the ranking member of the Personnel Subcommittee, and see if he has an opening statement. I will then go to Senator Dole for any statement she might have, and then we will look forward to the testimony from the Governors.

We will try to follow a rule. The first time I testified before the U.S. Senate, I was under the mistaken apprehension that the purpose of a hearing was for the Senators to listen.

[Laughter.]

I found out very quickly that wasn't always the case. We will try to listen today. We have some wonderful witnesses and we are glad that you are here.

Senator Chambliss, I have just introduced the hearing. I was going to go next to Senator Nelson. Why don't I do that, then go to you and Senator Dole, and then we will go to our Governors, if that is all right. Senator Nelson?

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR NELSON OF NEBRASKA

Senator NELSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Senator Chambliss, as well as my colleague Senator Dodd, for holding what is a very important hearing today to focus on how the Department of Defense and the States can work together to improve the quality of life for our soldiers, sailors, airmen, and Marines, active and Reserve by providing well-deserved and needed assistance to families, particularly when the service member is deployed. I certainly feel privileged to be here with all of you today to address what is obviously a vitally important issue affecting American families today.

The Governors are here today to help us understand what we can do to help you help the families of our deployed military per-

sonnel. So I say to you, Governor Bush and Governor Kernan, welcome. It is good to see you.

I am also delighted that we have some other witnesses here today who have a vital role to play in taking care of our military families and I will welcome them at an appropriate point.

Having served as Governor myself for the State of Nebraska, I clearly understand the importance of the National Guard to the Governor and the State. Also now, I fully understand how important it is to take care, as I did then, of the families of the Guard and Reserve members who are ordered to active duty to fight our Nation's battles. Although I served as Governor during a far different era, when the needs of our military families were significantly different and the challenges were fewer in terms of deployments. Nevertheless, we were able to work together to help military families by assisting in the creation of the Educational Opportunities Directorate in the Department of Defense to help families of active duty, Guard, and Reserve members.

We worked also with the Military Impacted Schools Association to secure additional impact aid funds for those schools. We supported the Best Practices for Military Children as developed by, in Nebraska, the Bellevue Public Schools, one of the Nation's leading school systems in developing programs designed to meet the needs of military children.

We worked together to be able to make sure that we optimized the opportunities for families experiencing significant military challenges by being deployed at that time, and we had never minimized their hardships nor did we over-emphasize the challenges that were there. They also, I know, recognized themselves the strain that was placed on their families when deployments occurred.

I am looking forward to today. Mr. Chairman, I would ask that the rest of my testimony and opening statement, which is in the form of testimony, be included in the record as part of this hearing, if you would.

Senator ALEXANDER. It will, Senator Nelson. Thanks for your active participation in these hearings and your leadership.

[The prepared statement of Senator Nelson follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF SENATOR NELSON OF NEBRASKA

Thank you Senators Alexander, Chambliss, and Dodd for holding this very important hearing today to focus on how the Department of Defense and the States can work together to improve the quality of life of our soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines, active and Reserve, by providing well-deserved and needed assistance to families, particularly when the service member is deployed. I certainly feel privileged to be here with you today to address this vitally important issue.

I am most impressed that we have two sitting Governors here today to help us to understand what we can do to help the families of our deployed military personnel. Governor Bush and Governor Kernan, Welcome!!

I am also delighted with our other witnesses who have a vital role to play in taking care of our military families. I will welcome them separately as each panel is seated.

Having served as Governor of Nebraska, I understand the importance of the National Guard to the Governor and the State. Also, I fully understand how important it is to take care of the families of Guard and Reserve members who are ordered to active duty to fight our Nation's battles. Although I served as Governor during a different era when the needs of our military families were significantly different, I was able to help military families by:

• Assisting in the creation of the Educational Opportunities Directorate in the Department of Defense to help families of active duty, Guard and Reserve members.

• I worked with the Military Impacted Schools Association to secure additional impact aid funds.

• I supported Best Practices for Military Children as developed by the Bellevue Public Schools, one of the Nation's leading school systems in developing programs designed to meet the needs of military children.

Quality of life for the families of our service members is particularly important now in light of the fact that the extensive commitments of our military forces are pushing our military families to the limit.

We often hear of the strain on our military personnel that is caused by frequent, lengthy, and dangerous deployments. I do not want to minimize their hardships in any way, but I do think that we also need to recognize the strain on their families when the military member deploys.

The family members are left to cope with all the same issues that the family coped with before the deployment of a member of the family, and then some. One of the key members of that family is no longer home to help with the normal family issues that arise at home. The family members left behind worry about the service member, particularly when that member—a mother, father, brother, sister, son, or daughter—is in the middle of a combat zone where fellow service members are wounded or killed virtually every day. Many families have to cope with additional burdens, like loss of income, difficulties with medical care, child care, school issues, and many more that some of us haven't even thought of.

It is no simple matter to address all of the quality of life issues for our diversified armed forces. Our military makeup has undergone a significant demographic change since we initiated the all-volunteer force in 1973.

Before that, our military was mainly a conscripted force, mostly male, unmarried, and without children. The composition of our military is a lot more complex today.

Many more military members today have family obligations. This has a profound impact on the variety and kinds of programs needed to support our military personnel and their families.

To demonstrate the complexity of the family makeup of our Armed Forces, let me list some of the different combinations that we see:

• More than half of the force is married, many with children.

• We have dual military couples; in some cases, both husband and wife are in the same service, and in others they are in different services.

• Normally the husband is the service member in those families where only one spouse is in the military; but we also have a number of families where the wife is the service member and the husband is the family member.

• We also have a number of single parent families, some where the mother is the single parent service member, and a surprising number where the father is the single parent service member.

The reason I listed all these different family configurations is to demonstrate the wide variety of programs we need to care for these families. Addressing these needs is difficult enough for families living on or near a military base, and it is even more difficult when the family lives some distance away, as many of our Guard and Reserve families do. However, the fact that assisting families who cannot avail themselves of the services provided by a military installation is difficult does not absolve us of the responsibility for providing a similar service to them. If we are going to be successful, the Department of Defense must work closely with State and local governments to address the needs of these families.

The National Military Family Association recently completed an outstanding report entitled *"Serving the Home Front: An Analysis of Military Family Support from September 11, 2001 through March 31, 2004."*

Mr. Chairman, I request that a copy of this report be included in the record of this hearing.

One of the many important conclusions contained in this report is:

"Strong partnerships among and between military and community agencies are essential in ensuring family and servicemember access to programs and services that meet needs arising from the unique challenges posed by deployments."

This report makes three recommendations keyed to community support, the issue we are addressing at this hearing:

• Recognize the importance of community support and encourage a continued commitment between military and community leaders to provide for the changing needs of military families.

• Encourage State and local government leaders to network and share programs that benefit military families.

• Appoint installation points of contact to coordinate and market available community support.

This study is an important first step. I think that this hearing is another important step in assessing how we can address the needs of families of deployed service members. In my view, this hearing implements the recommendation that calls for networking and sharing programs that benefit military families. In that regard, I look forward to hearing from Governor Bush and Governor Kernan on their thoughts of what we can do together to help these families.

Thank you.

Senator ALEXANDER. I also have a statement from Governor Mark Warner of Virginia, which we will include in the record, and we are delighted to have that.

[The statement of Governor Warner follows:]

STATEMENT OF GOVERNOR MARK R. WARNER

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee, I regret I am unable to attend the Children and Families Subcommittee Hearing due to other scheduling commitments. I commend your work and greatly appreciate the opportunity to submit written comments.

We all recognize the important service and sacrifice being made daily by our men and women in uniform, and by the families they leave behind. These family members, too, serve our Nation in their own, less visible, way and we know that in addition to their patriotism and pride, they have everyday stress driven by their concern for the well being of their loved ones, by financial circumstances, and by the demands of parenthood. Fulfilling family obligations and raising children can be difficult in the best of times. Doing so when a partner in that effort is absent and in harm's way only adds to that challenge.

The work of your subcommittee recognizes the needs that arise under these special circumstances and will, I believe, produce valuable best practice models for our application throughout the Nation. Governors in our respective States and through the National Governor's Association are increasingly engaged with these same concerns and it is important that you and we exchange information and ideas in our shared goal of serving those who serve.

Last year in Virginia we created the Virginia Citizen-Soldier Support Council. This followed my signing of Executive Order 44, authorizing a pay differential payment for State employees called to active duty in the Guard or Reserves. The Citizen-Soldier Support Council was created in much the same spirit and with similar intent as your own efforts. In establishing this new panel to address these issues, we did so with recognition that many organizations have been doing good work on behalf of these interests already. Family Assistance Centers and organizations such as the Employers for Support of Guard and Reserves (ESGR) are examples of efforts that have been ongoing for many years. We value the many contributions such groups have already made to the well being of our men and women in uniform and their families. We have included representatives of such groups on our Citizen-Soldier Support Council and much of what we seek to do is as compliment and supplement to their good work.

Our Support Council is currently composed of 26 members, representing those groups, military units, businesses, and local and State government entities. In my charge to the Council last June I specifically asked that among their goals they seek to increase awareness, involvement and cooperation of the following entities in support of military personnel and their families:

- Virginia's business community;
- State government agencies;
- Local government;
- Financial institutions;
- General and mental health care providers;
- Virginia State Bar;
- Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR);
- State and local Chambers of Commerce.

I was pleased with the response of each of these communities in providing representatives to participate in the work of the Council. That work has been done through two committees; a Corporate and Community Committee, and a Local and State Government Committee. The committees met several times during the second half of 2003 and produced recommendations that were adopted by the full Council.

Among the recommendations the Council has already made:

- Legislation extending State professional licensing deadlines for activated personnel;
- Increased and focused counseling resources for schools with children of military personnel;
- A designated point of contact in the Virginia Employment Commission to respond to issues related to military personnel;
- State tax exemption provisions for activated Guard and Reserve personnel mirroring exemptions provided active component personnel;
- Encouragement of colleges and universities in the use of the American Council on Education (ACE) guidelines for providing academic credit for military training and job performance;
- Joint Resolutions by the State House and Senate commending Guard and Reserve members and encouraging increased public and private attention to their concerns and needs;

• Increased focus of mental health counseling resources in Virginia's communities through existing Community Services Boards to provide counseling services to Guard and Reserve personnel and their families;

• Improved Web site links between State and local government agencies and military family service organizations to better publicize services;

• Improved Web site links between financial institutions and military family service organizations to better publicize low cost loan opportunities;

• Increased recognition of employers who take extraordinary steps on behalf of employees who are mobilized for active duty;

• Encourage local and school events recognizing and celebrating the contributions of Guard and Reserve members and their families.

The Council will next meet on May 12, 2004, and will continue to meet periodically for the foreseeable future to develop suggestions to assist our Guard and Reserve members and their loved ones. We are anxious to learn what other States are doing in this regard, to share our own progress to date, and to adopt good ideas that have been implemented elsewhere. I am pleased to note that the Quality of Life Office of the Deputy Under Secretary of Defense (Military Community and Family Policy) has recently met with my staff to discuss partnering with Virginia, as they are with other States, in exploring ways we can all do more to give support, recognition, and assistance to our military personnel and their families.

I appreciate the opportunity to submit this overview of our efforts thus far in Virginia and look forward to our future work together in this important area.

Senator ALEXANDER. Senator Chambliss, who is the co-chairman of these hearings and Chairman of the Personnel Subcommittee of the Armed Services Committee?

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR CHAMBLISS

Senator CHAMBLISS. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I apologize for running late. Since my office is in The Russell Building and I don't spend much time in this corner of The Dirksen Building, I got lost getting over here, so I apologize.

[Laughter.]

Good afternoon to all of our witnesses and especially my good friend Governor Bush. As he knows, I come from the very southern part of my State, so I live a lot closer to his capital than I do mine. It is great to have you here.

Governor Kernan, we are very pleased that you are here. On behalf of all our military families, we especially want to recognize your service to our country. In fact, I understand you were a Prisoner of War during the Vietnam era and we are very appreciative for your service to our country and for being here today.

I want to add my thanks to all of you participating in today's joint hearing on the issues facing military families. As we begin our discussions today, over 319,000 soldiers in our Nation's Army are deployed to 120 countries around the world in the cause of freedom, as are nearly 70,000 sailors and Marines and nearly 30,000 airmen. These brave men and women serve in every corner of the globe to secure not only our peace and freedom, but peace and freedom for the whole world.

One-hundred-and-fifty-thousand men and women are serving in Iraq and Afghanistan today, of whom more than 40 percent are members of the Reserve and the National Guard. As co-chair with Senator Zell Miller of the Senate's Reserve Caucus, I am particularly concerned about the well-being of our Nation's Guardsmen and Reservists, who have been relied on so heavily over the last several years. We commend the families of our military personnel for the service and for the sacrifices they have endured.

The Subcommittee on Personnel of the Committee on Armed Services has the privilege of working in a strong bipartisan spirit to authorize appropriate pay and compensation and benefits for the greatest military force in the world. The Ronald W. Reagan National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2005, which was passed in the Senate unanimously on June 23, 2004, represents our continuing bipartisan commitment to military personnel and their families.

This hearing demonstrates that each of us has a role to play in support of our military families, and that no one branch or agency of government can do it alone. It is deeply gratifying to learn of the many achievements and best practices of the States in ensuring that military members, both active and Reserve, are not penalized for their service to freedom and, in fact, are rewarded for that service.

Many States, as we will hear today, are setting unprecedented standards for support to military families. I am proud that in my own State of Georgia, all public school systems serving military bases have signed memoranda of agreement joining them with schools in 24 States to ease school transition for students in military families. Our State also offers pay to Reserve members who are State employees when they serve on active duty. Georgia also gives priority for tuition assistance for National Guard members returning from deployment and has taken steps to protect military families from payday lending.

I also want to acknowledge the accomplishments of the Department of Defense. Clearly, the Department has answered the call of military families, especially since the last Gulf War, with establishment of 700 Family Assistance Centers, greatly improved communications, and assistance to students and schools.

These are but a few examples of the initiatives throughout our government and our great country which together illustrate the depth of our patriotism, commitment, and support for our men and women in uniform at all levels of government and in both the public and private sector. And yet we know there is much more to do.

Governors Bush and Kernan, Secretary Abell, Mr. Jones, General Reimer, and Ms. Petraeus, we are grateful for your work and advocacy on behalf of military families and look forward to your statements before this subcommittee today.

And thank you, Senator Alexander. Let me not fail to acknowledge your leadership and dedication to military families as we proceed with this hearing today. You and I have been all over the Southeast as well as here in Washington holding hearings on this issue and it is always a privilege to be with you as well as with my companion from the Personnel Subcommittee of the Armed Services Committee, Senator Nelson. Thank you very much.

Senator ALEXANDER. Thank you, Senator Chambliss.

Senator Dole?

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR DOLE

Senator DOLE. Thank you very much. First of all, I want to say to Senator Alexander and Senator Chambliss, thank you for your support of this country's greatest asset, our young men and women in the military and the families who stand behind them.

It is my great pleasure to welcome Governor Bush and Governor Kernan today. Governor Bush, it has been my privilege over many years to work with you and your family members on many different issues.

I also have the privilege of knowing very well Governor Kernan's family. His father and step-mother, are very dear friends of mine, and I think there are a number of family members here today. I just have to make a little footnote here, that Barbara Kernan and I worked together in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in my first job, many years ago. We were working for two wonderful men at Harvard Law School who then persuaded me to enter Harvard Law School.

So it is wonderful to be with the Kernan family and to welcome both of the Governors here today. Certainly, we appreciate you taking time to discuss with us how your States are dealing with some of the unique challenges facing military families today.

Our active duty, Guard, and Reserve personnel, of course, have made tremendous contributions in our war on terror. This contribution comes at great personal sacrifice and with significant disruption for family life and employment.

In visiting the bases across North Carolina, I have spent a great deal of time with them over the last 2 years and one of the things I have been privileged to do is to meet with the spouses one-on-one, without anyone else present, just to say, tell me what you are experiencing. What can we do to be helpful to you? As a Member of the Armed Services Committee, it has been very important to me to hear from them.

I am very impressed by the family support programs that are in place today for our active forces. I was even more pleased to learn about the groundswell of support for Reserve families within the State of North Carolina. Many of these families are separated from the traditional military base support structure and they often don't live close to the volunteer spouse support networks that are so good on bases. The growth of localized Family Assistance Programs designed specifically for Guard or Reserve family members and a mobilized way of life is very encouraging, indeed.

The military lifestyle places many unique stresses, as we all know, on the family, perhaps the largest of which is the frequent and extended deployments, regardless of whether these deployments are for training or to a combat zone. Ten years ago, families often left the assigned base to live with parents and immediate family during a member's deployment. Of course, today, the majority of families, stationed certainly within my State of North Carolina, choose to stay at the home base rather than relocate. I think this speaks volumes about the improvement in military family support services and the value of the spouse support networks.

Military families move on average about every 3 years, much more frequently than the average civilian family. Military children, of course, attend a wide variety of schools throughout their education, many with different educational timelines and levels of quality. Not only are these children faced with the social challenges of frequently changing schools, but they also face the uphill challenge of having to join athletic teams mid-season or having to run for student government as "the new kid." These children are at

enough of a disadvantage when one of their parents is not deployed. You add a deployment to a combat zone and you have a child who deserves every resource our State and our Nation can provide.

So I am delighted to be with you today. I have to leave to preside over the Senate shortly, but I certainly look forward to hearing your testimony first. Thank you for joining us.

Senator ALEXANDER. Thank you, Senator Dole.

We are delighted to have such good attendance today. Senator Murray, Senator Clinton, and Senator Bayh are here. We want to get on to the Governors, but we also would like to hear from the Senators before we begin, if you have an opening statement. Let me start with you, Senator Murray.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR MURRAY

Senator MURRAY. Mr. Chairman, thank you so much, to you and Senator Chambliss for chairing this joint hearing today on a very critical issue and I want to welcome our panelists, all of them today who are here to talk about how we can better support the families and the men and women who are serving us so honorably today overseas.

Many of us have been working for a long time to address a number of the needs that have been talked about already by previous speakers. This is a very important issue for me. We have over 20,000 soldiers and sailors from Washington State who are serving in Iraq and Afghanistan today, over 6,000 Washington State citizens who are Washington National Guard and Army Reserves, and as Senator Dole just talked about, 10,000 students who are being affected by the implications to their families.

So the needs of those students and their families are very near and dear to my heart and I look forward to hearing through our panelists their comments and suggestions and also from the Pentagon on how they are implementing some of the legislation we have already passed affecting and helping these families, so thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

QUESTIONS OF SENATOR MURRAY TO GOVERNOR KERNAN

Earlier this year, I met with families of Washington National Guard soldiers serving in Iraq and soldiers preparing to deploy. At that meeting, Guard and Reserve members told me about the challenges their spouses and children would face once they were deployed. I could see how much they worried about a loss of income, the extra expense of child care, and their family's limited options for healthcare.

I listened closely to all of their concerns, and I spent several weeks crafting a bill to minimize the challenges at home when these brave men and women leave their jobs, their schools, and their families to protect our homeland and fight terrorism.

The Senate has now passed many pieces of my bill in a very cooperative bipartisan manner—I'd like to ask our distinguished panelists how they believe these pieces of legislation would help families in their State.

One of my latest efforts for military families—to provide child care help to families of activated soldiers—was included in the Fiscal Year 2005 Defense Authorization bill. My amendment directs the Secretary of Defense to make child care services available to activated soldiers and their families not living near major military installations. I believe we are asking so much of our Guard and Reserve members and their families that we have an obligation to make it easier for their spouses and children during these long deployments. According to latest statistics, there are nearly 9,000 Guard and Reserve families in Indiana, with almost 16,000 dependent children.

Question 1. Can you tell us how this child care benefit might help Indiana's Guard and Reserve families—who typically don't live near military bases?

QUESTIONS OF SENATOR MURRAY TO GOVERNOR BUSH

It's my understanding that Florida provides its State employees with the difference between their military pay and their State salary.

In the Senate DOD Authorization bill, we passed an amendment that would provide the same benefit to Federal employees called to active duty. However, the Administration has fought this effort and we continue to fight an uphill battle with the House majority.

I commend your efforts to honor your State employees' service instead of financially penalizing them for serving their country.

Question 1. Can you tell the committee what this has meant to your State employees and their families while they have been called to service?

Question 2. Do you think the Federal Government should provide this benefit to the brave Federal employees in Florida—and across the country—who choose to serve in the Guard and Reserves?

The Senate has approved a few other pieces of my bill and I'd like to hear your thoughts.

One piece would allow Guard and Reserve families to retain access to their private-sector health plan, rather than being forced to shift onto TRICARE during an activation—and back off again upon their loved-one's return home.

Another would provide a tax incentive for small businesses to supplement their employees' salary during an activation—and to allow that small business to hire a temporary replacement for the employee called to serve.

Finally, one provision—that has not been acted upon this year—would offer spouses protection under the Family and Medical Leave Act. This would allow those families who are suddenly single-parent households the ability to spend time together before their loved one is deployed and make arrangements to deal with this new situation.

Question 3. Could either of you comment on these policies—would they help the families in your States?

QUESTIONS OF SENATOR MURRAY TO SECRETARY ABELL

I am pleased to hear that the Department of Defense sees military families as a top priority, and that quality of life benefits are a big part of your commitment. And, I want to thank you and the Pentagon's Child Care Office for your support of my amendment to the Defense Authorization bill earlier this year.

With over 19,000 children of Washington National Guard and Reservists in my State—along with tens of thousands of children from active duty families—the welfare of military children is very important to me.

In your written testimony, you discussed several programs that Washington State is dependent on, such as Impact Aid.

I'm also proud that my State was one of the first participants in "Operation Military Kids"—it's a great program.

You also mentioned the challenges military children face—especially those with special needs—during deployments and transitions between schools due to frequent moves between bases.

According to the Military Child Education Coalition, 13 percent of children in military families receive special education services or support.

And, children in military families move an average of every 2 to 3 years—which translates into attending six to nine schools from kindergarten until high school graduation.

Children with disabilities in these highly mobile families often lack consistency in services, which causes them to fall behind their classmates as they move.

Especially in times of war and when parents are extending stays abroad, children in military families need support and stability in their lives and education services.

That's why Senator DeWine and I offered an amendment to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act to help facilitate greater continuity for students who change schools or school districts.

Our amendment would ensure that all students' receive continued special education services when they transfer schools, including quickly transferring records.

It increases opportunities for early evaluation and intervention for homeless and foster infants and toddlers with disabilities and children with disabilities in military families.

It also provides for representation of such children on key committees that make critical decisions affecting special education.

Our amendment expands the definition of "parent" to include relatives or other caregivers who are equipped to make sound decisions in a child's best interest when there is no biological parent available to do so.

Finally, it improves coordination of services and information so educational and social services agencies can function more efficiently to benefit these children.

Question 1. Can you share the Pentagon's views of our amendment and how it would help your efforts to aid these students in transition?

Last year the Senate passed legislation to provide healthcare coverage for members of the Guard and Reserves who are unemployed or do not have employer-sponsored health care coverage.

This is clearly a readiness issue as a large number of Guard and Reserve members called to duty since we entered Afghanistan and Iraq had health issues that required treatment before they could be deployed.

The Temporary Reserve Health Care Program was soon to expire, so the Senate included permanent authorization of this program in the fiscal year 2005 DOD Authorization bill.

We are asking so much of our Guard and Reserve soldiers today—I believe the least we can do is provide these soldiers and their families with healthcare when they don't have any other access to care.

But, it's my understanding that this program has yet to be implemented.

Question 2. Please explain why the Pentagon has not moved on this Congressional directive?

Your written testimony discusses quality of life considerations for the Pentagon's global rebasing strategy.

I'm proud the military bases in Washington State are consistently ranked as some of the most desirable due to these quality of life factors. But, I am concerned that the rebasing strategy is missing an important step when it comes to our public schools.

The potential draw-down of our military in Europe and Asia would require the transition of approximately 50,000 students from Department of Defense Schools abroad to public schools across the country. In order for an integration plan to be successful for our military families, it is imperative that comprehensive student transition plans are developed, including:

- Ensuring these students meet the No Child Left Behind Act's standardized testing requirements, and;
- Planning with State and local education agencies.

Question 3. What actions are being taken and are collaborative plans being developed to ensure a smooth transition for these students?

BACKGROUND ON OPERATION MILITARY KIDS

In April of this year, a partnership was established between the Washington State University 4-H Programs, the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, the Washington State National Guard and Army Reserve. "Washington State Operation: Military Kids" is one of the pilot programs under the guidance of the Army and the Department of Agriculture.

The purpose is to help relieve the stress on military children impacted by the Global War on Terrorism—particularly those with deployed parents. It will create support networks for geographically dispersed military children in schools and communities before, during, and after the deployment of a family member or loved one.

The program aims to help new military children connect with other youth in similar situations and caring adults who can empathize and help them cope. By engaging existing school, community and military networks, the project builds bridges of understanding and links kids and families to needed resources.

A variety of statewide initiatives are being developed for schools, community groups and military families on the critical issues facing deployed soldiers, sailors, airmen and marines. This summer, "Washington State Operation: Military Kids" is working to get these three efforts up and rolling:

1. Training is underway for teachers, after school programs and community organizations to understand the special needs of military children.
2. "Speak Out for Military Kids" will teach military children public speaking skills and provide opportunities for them to educate the public about their experiences.
3. Family Assistance Centers throughout the State are designing local programs such as Family Night Out and Problem Solving sessions for parents and kids.

The "Washington State Operation: Military Kids" program is a great example of how the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the Army, and local organizations have joined forces to make a difference in their communities.

Senator ALEXANDER. Thank you, Senator Murray.

Senator Clinton?

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR CLINTON

Senator CLINTON. Thank you very much, and I thank both Senator Alexander and Senator Chambliss for holding this hearing and I appreciate the chance to have a joint hearing, especially since it is two committees I serve on, so I am delighted that we can do this. I certainly thank and welcome all of our panelists.

I think we are here for some very good reasons and because of the concerns we have about the impact on families who have been left behind while their loved ones have been serving our country abroad.

There are many things that can and should be done on the State level, and I appreciate the testimony that we are going to hear from our two Governors who represent some of the work that is being done to try to alleviate the stresses and the strains of these absences.

But we also have to take a harder look at what the Federal Government should do, as well. It is a Federal responsibility. The States have been trying to plug those holes, because oftentimes they are left with the responsibility to do so. When we see articles as we have seen in the last few days about the numbers of essential workers who have been deployed out of Guard and Reserve units, we know very well the impact that has on the private sector and on the public sector, on police departments and fire departments and other essential services.

So we should be trying to look at how we as a Nation support the families. I am very proud that in New York, we are a State with a long and distinguished military tradition. The Tenth Mountain Division based up at Fort Drumm is the most deployed division in the Army in recent times. The men and women there have served in both Afghanistan and Iraq with great distinction.

However, we still run into opposition to recognizing the reality of the forces we currently have and how we are using them. One example is the legislation that Senator Lindsey Graham and I, along with Senator Tom Daschle and others, have introduced and been successful in passing in the Senate to allow Guard members and Reservists to buy into TriCare, the military health insurance program. This will not only help alleviate the strains on about 25 percent of our Guard and Reserve members who do not have health insurance from their employment, and their families don't have health insurance, it will also improve medical readiness and ensure that the families left behind are not left in the State of uncertainty and insecurity.

We have met some resistance to that. I am hoping that the Pentagon and the administration will support this important provision and that we will once and for all be able to provide this necessary benefit to our Guard and Reserve members.

Additionally, when we look at the issues that are being addressed by the States and local governments because of the personnel shortages, we have to recognize that a lot of our employers have really been stretched thin, as well. Another element of the legislation Senator Graham and I introduced was to try to do something to provide some financial support for these employers.

Finally, I am concerned about the report that the Pentagon intends to close its child care center with no replacement available until 2007. Last week, I wrote to Secretary Rumsfeld that removing a child care center at the Pentagon without an immediately available replacement sends exactly the wrong message to the men and women who are literally working 24/7 at the Pentagon to support our troops abroad.

Another example of mixed messages is that the DOD is considering closing military schools and commissaries. I know that in Florida, Governor Bush, there are many, many schools on military installations. According to a report in the Army Times last fall, the DOD is considering a plan to transfer control of more than 58 schools to local communities, which I think is an unfortunate decision on two levels. First, we add more insecurity to the lives of these children, who often need the support of the base family and the other children who are confronting the same dilemma and oftentimes tragedy of having a mother or a father abroad, and we are putting more burdens on local school systems.

Separately, we have seen a memo from the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness to close 19 commissaries across the country and to study the possible closing of another 19 in the coming year. This is something, again, that I think is shortsighted.

So when we are looking at the stresses on families, I think it is very commendable that a number of our States have taken steps to try to plug some of these gaps, to try to provide the support that our families need during this time. But I don't think we should overlook the fact that ultimately, the responsibility rests with the Federal Government. We have a different kind of force facing different pressures in a very challenging world and we need to make sure that in an all-volunteer military, that we recognize that the husbands and wives and the children of our service members are also serving our country and we should support them in this important effort.

Thank you very much.

Senator ALEXANDER. Thank you, Senator Clinton.

Senator Bayh?

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR BAYH

Senator BAYH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thanks to our witnesses for joining us today. Mr. Chairman, I probably reflect your thoughts and Senator Nelson's thoughts when I say I have a good deal of nostalgia for the days when we used to be seated on that side of the table, so it is always good to hear from our Nation's Governors.

I also agree with Senator Clinton that this is a very important, timely hearing, Mr. Chairman, so I thank you for conducting it.

I hear so often from across our State very touching, even heartrending stories from the families of our servicemen and women about how difficult it is for them to make ends meet, and to provide health care and the other essentials. We shouldn't put our military families in a position of having to choose between doing right for their loved ones or doing right for the country they love. It is our

moral obligation to see that that kind of dilemma is done away with.

It is also in our best interests, because we can't hope to win the fight on the front lines while also not doing right by our families here on the home front. So I thank you for calling this hearing.

I would also like to say, just as a matter of personal privilege, that I can't think of a better witness than the Governor of my own home State. Governor Kernan has served in our military with distinction. He was a Navy flyer in Vietnam. He was a POW in that conflict and received the Navy Commendation Medal, two Purple Hearts, and a Distinguished Flying Cross. So Governor Kernan knows what it is like to serve our country. We admire him for that service and welcome him here today. If the Governor is too reticent to mention it, I will mention the fact that his parents are also here with him, and we welcome them, as well.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator ALEXANDER. Thank you, Senator Bayh. Thank you for the excellent statements.

Senator ALEXANDER. At this time I would like to submit statements for the record of Senators Kennedy and Feingold.

[The statements of Senators Kennedy and Feingold follow:]

STATEMENT OF SENATOR KENNEDY

Today's hearing gives us the opportunity to explore better ways to support the families of our men and women in the military. Our forces serve the Nation well, and they should also be able to depend on it for the support their families need in their absence.

Today's all volunteer force is vastly changed from the draft-era military of the early 1970's. Our professional military is now older, better educated and more likely to be married and have children. Nearly 60 percent of today's service members have a family obligation. Providing for the families of our men and women who serve in the armed forces must be a top priority in Congress. Unfortunately, the needs of these families are still miles from being met.

The military leadership has spoken out for months on the strain on our forces. On January 21, Lt. Gen. James R. Helmly, head of the Army Reserves, said, "the 205,000 soldier force must guard against a potential crisis in its ability to retain troops" and serious problems were being masked temporarily because Reservists are barred from leaving the military. The same day, Lt. Gen John Riggs said, "I have been in the Army 39 years, and I've never seen the Army as stretched in that 39 years as I have today." General Riggs was referring to the operational Army in that statement, but his words ring equally true for today's military families.

In recent years, the Department of Defense has done a remarkable job of recognizing and collecting data on the strain of deployment on soldiers and their families. The absence of a family member poses a unique stress. Spouses and other adult family members often experience depression, guilt, anxiety, and fatigue. Those effects are almost always exacerbated in children, from feelings of separation and anxiety to fear, defiance, and school difficulties.

It's imperative that we provide the support and services that all military families need to cope with the effects of deployment—in-

cluding mental health services, basic education, and child care. No military family should fall through the cracks.

We're making some progress. New partnerships between the Department of Defense and the child care community have increased access to rest and recuperation leave for personnel returning from tours of duty in Iraq or Afghanistan. Such leave is critical to protecting the mental health of families and easing the transition as a parent returns home after an extended period away.

States are also working in partnership with their military communities to establish educational policies that will ease the many transitions for students when military families make frequent moves.

The Department of Defense has built up an extensive network of proven and effective programs over the years to meet the basic needs of its personnel and their families—from good schools to quality child care, free health care, and a commissary and exchange system that provides necessities to families at reasonable prices. Such support can make an enormous difference.

But too often, families of our 150,000 National Guard and Reserve troops remain disconnected from military instillations, and are shut out of this network of support and services. Without networks, they remain at risk of being denied the assistance they need to sustain themselves.

During the recent consideration of the Department of Defense Authorization bill, I worked with our colleague Senator Alexander to ensure that military families receiving Federal benefits such as food stamps, energy assistance, school meals, or Head Start continue to remain eligible and participate in those programs—even as their income may temporarily increase due to the special combat pay their family members receive for going in harm's way.

I have also worked with Senator Murray to see that our Active Guards and Reservists have fair access to the child care support they need to give their children quality care and early learning before they enter school. The Department of Defense provides a gold standard of care to the children of its personnel on military instillations. The Department should also step-up assistance for Guards and Reservists who do not live on a military base. They deserve no less.

I had also hoped we would provide greater assistance to local school districts that serve large numbers of military children. During the first Gulf War and now the second, local school districts have incurred a variety of costs for children who struggle academically while their parents are in harm's way. Schools are forced on their own to finance increased costs for counseling, tutoring, dropout prevention, and school safety. A recent press report describes the impact of war on the education of military children, and I would like to request that it be inserted into the Record after my statement.

Leaving behind a civilian job is also a major hardship for families of Reservists who have been called up for active duty. These men and women leave behind their civilian jobs—often giving up high salaries and benefits. Their families have to find a way to meet their mortgage payments, buy groceries, and care for their children without the benefit of their civilian salaries.

To lessen this hardship, our laws entitle service members returning home to go back to their former jobs, with full pay and benefits. Most employers obey the law. But more and more, soldiers return to find that they've been replaced or demoted. In 2003, over 1,300 service members suffered problems with employers and filed complaints with the Department of Labor.

It's not enough to have protective laws on the books—we also need to enforce them. The Federal agencies which bear the responsibility to prosecute these cases have pursued only a handful of the cases in recent years, and I have asked the General Accounting Office to investigate that issue. We need to do everything we can to protect the rights of servicemen and women as they reenter the American workplace.

In wartime, we cannot afford to weaken the very network of programs our military families depend on. The Department of Defense schools guarantee quality education for the sons and daughters of military personnel. Commissaries provide the families of our troops with the goods and services needed for a sufficient quality of life. The Administration's plan to close these facilities is wrong. It has no authorization from Congress, and often lacks sufficient information about the impact on families. As our troops serve America half a world away, they should not have to worry about their children's education and their family's grocery bills.

Today, we'll explore the support and services provided by the Pentagon and the States to support the families of armed service personnel. I look forward to hearing from all of the panelists, and I extend a special welcome to Governor Bush and Governor Kernan, and I commend them for the work done in their States to strengthen services for members of the military and their families. The task is not easy, especially in light of the new security challenge that many States face as a result of the extended deployment of their own National Guards.

We need to do better for these families, and I thank each of the witnesses today for their commitment to that goal.

WAR TAKES TOLL ON MILITARY KIDS

FRIDAY, MAY 14, 2004

BY KELLEY BEAUCAR VLAHOS (FOX NEWS)

WASHINGTON—The War on Terror is taking a toll on the children of American soldiers as public school and Pentagon officials report an increase in behavior problems, failing grades and dropout rates.

"These kids are not doing well—they are not doing well academically, they are not doing well socially, they are not doing well emotionally. It's wearing thin," said Barbara Critchfield, a longtime guidance counselor at Shoemaker High School in Killeen, Texas, which sits right outside of Fort Hood, the largest Army base in the country.

At least 80 percent of the 2,000-member student body at Shoemaker lives in a military household. A majority of them have parents who have been or are currently deployed in Iraq or Afghanistan.

Critchfield told Foxnews.com of numerous teens who have stopped coming to school altogether. Of the 396 expected graduates this June, 75 to 80 have already either dropped out or have skipped too much school to graduate on time, she said.

"They're dropping like flies," she said.

She reported that one teenage girl was living alone for a year before her father returned home from Iraq. One student is adjusting to a returned parent's painful post-traumatic stress. Another boy's father never came home.

"I don't think we will ever be the same," Critchfield said, noting that there have been three deaths and at least two serious injuries to parents of students on campus. "For the most part, we just try to be there for the kids, we roll with the punches, and every day brings a whole new problem."

Such are the circumstances for schools connected to the many installations across the country that have been rotating troops since September 11, 2001. Currently, about 135,000 American troops are serving in Iraq, several thousand are deployed in Afghanistan, and still thousands more are in the Gulf region or other hotspots across the globe.

Department of Defense officials dedicated to keeping watch over military families say there are around 1.2 million shool-age children of parents in the military's active duty force. Dr. Jean Silvernail, program analyst for the Pentagon's Military Children in Transition and Deployment, said the Pentagon has no firm data for the number of children, including those whose parents are serving in the National Guard and Reserves, directly affected by current deployments. Recent reports have put the number served by public schools at close to 650,000.

School officials say because of their location outside of major military installments, they have always been prepared for transitory issues, since children frequently come to and go from the school district when their parents are transferred. But the war has tested the skills of many teachers, some of whom are military spouses themselves.

"I have a husband who is about to be sent off again," said Amanda Tooke, assistant principal at Kenyon Hills Middle School in El Paso, Texas, which serves a large number of families connected to Fort Bliss. She has three children in the local schools, including one in the middle school.

"It's up and down, an emotional roller coaster," she said.

Tooke said teachers are watching for warning signs and giving personal attention where needed. For the most part, she said, they just try to keep up a patriotic, positive atmosphere.

"The awareness is important," she said, noting that they have a student whose older brother was recently injured in a roadside bomb attack. "Everyone is really supportive."

Silvernail said the Department of Defense has enlisted the help of organizations like Generations United, a group of retired military personnel and veterans who go to school districts to offer tutoring services. The Military Impacted Schools Association is also looking out to make sure schools get the resources they need.

The Defense Department has put up a Web site, MilitaryStudent.org, which offers links to information, resources and personal contacts for teachers, students and parents. Silvernail said her department is also hiring regional counseling coordinators for the most impacted districts.

"One of the things we know is that children under the stress of deployment are affected academically, socially, and emotionally," she said. "We are truly trying hard to do the best we can for these kids."

Earlier this month, U.S. Rep. Robin Hayes, R-N.C., successfully pushed through a House resolution honoring the teachers and administrators in schools that are disproportionately affected by war. His district includes Fort Bragg in Fayetteville, and he said he will continue to fight for Federal aid for these schools.

"It's a pretty disruptive life," he told Foxnews.com. "This is something we tend to take for granted—that our school personnel is stepping up to make things as seamless, and if at all possible, as uninterrupted as they possibly can."

Critchfield said spirits have been brightened by the prospect of graduation day on May 30, for which there will be a teleconference between mothers and fathers in Baghdad and their graduates at Ft. Hood. Not only will they be able to see the commencement ceremony, but each parent will have a few minutes afterward for a video chat with their children. In addition, the whole event will be broadcast live on the Web.

The whole undertaking represents a huge gift for both the parents and the students, who have, in many cases, been a bundle of nerves throughout the entire school year, she said.

"We pretty much take it one day at a time. It's tense, and intense."

STATEMENT OF SENATOR FEINGOLD

I want to thank the Chairmen and Ranking Members of the Children and Families Subcommittee of the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee and the Personnel Subcommittee of the Senate Armed Services Committee for holding this important

hearing on supporting the families of those in the National Guard and Reserve. Military families bear a great burden when we deploy our troops and this burden can be especially challenging for the families of our citizen-soldiers. We, as a Nation, should be doing all we can to ease that burden.

Today, I would like to draw attention to legislation I authored to help these military families. The Military Families Leave Act (S.683) would allow military family members who already qualify for Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) benefits to use their benefits (i.e. take unpaid leave) for issues directly arising from the deployment of a member of their family. The Military Families Leave Act is supported by the National Military Family Association (NMFA), the National Council on Family Relations (NCFR), and the National Partnership for Women and Families, as well as a number of military organizations, including the Reserve Officers Association, the Military Officers Association of America, the Enlisted Association of the National Guard of the United States, and the National Guard Association of the United States. The Senate adopted this legislation by unanimous consent when I offered it as an amendment to the supplemental spending bill for Iraq and Afghanistan.

The Military Families Leave Act would provide military families of both the active and reserve component with some important flexibility to help them cope with the new demands they may face as a result of a loved one's deployment. In a recent letter of support, NFMA stated that my legislation would provide military families with "breathing room" to adjust to the new and difficult circumstances. NCFR said the Military Families Leave Act was, "an excellent example of how public policy can support families and change lives for the better." During Senate consideration of the Iraq supplemental, the National Partnership wrote in support of this legislation, saying it "comes at a critical time in the lives of our military families. Its passage will give them time to prepare, logistically and mentally, before or during a loved one's departure for active duty without fear of losing a much needed job." It is time for Congress to give military families this breathing room.

I ask that, as these two committees discuss ways to support military families, they take a close look at the Military Families Leave Act and listen to what military families and organizations dedicated to helping them say about this legislation. Some naysayers may suggest that this modest step would bring economic disaster. It will not. This legislation builds upon the proven FMLA—a law that many of these same naysayers said would also lead to economic disaster. According to a 2000 Labor Department survey, over 93 percent of covered employers said that FMLA had no affect on profitability. Our troops and their families are making tremendous sacrifices every day. We know that this time is very difficult for children and families. Allowing families to use their FMLA benefits for issues directly resulting from deployments of their loved one is not too much to ask.

Senator ALEXANDER. Just to preview what we have coming, we have three panels and we will have a chance to go through most of the issues that we have talked about today.

First, we will hear from two distinguished Governors. Then we will hear from Charles Abell from the Department of Defense about the Federal Government's activities. And then we will hear from the National Governors Association, from General Reimer, who is founder of the Military Child Education Coalition, and from Holly Petraeus, who while she was at Fort Campbell, as an example, helped families there as the wife of the commanding General and active herself in those activities.

As we now move to the Governors, what we found in our first six hearings was that while of course we have Federal responsibilities, as Senator Clinton mentioned, but we found a great many things that have to do with military personnel and their lives that were the purview of the States and which the two of you have been doing something about, such as when families move from one State to another and their children face different graduation requirements. We began to run into a number of things that obviously the States could do better than the Federal Government, or different, and then we found out that a good deal more was going on than we knew about. So the first part of the hearing is about what is happening with the States.

The two Governors, the Governor of Florida and the Governor of Indiana, I will not give them long introductions. Senator Bayh has just given Joe Kernan a good introduction. Governor Kernan, we are delighted that you are here. We are proud of your service for our country and your leadership with the veterans' outreach in Indiana.

Governor Bush, the Governor of Florida whom I have known a long time, we have worked together mostly on education initiatives across the country, both when he was in the private sector and as Governor. He has focused on education. He has focused on the Everglades. But because Florida has one of the highest concentrations of permanent military residents in the country, he, like Governor Kernan, has been a leader on support for military families.

Why don't we begin with you, Governor Bush, then go to Governor Kernan. We look forward to your testimony.

STATEMENT OF HON. JOHN ELLIS "JEB" BUSH, GOVERNOR, STATE OF FLORIDA

Governor BUSH. Thank you, Senator Alexander. Thank you very much, Senators. It is a joy to be here in our Nation's capitol. Good afternoon. Thank you for the opportunity to speak about the many ways State governments and communities can support the men and women in our armed forces and their families.

Florida is the proud home of 21 military installations and three unified commands, including the Southern Command in Miami, Special Operations Command and Central Command in Tampa. Florida's outreach to our military community is based on the idea that we can only meet the needs that are identified.

Just as Senator Alexander said, the first step is to listen, and so one of the things that I did was to steal an idea from Senator Bob Graham, then Governor Graham, who created a base commanders' meeting. In 1999 when I was elected Governor, that was one of his recommendations. I admit it. I stole it, took the idea, and now for twice a year since 1999, we have had meetings with every base

commander in our State to listen to them about the concerns that exist for their families, for enlisted men, as well as the bases in general.

Additionally, every Florida State agency has an internal military affairs liaison and these liaisons reach out to the military community to open up communications and identify needs. They ensure members of our military community are well served by the State and we have encouraged local governments to do the exact same thing.

In addition, in 1999, we created the Florida Defense Alliance to help better integrate the military into our local communities, and it is comprised of community, State, and military leaders and the group focuses on community outreach activities to support the men and women of the armed forces that are located in Florida.

Two of the alliance's five working groups are dedicated to the specific needs of military families. The Military Family Working Group examines issues that affect military families moving into our State, and the Military Spouse Career Opportunities Working Group addresses the unique needs of military spouses that transfer into our State.

Florida, at the State level, has used this information to create initiatives and pass legislation to support military personnel and their families, and I would like to summarize our actions to date.

Education is a huge priority in the State of Florida and it is reflected in our support for military families. The Florida Department of Education is required to work with military families and military leaders to identify and address unique needs of students in military families and they do this with a regular reporting system that comes directly to me. This year, we passed legislation to give these children first preference in special academic programs like charter and magnet schools as well as Advanced Placement courses.

We learned that this was a problem recently when General John Pavlovich, who recently assumed the command of the 45th Space Wing at Patrick Air Force Base in Brevard County in Florida, he and his wife found out that their son, Luke, a gifted student, wasn't eligible for special programs in his school because of the enrollment dates, which is a problem across the country in order to plan for enrollment, whether it is for public school choice programs or ESE programs or gifted programs, magnet programs, you name it. Typically, there is a 6 month or 1 year waiting period, and as was pointed out by the General and his wife, Deb Pavlovich, who is involved in many of these issues, they pointed out to the Florida Defense Alliance that this was going to create a real problem for many military families. In May, I signed legislation to ensure that that requirement of eligibility was waived for all military families for every one of our special school choice or special needs programs.

The Florida school choice programs include a program called the McKay Scholarship program for children with special needs. We now have about 25,000 students who, if their moms and dads don't believe that their IEP, their Individual Education Plans, are not being met, they can unilaterally send their child to any school of their choice, including private options. And again, there was a 1–year public school residency requirement for this program that our

legislation waived, as well, so military families can take full benefit of this school choice program that they otherwise wouldn't be able to do if they had recently moved to our State.

Students in military families who transfer into Florida's high schools as high school seniors created another problem, which is that we have an exit test to graduate from high school, a requirement to pass a test in order to receive a standard diploma. As was mentioned, the standards in many States are quite different and so we substituted the standard assessment of our State for any assessment, including the SAT and ACT, for the State's exit exam requirement for graduation.

And all active duty service members, including National Guards and their families stationed in Florida, or outside of Florida within 50 miles, Senator Chambliss, of Florida, if they are 50 miles from any public institution of higher learning, are eligible for in-State tuition rates.

The sons and daughters of Florida servicemen and women who have given their lives in the war on terror receive a 4-year scholarship to any of Florida's public universities or community colleges through our Florida pre-paid scholarship program.

In terms of work, Florida also tries to support working military husbands and wives, which is one of the things that we have heard from the base commanders is one of the leading challenges that they face in day-to-day life. Based on the knowledge of some surrounding States that we were told that offer unemployment benefits to military spouses who quit their jobs to keep their families together after deployment or transfer, Florida did that this year. I think there are probably 15 States that have that benefit now for families in that unique circumstance.

Military spouses in Florida also have access to a variety of resources through our State's network of one-stop career centers and they are given priority. If there is a line, they get in the front of the line, because what we have tried to do in every possible way in every service, the priority should be given to these families because of their unique circumstances. These centers help connect them to employers and set up interviews and provide job training, counseling, and online resources to help spouses find meaningful employment in their chosen fields.

We also found that transferring in, in many cases, for professions became somewhat cumbersome, and actually based on this, we have streamlined our requirements regarding nurses and teachers. The certification process has been streamlined and we have now a simple endorsement process for nurses and some 2,000 nurses, spouses of military personnel that have moved into the State, have taken advantage of this endorsement process, where if they are certified in most States, then they will be able to get immediate certification in Florida.

In addition to job and school changes, transfer or deployment can also create—and always creates—some financial issues that puts tremendous stress on military families. We try to ease that burden by protecting servicemen and women from practices that unfairly penalize them for their service.

For example, we prohibit landlords from discriminating against service personnel. Believe it or not, that actually had taken place.

There were instances that we identified and the law was changed to bring greater scrutiny to that and to bring enforcement against that type of act.

We also cap interest and fees that title loan companies can charge customers, and Senator Chambliss, I know that Georgia did the same thing. There is something about having admirals and generals show up in the State capital to lobby on behalf of enlisted men and women where these title loan companies would have stores right outside the gates of the bases charging up to effective interest rates of 330 percent. The legislature, after years of not being able to see the way to regulate this industry, did so with one visit by the base commanders of our State and I would urge other States to consider that as part of a strategy to help military families.

We have also closed the gaps in the Federal Uniformed Soldier and Sailor Relief Act to protect military personnel from penalties for early terminations of contracts, like auto leases, cell phone agreements, and other things leased or contracted, including rent for apartments.

In Florida, State employees called to active duty as Reservists or National Guards receive 30 days of pay upon deployment. The State of Florida continues to pay the difference between their military compensation and their State salary for the duration of their deployment.

And we are exploring tax incentives that may inspire private companies to follow our lead. We know that many of the small businesses have a hard time. If you have five employees in your business, it is very difficult to have someone leave for a year or a year and a half, and so we are looking for next session to find ways to provide incentives for all businesses to be able to provide the same coverage that the State government does for our employees.

The State also extends health insurance coverage to State employees who are deployed and we offer workers' compensation coverage to members of the National Guard called to active duty within our State.

Today in Florida, five counties forgive property taxes for every month a service member is deployed away from home, and they offer a one-time grant of $600 for renters who are deployed to help with storage and moving expenses, which can be extraordinarily high. We are working to expand this county-by-county across our State.

We have also redefined our legal definition of wartime veteran to ensure veterans who return home from the war on terror and others who serve in conflicts around the world receive the benefits they are entitled to. In addition, recent legislation gives disabled vets an additional $5,000 homestead exemption. That had not been changed in 30 years. That goes on top of the $25,000 standard exemption in our State.

The State of Florida recognizes the importance of maintaining a strong military and the role of State governments in support of that objective, and our active partnership with the military in our State has made it possible for us to incrementally provide benefits and services to the Reservists, the National Guard, and the enlisted men and women that are in our State, and we are going to

continue to listen to them and develop policies around them to assure that our State says thank you for a job well done.

Thank you, Senator.

Senator ALEXANDER. Thank you, Governor Bush.

[The prepared statement of Governor Bush follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF GOVERNOR JEB BUSH

Mr. Chairman, and Members of the Committee, good afternoon. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you about the many ways State governments and communities can support the men and women in our armed forces and their families.

MILITARY PRESENCE IN FLORIDA

Florida is the proud home of 21 military installations and three unified commands, including Southern Command, Special Operations Command, and Central Command, currently directing U.S. military action in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Each of Florida's 67 counties is directly impacted by the defense industry, and military families are an integral part of the social fabric of our State. Military men and women not only serve their country, they serve their communities as volunteers and role models. Florida is proud of the men and women who serve courageously and honorably from our State. We have made serving them, and supporting their families, one of our top priorities.

FLORIDA'S MILITARY OUTREACH

We can only meet needs that are identified. That is the rationale behind Florida's strong outreach to our military community. Our State actively partners with Florida military installations to discuss concerns and the unique needs of military families.

BASE COMMANDER MEETINGS

Since 1999, I have held semi-annual meetings with the base commanders of all Florida installations to discuss issues impacting their troops, installations, and communities. We have met 9 times to date. The information provided by the commanders gives us insight into ways to ease the transition of military personnel and families into and out of our State and guides us toward solutions that improve the quality of life for military families while they're in our State. The commanders have raised several issues that have since been addressed by new State initiatives.

AGENCY LIAISONS

At my direction, every State agency now has an internal military affairs liaison. In place since 1999, these representatives reach out to the military community to open communication and identify needs. Their purpose is to ensure our military community is well served and has access to all available State resources.

FLORIDA DEFENSE ALLIANCE

We created the Florida Defense Alliance to help us better integrate the military into local communities. Also formed in 1999, the Alliance is comprised of community, State, and military leaders. The group focuses on identifying and implementing community outreach activities to support the men and women of the armed forces in Florida.

Within the Alliance are five working groups, targeting specific issues related to the military in Florida, and two of these groups focus on the wellbeing and needs of military families.

The first, the Military Family Working Group, examines issues that affect military families moving into our State, as well as their transition to civilian life. The challenges military children face as they transfer into Florida schools is an area of particular interest to this group. The group makes recommendations regarding legislation to ease the transition of military families in Florida.

The other family focused working group, the Military Spouse Career Opportunities Working Group, targets the unique needs of military spouses who transfer into Florida. This group addresses job search support, unemployment compensation, licensing requirements, and other issues important to spouses making a move to follow a service member.

These outreach efforts have provided a wealth of information and insight. As a result, Florida is working to make it easier for military men and women to serve

from our State, and give them peace of mind that their families are supported by their community and State government.

SUPPORTIVE ACTION

The State of Florida has used the insights gained from these outreach efforts to create initiatives and pass legislation to address the unique needs of military personnel and their families. Our State has emerged as a leader in this regard, and we will continue to push forward to create the most military friendly environment in the Nation.

I would like to summarize the actions we've taken to support military families in Florida. This summary will underscore our commitment to service men and women, and hopefully serve as a model for other States.

EDUCATION

Education is a priority for Florida, and this is reflected in our support of military families. Children in military families may change schools as many as 9 times before graduation. Florida has taken steps to ensure students transitioning into our system may do so with a minimum of disruption. We are also committed to providing opportunities for these students to pursue higher education in our State.

• Florida requires our State Department of Education to work with the military to identify and address the unique needs of military families.

• This year, I signed legislation to ensure children of military families in our State are given first preference in special academic programs like charter and magnet schools and Advance Placement courses. Many of these programs have arbitrary enrollment dates that put them out of reach for children transferring in mid-year. Children who transfer into a Florida public school because of military orders will now have access to all programs regardless of enrollment date.

• Florida has long been an advocate and proving ground for school choice, offering three voucher programs, including the McKay Scholarship program for children with special needs. Children of military families are now exempt from the 1 year public school residency requirement for the McKay Scholarship, ensuring their parents can make the right educational choice to meet their special needs.

• Military children who transfer into Florida's public school system as high school seniors may substitute a standardized assessment such as the ACT or SAT for Florida's exit exam requirement for graduation.

• Florida's Prepaid Scholarship program provides a 4 year college scholarship to sons and daughters of Florida service men and women who have given their lives in the war on terror. These scholarships are honored at all Florida public universities and community colleges.

• A few years ago, we passed legislation allowing all active duty service members and their dependents stationed in Florida to receive in-State tuition at any of Florida's State universities and community colleges. In 2002, we expanded this benefit to include all National Guards stationed in our State. This year, we expanded this benefit to include children whose military families are stationed outside Florida, but within 50 miles of a Florida university or community college.

SPOUSES

We often speak of the sacrifice our service men and women make for this country. We must also consider the sacrifice made by their spouses. Working military husbands and wives change jobs with every transfer. Florida has developed several ways to support them through the transition.

• Two years ago, we launched a pilot program to make it easier for nurses to move to Florida. Under this pilot, Florida grants licensure by endorsement for nurses who are currently licensed in one of the 17 States participating in the "Nursing Licensure Compact." We've licensed approximately 2,000 nurses under the program to date. This year we made the program a permanent part of Florida statute, and added an additional benefit for military spouses. Nurses not part of this compact, who transfer to Florida with a military spouse, are now allowed to work as a nurse for 120 days while awaiting licensure, twice the period given to other nurses.

• Florida is one of the few States to offer unemployment benefits to military spouses who quit their jobs to keep their families together after deployment or transfer.

• This year, Florida also passed legislation to create an employment advocacy and assistance program for military spouses and dependents. The goal is to strengthen the link between military families and Florida's workforce and employment market. Military spouses have access to a variety of resources through "one stop career cen-

ters." The centers will help connect them to employers and set up interviews, provide job training, and provide counseling and online resources required to find the kind of work they want to do.

FINANCE

In addition to job and school changes, military families can be stressed by separation and cash flow issues related to transfers or deployment. Florida has taken several steps to ease this burden and protect service men and women from predatory practices that unfairly penalize them for service.

• Landlords in Florida are specifically prohibited from discriminating against any member of the United States Armed Services in offering a place to rent or through any item in the rental agreement.

• We have regulated activities of payday loan and check cashing businesses that traditionally target military personnel.

• We have capped the interest and fees that title loan companies can charge service men and women.

• We have passed legislation to close the gaps in the Federal Uniform Soldier Sailor Relief Act. The act was originally passed in 1940 to protect servicemen from penalties for breaking financial agreements when deployed. The Federal law doesn't protect military personnel from penalties for early termination of auto leases, cell phone agreements and other items that are commonly leased or contracted. Florida's law does.

• Any State employee called to active duty as a Reservist or National Guard receives 30 days of pay upon deployment. The State also continues to pay the difference between their military compensation and their State salary for the duration of their deployment. We have encouraged private employers to follow our lead, and many have joined us. We're exploring tax incentives that might inspire more to companies to participate.

• The State has extended health insurance coverage to State employees deployed as a Reservist or Guard, and we offer Workman's Compensation coverage to members of the Florida National Guard called to active duty within the State.

• Five Florida counties now forgive property taxes for every month a service member is deployed away from home, and they offer a one-time grant of $600 for renters who are deployed. We are encouraging more communities to join this initiative and are working to expand this benefit county-by-county.

• We have made it easier to recognize and provide benefits to wartime veterans by legally defining "wartime veteran" as anyone who served in a campaign or expedition for which a campaign badge was issued. Veterans who return from the war on terror and others who serve in conflicts around the world are now assured of receiving the benefits they're entitled to.

• We have also increased the homestead exemption for disabled veterans in Florida, from $500 to $5,000. This is in addition to the standard $25,000 exemption.

FLORIDA IS A MODEL

The State of Florida recognizes the importance of maintaining a strong military, and the role States play in support of that objective. By taking steps I've outlined today to ease the stress of military life and mitigate its impact on military families, Florida is doing our part to ensure the men and women in our armed forces are able to serve to the best of their ability. I am proud of Florida's position on issues related to military support. Our experience reflects the active role State government can play in support of a national cause. Florida will continue to seek new ways to meet the emerging needs of military families.

There need not be a division between local communities and military installations. Florida's active partnership with the military is a model for effective collaboration that reduces conflict and promotes a supportive environment for the men and women who serve this country.

Each State has its own dynamics that define how it can best support the military within its own borders. However, it is incumbent upon us all to leverage all resources to meet the unique needs of our men and women in uniform. Florida is eager to share our experience and best practices with other States, and to learn from them as well.

Together, we can ensure America's service men and women have the support they deserve, wherever they are based.

Senator ALEXANDER. Governor Kernan?

STATEMENT OF HON. JOSEPH E. KERNAN, GOVERNOR, STATE OF INDIANA

Governor KERNAN. Senator Alexander, Senator Chambliss, members, thank you very much for the opportunity to be with you today. I appreciate the chance to be with Governor Bush. We have different stories because we come from different places.

As Governor Bush said, they have 21 installations in the State of Florida. We have one active installation that is not Reserve or Guard-based in our State and it really only has a handful of personnel that are in uniform, the Crane Naval Surface Warfare Center, which provides services to all of our armed services as well as to Homeland Security.

Our difference, then, in this context is that we do not have the kind of support system that is available in the State of Florida and in those places where there are a great many permanent military installations. Therefore, as we are looking for ways to support those who serve from Indiana, particularly from the Guard and the Reserves, it is a matter of transition. I acknowledge that the role of the Guard has changed. The role of the Reserve transitioned from mobilization to deployment and all of the problems that that causes, as well as outreach to make sure that our families and our members understand the kinds of things that are available to them as many of them are going through a deployment and mobilization for the first time.

We have in Indiana the fifth largest National Guard in America. There are 14,000 men and women that serve in our two Air Guard fighter wings as well as in the Army Guard. We have to date deployed some 7,600 members of our Guard and today have about 4,000 that are now on active duty, the most recent 1,200 that have just deployed over the course of the last 2 weeks. There are 147 different National Guard units in Indiana, so they are scattered all across the State, which means that their families are scattered across the State, as well.

We in our State have over time, as Governor Bush has said, put in place a number of programs, some of which are duplicated in Florida and in other places. The two that I would mention that we are most proud of are that we provide all of our active duty, all of our members of the Indiana National Guard with the opportunity for full tuition relief at any of our public institutions in the State, and for anyone who is disabled with a service-connected disability or has a Purple Heart, they receive free remission of all tuition and all fees at—their children receive free remission of all fees and all tuition at our public universities.

As we look at the role that the Guard has played, that we and the State of Indiana has played, the Indiana National Guard Family Program focuses in three areas. The first is family readiness, recognizing that it is in that lead-up time to when someone finally deploys that an awful lot of things have to be put in place, that there are issues that have to do with signing up for DEERS, the government card that permits access to service, legal assistance, identifying guardians in those instances where that is appropriate, financial planning, child care, all of those kinds of things.

We have in place at each of our 147 Guard units around the State three members, three volunteers who are there to answer

questions, to serve as resources for the members of the Guard and for their families. And as many as 18 to 20 will be in place depending on the size of the unit as well as where it is in the deployment-mobilization pipeline.

The second area that gives us—that has been very important to us in Indiana is the Family Assistance Centers, which was mentioned earlier, supported by the Department of Defense. As we look at those issues that I mentioned that have to do with readiness, they also remain challenges for families as their members are deployed. It is staffed with full-time personnel as well as a number of volunteers from communities across the State. Just to give you an example of how important they are, between the months of March and June of this year, we had 15,000 contacts from National Guard families in the State of Indiana.

We, as well, have seen significant support from the private sector. We have our larger companies that have been able to be very supportive. As the Governor said, smaller companies have a much more difficult time, but we have established an Indiana National Guard Relief Fund that has dispersed to date about $20,000 to families that do not have the resources for the variety of challenges that they face. And the Lilly Endowment, the endowment of one of Indiana's great companies, is just now providing $250,000 that will be distributed to Guard families for those circumstances where they are unable to pay for any of a variety of reasons.

As we look at the readiness issue, the one thing that I would mention and one that would go a long way toward assisting families would be the longer the lead times that our men and women are given, the better they are able to be prepared, the fewer loose ends there are for them to have to deal with as well as their families once they are deployed.

Finally, in the area of youth services, which again is a part of the Guard's formal program, the Indiana National Guard has been active in working with young people. You have heard from many here today about the importance of education and all of the challenges that our children face. We have formed a youth council, have a full-time person who coordinates youth services, the special needs that our students are facing and helping them cope with those challenges, making sure that they know they are not alone. We have formed an alliance with the 4-H leadership in order to provide another piece of infrastructure that will assist our children and their families as well as teachers and parents, and our youth council actually will be speaking and making a presentation at the National Family Readiness Conference later this year.

As we look at those things that the Federal Government has been actively engaged in and that we are fully supportive of, and I would preface my remarks by saying that General Blum, who serves as the Chief of National Guard has been terrific in working with us and I know with other States. I mentioned longer lead times.

I would also, consistent with testimony that our Adjutant General gave here a few weeks ago, the opportunity to reduce the deployment time from 12 months to 9 months, we believe would be very beneficial to families as well as the Guardsmen and women. It would help their employers, and as we are seeing now with the

12-month deployment, with the time that is required to work up to get ready to go as well as the time on the back end, deployments are now lasting anywhere from 14 to 18 months. And again, for those that are part-time soldiers, volunteer soldiers, it puts a significant burden on those families.

We are, and when I say "we," I mean the Governors of all stripes are very supportive of the House version of the Defense Authorization which permits the Secretary of Defense to fund National Guard domestic operations. We believe that that is important for us to understand as Governors, to contribute to our fiscal stability and understand where we are, as well as to continue to provide programs.

We are strongly supportive of increased Federal health care assistance consistent with what the Senate has done, that all Guard members, we believe, should be eligible for TriCare. We, as well, as we look at TriCare, which is the primary way that the families of Guard members in Indiana get their care because of our lack of installations. If you have an acute care need, you have to go to Wright-Patterson in Ohio or you have to go to Fort Knox in Kentucky in order to get those services. TriCare is very, very important, and proper reimbursements, timely payments, reimbursements for them, for those that provide services, we believe are very, very important.

We would ask that the deferral of payments and interest accrual on active duty personnel for their loans that they may have taken out, particularly for education, that those be deferred. Efforts to address different groups of folks who are juggling careers and the kinds of financial stress that is imposed, proper and, we believe, appropriate making up of the difference between Guard pay and what they are earning on the private side, we believe is very important. Expansion of the Federal Family and Medical Leave Act to include activated National Guard families, we believe would be a step in the right direction, as well.

This is a partnership. This is a team effort, and we at the State level are committed as you all are to doing everything that we can on behalf of our Guardsmen and women as well as their families. We applaud your efforts. We look forward to continuing to work with you, recognizing that it is the families of Guardsmen and women that are serving, as well.

Senator ALEXANDER. Thank you very much, Governor Kernan and Governor Bush.

[The prepared statement of Governor Kernan follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF GOVERNOR JOSEPH E. KERNAN

Good afternoon, I'd like to thank the Chairman and Ranking Members of the two subcommittees sponsoring today's hearing for giving me the opportunity to discuss Indiana's efforts to support our active duty military members and their families, especially the men and women serving in our National Guard. I would like to also share some thoughts on what the Federal Government might do to further assist these families.

As you may be aware, previous rounds of Federal base closures have left Indiana with only one major active duty installation—Naval Surface Warfare Center-Crane. This base, which is over 100 square miles, is located in a rural area of southern Indiana. It is the U.S. Navy's third largest installation in the world. The U.S. Army is also a joint tenant and oversees one of the Nation's largest ordnance storage facilities. We are very proud of Crane's capacity to develop, test, adapt, and produce high-tech weapons and other specialized equipment needed for both combat and

force protection. Officials at Crane have multiple partnerships with industry, academia and State and Federal Governments. The latest example is the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding with the Military Department of Indiana to increase use of resources between Crane and Camp Atterbury in order to facilitate state of the art research and training that enhances our homeland security initiatives.

Since Indiana lost four major installations and thousands of active duty soldiers, our primary attention, in addition to strengthening NSWC-Crane's military missions, has been focused on support for our National Guard members and the facilities where they are based. We are extremely proud to have the 5th largest National Guard force in the country; 14,000 Hoosiers throughout our State volunteer as citizen soldiers. Seven-thousand-six-hundred and twelve Army and Air National Guard troops from Indiana have served on active duty in the global war on terror since 2001. And, last year, nearly 1,500 Indiana Guard soldiers served in the Middle East during Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Indiana is home to the Grissom Air Reserve Base, the Defense Finance and Accounting Center—Indianapolis, two Air National Guard Fighter Wings in Ft. Wayne and Terre Haute, as well as the Camp Atterbury Joint Manuever Training Center, a premier training and mobilization center. More than 10,000 soldiers have been mobilized through Camp Atterbury after being called up for duty in Operation Noble Eagle, Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Iraqi Freedom and other missions assigned by the Department of Defense including support missions in Bosnia and Afghanistan.

Having touched upon Indiana's role in America's military and what Hoosiers have been doing for their country, let me now talk about what the State of Indiana has been doing for our service men and women and their families.

INDIANA INITIATIVES IN SUPPORT OF MILITARY FAMILIES

Since Hoosiers value military service, our State has in place a number of laws and programs intended to support our deployed soldiers and their families, and give them a boost upon their departure from service. These initiatives are outlined in more detail on the attached chart and include the following:

- Limited leave without loss of time or pay for State employees;
- Hiring preferences for State government positions, including special preferences for those with service connected disabilities;
- Full tuition assistance for State colleges and universities;
- Full tuition and mandatory fee scholarships at our public universities for the children of military personnel with service connected disabilities or who have received a Purple Heart;
- Tax deductions for military personnel and special filing extensions for those outside the State or in a combat zone;
- Property tax deductions available to disabled Hoosier veterans who have at least a 10 percent service connected disability;
- Driver's license renewals for those serving abroad, with 90 day extensions upon discharge;
- A requirement for private employers to grant leave for active duty in accordance with the Soldiers and Sailors Civil Relief Act.

INDIANA NATIONAL GUARD FAMILY PROGRAM

We are especially proud of our National Guard Family Program, which has adopted a philosophy of "family readiness" in recognition of the growing role that Guard soldiers play in our Nation's defense. We know that when our soldiers are being deployed, in a very real sense their families are being deployed as well. Focusing on making families ready for life in the Guard, including deployment, gives them more time to plan when things are calm and not confused with the emotions associated with deployment.

A strong volunteer network is the cornerstone of our service to Guard members and their families. The Guard is unique in the fact that its members are scattered throughout all parts of our State and sometimes in neighboring States. Because most of them are part-time soldiers and don't live within the confines of a military base, their families miss out on the camaraderie and support found on a base. The Family Readiness volunteer network can become a lifeline to essential services such as child-care, employer support, counseling and other services, especially during a deployment.

Indiana's Family Program is made up of three components: Family Readiness, Family Assistance Centers, and Youth Services.

Family Readiness: Our Family Readiness Program has established a statewide network of volunteers to provide support and assistance to Guard members and their families. There are 147 Army and Air Guard units in Indiana. Each unit is served through a family assistance center that is staffed by at least three volunteers and more are added during a period of deployment. The mission of the Family Readiness Program is to "educate, inform and assist families, service members, and the community thereby improving readiness and retention." Typical services provided to Indiana Guard families through this network include:

- Information and enrollment into the Defense Eligibility Enrollment System (DEERS), a computerized data base that is the means of documenting eligibility for medical and other benefits for service members and their families;
- Information and referral to resources that provide legal assistance such as preparing wills and identifying guardians;
- Financial planning, including budgeting during deployment;
- Links to Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR) representatives to facilitate relationships with civilian employers;
- Assistance to families as they deal with media inquiries;
- Assistance to children of Guard families.

Once a unit has been notified regarding its deployment, the Guard's Family Assistance Program schedules a briefing covering each of these issues. Soldiers and their family members are encouraged to attend the briefing and volunteers are available to provide follow-up assistance.

Because the DEERS program is of such value to Guard families, our Family Readiness staff is working to build relationships with State and local businesses and organizations to make the card more relevant to the families' day-to-day lives. Examples of additional benefits might include discounts or special promotions.

While the family readiness program is of great value to military families, especially as they prepare for deployment, once the soldier is deployed communication with his or her loved ones back home becomes even more important. The "Armyknowledgeonline" email system is a terrific tool for facilitating family communication and Indiana's Family Readiness Program plans to help expand access to this system by partnering with local organizations to provide access to computers for family members who do not have computers in their homes.

While the challenges of a soldier's deployment are great, the return home comes with its own set of concerns. Often times after extended separation, families need assistance in "returning to normal." The Indiana Guard's Family Readiness Program provides assistance and referral for families who wish to take advantage of those services.

Family Assistance Centers: Family Readiness services are often provided through Family Assistance Centers. Located throughout the State and funded by the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD), these centers, operated by contractors and staffed with volunteers, provide the structure through which help is provided to military families as they deal with issues such as enrolling into DEERS, TRICARE, and requests for legal assistance and financial assistance. From March to June 2004, nearly 15,000 Family Assistance Center contacts were made with military families.

Last year, a new fund, the Indiana National Guard Relief Fund, was established to provide financial assistance to Guard members and their families to help cover medical bills, funeral costs, emergency travel, food, utilities, and other expenses. The fund is supported entirely by private and nonprofit donations. Since its establishment, over $20,000 has been distributed to Guard families. More information on this fund can be located at http://www.inarng.org/relieffund.htm.

Another example of local partnership is a new initiative sponsored by the Lilly Endowment to provide additional financial resources to Guard families in need. The Endowment is making $250,000 available to help families of Indiana National Guard soldiers meet expenses that they are unable to cover on their own. The funds will have oversight by a committee that will consider requests for assistance.

Youth Services: We also applaud the U.S. military's recognition of the importance of meeting the needs of the children of service members and we have taken the next step to enhance our own youth programs. The Indiana Guard has led in addressing the needs of these children by creating a position of Youth Coordinator. In November of 2002 Indiana's Family Readiness Program Youth Services coordinator—herself a volunteer—created a Youth Council. She selected five young people from the Guard's Youth Camp to serve on the Council. This council was established to help provide direction for the Family Readiness Youth Services component. Through the work of the Council, the Readiness program has been able to create brochures for parents and teachers with tips on how to help children remain resilient through tough times and recognize signs of fear or anxiety that children may

exhibit. In the coming months, the coordinator will contact school superintendents throughout the State to help them understand the special needs of children whose parents serve in the military.

The Indiana Guard's Youth Council has also recently entered into a partnership with Indiana's 4-H Extension program. Young people from both groups jointly attend a leadership camp and are working on joint initiatives. Four-H regional youth coordinators will work with Guard Youth Service participants to provide more assistance to children of military families through the Guard's Family Assistance Centers and their volunteer network.

FEDERAL SUPPORT FOR STATES

I greatly appreciate your subcommittees' interest in strengthening support for military families and your recognition that the demands being placed on State Guards by the war against terrorism may require additional Federal action. I would like to offer several suggested steps that Congress and the Administration could take to help States.

First, I urge you to support the proposal included in the House version of the Federal fiscal year 2005 defense authorization legislation that would formally allow the Secretary of Defense to fund the National Guard for the performance of domestic operations. This policy, which has been endorsed by the National Governors Association, would provide States with assurance they would be relieved of any burden to fund future deployments of Guard troops for homeland security purposes, as they were under President Bush's directive following the attacks of September 11. This assurance will also help encourage States to continue and expand State programs that provide family assistance.

Second, I concur with Indiana's Adjutant General, Major General R. Martin Umbarger, who recently suggested at an issues forum of the House Armed Services Committee that the "boots on the ground" deployment of Guard soldiers be shortened from 12 to 9 months. Under the current policy, the total mobilization period lasts between 14–18 months depending on the amount of "train up" time and demobilization requirements. This puts a tremendous strain on Guard families and the small businesses that many of them independently own and operate and where many others are employed. Keeping the total period of deployment closer to 12 months will cause less disruption to our Guard soldiers and families, as well as our employers.

Third, I am hopeful that you will explore ideas for increasing Federal health care assistance for families of deployed National Guard soldiers. Many National Guardsmen currently face serious challenges in switching from their employer-supported health care to the military TRICARE reimbursement system and often must travel great distances to see a participating provider. Either all Guard members should be made eligible for TRICARE, as the Senate recently voted to approve, or DOD should at least enhance its outreach to providers to increase access to TRICARE for all eligible military families.

Fourth, I support the National Governors' Association endorsed proposal to defer payments and accrual of interest on federally funded student loans for soldiers who are on active duty. I also support efforts to relieve students from penalties they may receive for withdrawing from schools as a result of their activation for military service.

Fifth, as outlined by the National Governors' Association, Congress should support efforts to address pay gaps for activated citizen soldiers who leave their jobs as a result of being deployed. This is especially important for members of the National Guard who juggle their service to our country with their commitment to their civilian careers.

Finally, I encourage you to consider expansion of the Family and Medical Leave Act to include activated National Guard families, as recommended by the National Governors' Association. This benefit would be of great assistance as families prepare for a soldier's deployment, especially during these times of extended deployment.

CONCLUSION

Following the events of September 11, the men and women who serve in our Nation's National Guard have been called upon as never before to maintain and strengthen our national defense. Today's hearing shows how much the members of your two subcommittees value the sacrifices they and their families are making for their country. It has been a privilege for me to share with you some of our family support initiatives in Indiana and my perspectives on additional actions the Federal Government can take to assist our military families.

Senator ALEXANDER. We would now like to take a round of questions. We will ask each of the Senators to limit their questioning time to 5 minutes so after the Governors finish, we can go to the two other panels.

But before we do that, I want to recognize Senator Chris Dodd, ranking member of the Children and Families Subcommittee, very much a leader in this area. He and I co-chaired a hearing in Groton at the Navy submarine base there as a part of the seven hearings we have held. Senator Dodd, do you have any opening remarks?

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR DODD

Senator DODD. Very briefly, Mr. Chairman. First of all, let me thank you for doing this. Lamar Alexander has just been terrific on these issues and we had a wonderful hearing at Groton, Connecticut, at the submarine base there going back a number of months ago. I know we had similar hearings in Georgia with Saxby Chambliss and others to focus on this issue.

This has been a timely subject for a long time, but obviously, the conditions of today in Iraq, Afghanistan, and the pressures on the Reserves and Guards have highlighted this issue. The report yesterday that I am sure everyone has had an opportunity to look at or review anyway, the GAO report regarding pay issues certainly goes right to the heart of what we are talking about here today. Let me just share a couple of thoughts.

I think all of us probably take Article I, Section 8 of the Constitution about as seriously as any provision of the Constitution, the one that insists that Congress maintain and provide for the armed services of the United States. It is about as fundamental a job as we have. Obviously, it is axiomatic that if you are going to provide for and maintain the armed services, armed forces of America, that providing for their families has become all that more important.

It wasn't that many years ago that the overwhelming majority of people in uniform were single. It has been a changed demographic in recent times that today the majority, overwhelming majority of people in uniform are with families. And so we are confronted with a new set of obligations, as well as the changing dependency.

Not many years ago, reliance obviously on active duty forces. Today, 40 to 50 percent of all of our men and women serving in uniform in the war zones are Reservists and National Guards people, and unless there is some fundamental change, I think that trend line is probably to continue.

Jack Reed, our fellow colleague, offered an amendment successfully on the floor of the Senate to increase the number of active duty forces by 20,000 as part of the Defense Authorization bill—I believe it was the authorization bill, maybe it is the appropriations bill—which was supported. I don't know if that is going to be adopted or not. That may be one of the ways to relieve some of the pressures.

But certainly we all know anecdotal stories of what happens in these families when they are left in a situation where there is one person home providing for income, taking care of children. I know like Governor Kernan, I particularly appreciate your mentioning

child care, very important. Again, we have supported now for some 20 years here a child care support system for those less well off economically. Today, there are 500,000 children without any form of child care who fall between the gaps. They don't qualify for Federal assistance, probably don't qualify for much at the State level, don't qualify under the military assistance for child care.

And the best child care program, by the way, in the world, in my view, is provided by the United States military. That wasn't always the case, but I challenge anyone to find a better child care site than the ones you will find on military installations today.

Unfortunately, for people in the Reserves and National Guards who are not on active duty, they don't necessarily qualify for that form of assistance. If you have a single-parent home, the other parent off in a war zone or serving on active duty, then that child care becomes tremendously important.

I mentioned the pay issues, Mr. Chairman, which again I am sure our Governors may want to respond to that to some degree.

The point that has been made already regarding the predictability of service is just frustrating. I know in my State of Connecticut when I go around to visit, we have nine family visitors centers. General Cugno, who is my commander of my National Guard and Reserves in Connecticut, has done a fabulous job of providing Family Resource Centers, nine of them in the State of Connecticut, and we are a very small State, where people can actually go, families, on a daily basis and find out what is going on, when are people going to be back, answering those common questions that people have. It is a place to be where you have some assurance things are moving in the right direction. Obviously, the question we always get whenever I show up at these centers is the predictability of service, and that is obviously one that I know our colleagues care about.

Housing issues, Governor Bush, I appreciate you mentioning this, again a very important issue. We had a tragic situation in Connecticut a few weeks ago to discover that we had housing off the submarine base that was—I won't go into the details of it, but suffice it to say pretty bad, to put it mildly. And again, it is awfully hard to look these families in the face when their loved ones are off serving and they are under very, very inferior housing conditions.

Educational questions—Senator Alexander made a very good point and suggestion, I thought. Again, this goes beyond the immediate concerns, but students and families in that sophomore or junior year in high school, where then orders come in to move to a different post and interrupt at a critical time in an adolescent's life, if there is some way to avoid that, again, recognizing the importance of keeping these families together.

Anyway, these are some of the questions that I think are important. Again, I am very grateful to the Chairman for holding these hearings and grateful to the Governors for your involvement, your participation in raising the questions that you think we can help with. We are going to work a lot more closely together. We can't expect you to take on all of this. Obviously, there is a huge Federal responsibility here. But obviously, with this new direction we are heading in, we have got to work far more cooperatively.

My great fear, and I will end on this note and I know we all know this and I have heard this over and over and over again, getting people to either re-up or to join the Reserves or the Guard. They watch very carefully what is happening to those presently in the Reserves and the Guards, and if they sense that somehow people are not being taken as well care of as they could be, then I think we are going to have a hard time meeting those numbers, and I really worry about that from a national security standpoint if we are going to depend upon these forces as much as we are today in critical war zones.

To replenish those troops, to maintain the expertise, the amount of investments we have made in their training, to see that they will stay on is going to in large measure depend upon how well we treat the ones at home. And if we don't do that well, then as sure as we are sitting here, we are going to have a very difficult time maintaining these numbers in the future.

So this is a very important issue for many reasons, not the least of which is our ability to maintain a vibrant, active, well-trained National Guard and Reserve components across the country. I thank you.

Senator ALEXANDER. Thank you, Senator Dodd.

Why don't we begin with Senator Chambliss.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and thanks, gentlemen, for your insight, particularly into things that are ongoing in your State. Having 13 military installations in my State, we have a lot of the same issues, some of which we are addressing in the same way and some of which we are doing a little bit differently. But needless to say, we all have great respect and admiration for our men and women in the military. It sounds like both of you are providing the kind of leadership we need with respect to treating families.

Senator Dodd, Senator Alexander, and Senator Nelson, I would be very appreciative of having an ongoing dialogue with the Governors Association relative to all of the issues that everybody has spoken to here today because they are so critically important. We are doing some things a little bit differently, Governor Bush, in our State that may work better for us, but there are certainly ideas out there that should be adopted, hopefully by all 50 States relative to tuition.

Speaking to the issue that Chris just mentioned, Lamar and I have talked about at length at a couple of our hearings relative to the transfer of these kids during the middle of their high school years. That is a traumatic time. I went through that myself, so I know how traumatic it can be. I haven't recovered yet, but—[Laughter.]—we are doing something different in the military and it sure would give us a great opportunity to work with the Governors Association relative to your various State Departments of Education and with the Department of Defense concerning simple issues like that that have a terrific impact on these families.

Governor Bush, you, I know, have a working group of some sort, of military families, that you rely on to some degree, and I note you say that you have had a number of issues coming before the legislature in Florida relative to benefits that you are providing. Is that where you are getting your ideas, from your Military Families

Working Group, and how receptive has your legislature been to meeting and dealing with these issues?

Governor BUSH. We have gotten it really from three different forums, if you will. One is the base commanders meeting, where the commanders of these bases—I will be honest. The motivation of this when we set it up was really related to a pre-BRAC strategy for our State. Are we not allowed to talk about BRAC here? Probably not.

[Laughter.]

But in any case——

Governor KERNAN. Only if I can, as well.

[Laughter.]

Governor BUSH [CONTINUING]. In any case, it turns out that the base commanders were much more interested in talking about the so-called soft issues that relate to families. Their leadership, their management of thousands of people in these bases really revolves around running a city and listening to the concerns of the people that they serve. And so increasingly, they began to provide some ideas on how we could make life better.

And then when the call-up began, the significant call-up in Afghanistan and Iraq, the support, the Military Support Subcommittee of our Defense Alliance gave us many practical ideas that related to real-life experiences.

And then finally, we have done an assessment of what other States have done and have taken, stolen lock, stock, and barrel the best ideas that we could, all of which had great reception in the legislature. Every year, we have passed legislation that deals with these issues on a regular basis. So it has been a very good working relationship between the military and the legislature and my office.

Senator CHAMBLISS. We are not giving away any secrets, I don't think, when we talk in terms of Base Re-alignment and Closure (BRAC) that from a Navy perspective, I want every Navy individual, man or woman, to go to their commanding officer and say, I sure do want to be transferred to Kings Bay. I know you want them transferred to Mayport.

[Laughter.]

But I think it is important in this respect that they receive the dignity and the fair treatment that they deserve, and I think that is where the States obviously can play an integral role. As a part of it, a positive side of it is going to be BRAC, because that is one of the criteria.

Is there a working group within the Governors Association that does give us any kind of direct dialogue on these issues?

Governor KERNAN. You are going to hear from the leadership of the NGA in one of the later panels, Senator. It has been a bipartisan, across-the-board concern of Governors. As Governor Bush and my experiences indicate, every State comes at it from a different challenge. Some of the things that have been going on out West with fires and the depletion of the men and women who otherwise would be fighting them who are currently on active duty, to the issues that we have talked about here, every State has different challenges.

But what is unanimous is the fact that we recognize that this is important for our States as well as for national defense and the in-

creasing role of the Guard and the important role that they are playing is one that we all support. But we do not want to do that at the risk of depleting our forces, our Guard back home, and so striking that balance. I will tell you that the working relationship has just been terrific in working with, again, General Blum as Chief of the Guard, working with the regular Army, working with the Air Force, in our case, with our two fighter wings. So we are all coming at it from the same direction with different concerns.

I think that the value of these hearings and your focus on this is that it reinforces the importance of this Federal-State partnership as well as gives us a chance to be able to talk about those things that are working in other States and bring them back home and put them into practice.

Senator CHAMBLISS. With the unique relationship that we have with our States relative to the National Guard, and because we are calling on your Guard, and they really are State organizations, I think it is more important than ever that we have that direct dialogue and share ideas and try to make some long-range plans, because I don't see this ending any time soon. I think we are going to be calling your Guard up more and more for future conflicts that we may be involved in down the road. So thank you very much for being here.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator ALEXANDER. Thank you, Senator Chambliss.

We will go to Senator Nelson. In each case, you are each the Commander-in-Chief of your National Guard, correct?

Governor BUSH. That is part of the job.

Governor KERNAN. That is correct.

Senator ALEXANDER. Every Governor is. We haven't said that yet today. Maybe many people watching may not be aware of that, but that is a part of the job. At a time when, as all of us have said, more than 40 percent of those in Iraq and Afghanistan are either Reservists or Guard, the Commander-in-Chief of those Guardsmen are Governors.

Senator Nelson?

Senator NELSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Before I ask my question, the National Military Family Association recently completed an outstanding report which is entitled, "Serving the Homefront: An Analysis of Military Family Support," from September 11, 2001, through March 31 of this year. With your acquiescence, I would like to ask that a copy of the report be included in the hearing record.

Senator ALEXANDER. It will be.

[The National Military Family Association Report can be found in committee files.]

Senator NELSON. One of the many important conclusions that was contained in the report is that strong partnerships among and between military and community agencies are essential in ensuring family and service member access to programs and services that meet needs arising from the unique challenges posed by deployments. It makes three recommendations that are key to the community support: Recognizing the importance of community support in encouraging continued commitment between military and community leaders to provide for the changing needs of military fami-

lies—clearly something that both of you are engaged in; encouraging State and local government leaders to network and share programs that benefit military families; and third, installation points of contact coordinate and market available community support.

I think one thing that I would say that is not stated there directly but probably is inferentially there, is that a relationship and a partnership is needed between the State and Federal Governments to engage in providing the best level of support for these military families, clearly for the students who are engaged in school.

What I would suggest as we work toward what I think you are suggesting, Mr. Chairman, and Senator Chambliss, you have suggested it as well, is having a point of contact with the Governors Association so we have an ongoing dialogue to establish clearly a partnership so that we can work together. In suggesting the partnership, I think it is important to point out that the Federal Government needs to be the junior partner. It is very hard to come to Washington and ask for partnership where the States remain senior partners, but in this situation, I hope that we would maintain the junior partnership role to provide the kind of support and help that local Governors and the State as well as local governments ask for. Those on the ground are going to have a better idea of the different needs in their particular installations and what can be done so that we don't usually stumble in, as we very often do, with the one-size-fits-all approach, not recognizing the differences.

My question for both of you and for those who will follow you is, is it possible to put together a best practices approach, that we can have a clearinghouse of the practices that each of the States—stealing ideas, it is like stealing a base in baseball. It is accepted. It is okay. I stole my share, and I still reserve the right to steal the best ideas whenever they are out there.

Having those available so that States and others can share them and utilize them, I think is good. Is there an effort underway right now that you are aware of to do something similar within the NGA?

Governor BUSH. I am not aware of any.

Senator NELSON. Either of you.

Governor BUSH. I am sure the next speaker that represents the NGA probably will have that information. If there isn't, it would be easy to get. I do know I recently saw a report of all the National Guards, initiatives taken to support all of our National Guards that recently was published. The reason I noticed it is that there was a glaring omission. Nothing was in there from Florida. It must have got lost in the mail. The NGA is the proper place for that kind of inventorying of good ideas.

But I could send to the committee the report that our State Senate did, which went through that same process of looking at what other States have done as part of a select committee process that generated many of the ideas that I mentioned in my remarks.

Governor KERNAN. And I think, Senator, it is also very valuable from the standpoint besides giving us an idea of what is going on in other States, to look for those areas where there can be collaboration, where you are able to have reciprocal agreements in terms of how students are treated, what kinds of exams they are going

to be required to take, how to help with licenses that someone, a spouse may have in one State and recognize it in another. So it is not just good ideas that you can implement just in your State but also those collaborative efforts that are very important, as well.

Senator NELSON. On a personal note, I remember as Governor, having a spouse of an officer at Offutt Air Force Base, who was part of the strategic command at the time, come to me and tell me how difficult it was for her to get her credentials as a teacher approved in the State of Nebraska. It seemed like she was running into all kinds of difficulties. We worked our way through smoothing that out. But if you have to take care of these one at a time, it is like making a pie a piece at a time. I am enormously impressed by the amount of information that is out there, but I am equally disturbed by how difficult it is sometimes to get it and access it if you don't have a way of doing so. I would hope that we would be able to compile this information, have it available, and share it, because certainly I think that would be important.

My other question is, can you tell us right now, or be prepared to tell us in the future, what more we could do? I understand money is always important, but sometimes it is clearly more than just a matter of writing government checks. In your experience where could we be helpful to the States?

Governor KERNAN. I will go back to one of the things that I mentioned, and that is the concern that we hear, particularly from those who have come back home, is when am I going back? What certainty——

Senator NELSON. About deployment.

Governor KERNAN [CONTINUING]. What are my chances for going back and when it might be? And it is that, and recognizing that this is obviously an uncertain circumstance and you have to be able to respond to the needs of the service, the needs of the country. But for there to be that rotation that you can count on, barring unforseen circumstances, that will provide some certainty, eliminate apprehension, give families as well as those who are serving more opportunity to be able to plan for the future, I think is the most important thing that we can do.

Again, I know that the Guard has a plan laid out that deployment will not occur more than once every 5 years, but we are obviously not there yet and I think it has got to be, because we are looking at retention issues and folks that are coming back and making decisions about whether they are going to stay or not. That is foremost for them as a consideration, and for their families, as well.

Senator NELSON. It probably would not surprise you that Senator Chambliss and I have spent a great deal of time working on that and similar issues. We hope that there will be a solution of some stability and some predictability for the Guard and Reserve units.

Governor Bush, any thoughts about what we could do?

Governor BUSH. I think having a certainty of the lead time for deployment would be critical, because a lot of the legislation that we have passed, or some of it, at least, has been dealing with that uncertainty, you know, having to deal with contracts. If there was something planned out, if we had greater certainty of deployment,

when it would occur, and there was enough lead time, you can plan for your life better and your families can get prepared.

The other issue I would say is that providing incentives for private employers to hire Reservists and National Guard men and women——

Senator NELSON. That is important in the way of predictability because if they can't be sure when an employee is going to be called up again and there is a fear that it will happen every other year or so, it can affect employability.

Governor BUSH [CONTINUING]. Well, if you are working for a school board or a State government or a county government, typically, there is a scale there, and if I could, it is a government entity, the support has been there in our State, at least. But for a small business, even with the best of intentions and wanting to do it, if it is a critical employee and you have five employees, you can't—you have to move on in some cases. So providing some maybe tax incentives or some kind of incentive to provide that employment possibility, I think would be helpful for retention, as well.

And then the supplemental income issue that really makes it possible to serve for 9 months or a year. For some, their wages in the Guard are significantly lower than what they were making in the private sector. There has to be some recognition of that as well as the length the deployment goes out.

Senator NELSON. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator ALEXANDER. Thank you, Senator Nelson.

In my time, I want to kind of wrap up this point about Governors—I know we will hear from the NGA representative in a minute—and go on to schools, but let me take an example that Senator Dodd and I heard about. I want to take this idea about working with the Governors from the clearinghouse notion to—and each State doing real well.

I think there are actually some things States might agree to do in model compacts that more than one State adopts. Here is an example. In Connecticut, we heard at one of these excellent child development centers that the alternative to that is to train spouses of military men and women to be child care givers in their homes, where they may take up to four or five, six people. Now, this can be very good child care. It is not as good as being in the child development center, but it is certainly good child care and it requires certification. In Connecticut, we heard it takes a while to get certification. So if you are going to be there for 2 years and it takes 10 months for the spouse to get certification, it just doesn't work very well and it is frustrating.

So an example might be to take certification for the three or four areas where spouses most frequently want to go to work, child care being an example, and taking the three or four largest States, or States that have the most military bases—I mean, take Florida, Texas, California, and maybe add Georgia and one or two others, don't try to work with all the States but just say, okay, we are going to come up with a common way to recognize spouses—to give a certificate to spouses of military personnel who want to be child care centers.

Now, I believe we will hear from the Department of Defense they are working on something like that, but it seems to me on that and

perhaps on what to do about graduation requirements from students who move from Georgia to Tennessee and have learned Georgia history but are required to know Tennessee history, that there might be some model examples that State legislatures might be quick to adopt if someone would just take it to that stage. Is that kind of discussion going on?

Governor BUSH. It is going on, but not in a comprehensive way where you take the five most common things, and Senator Alexander, we talked about this several months ago and I think it is an excellent idea. I know that our State would be more than happy to take the lead or participate with other States because it would be a lot simpler to have model legislation than to have—federalism is great because it does create a competitive, dynamic kind of operation, but once we have reached critical mass—because my guess is every State has done what they felt they needed to do, or close to it, so this would be a way to consolidate those gains that have occurred over the last 4 or 5 years.

Senator ALEXANDER. And then the Federal Government could fit into that in the appropriate way. But as Senator Nelson says, I think it would be more the junior partner in that sort of thing.

May I shift to schools just for a minute? If I have got my figures right, about 88 percent of all these children who are now part of military families, and there are more than a million, go to school off-base. Now, 12 percent go to school on-base with some very impressive results. I was talking with Governor Bush. A Vanderbilt University study shows that for minority eighth grade kids, the schools in America that get the best reading results are the schools on posts in the military, and we can all speculate as to why that might be true, but I am very wary of any plan to get rid of those schools if they are actually leading the country in helping minority eighth graders learn to read.

But aside from that, what can you tell us about your experience about the impact of military families on public schools? What happens in your States where you have a large military installation and nine out of ten of those children go to school in the schools surrounding the base? What do we need to know about that? What should we do more or less of from the Federal level?

Governor KERNAN. I would just, Senator, say that again in Indiana, we are so different, certainly than the experience in Florida, with one base that has 30 uniformed personnel that is active duty. So to get a handle, then, on the performance and the effect of kids in what would be every school corporation in the State of Indiana that would have the youngsters of those that are serving, I think that what you would typically find is probably some of what drives the performance of those that serve on base, and that is that you have a strong family structure, that you have got some discipline and some guidance within the home that is reflected in the chosen field for at least one of the parents.

But I don't have anything to back that up, and one of the things that we are doing as a part of our youth council is making sure that in some way, there is the recognition that for those children who are the sons and daughters of those who are serving, particularly relative to deployment, that the teachers, the principals understand that these are kids that they should keep an eye on be-

cause there may be, in this time of transition and this time of challenge, they may be faced with special difficulties. But I can't give you any kind of quantitative response because of really our circumstance in Indiana.

Senator ALEXANDER. Governor Bush?

Governor BUSH. If you are interested in rising student achievement and high achievement levels, and you are studying what group does better, what group does worse, you would argue that every community in every State should have military bases, which is impossible, obviously. But a great majority—my guess is that we have more than 88 percent of our students, military students, are going to public and private schools off-campus, off the military base, excuse me, and in those districts that have a high proportion of military families, what we find is the best-run school districts, because the base commanders and the moms in particular, everybody considers it a high priority, we require compacts for every military base in the surrounding school districts.

So there is a working agreement for every school district. They have their marching orders. And they have, by and large, one could say that they are typically the best-run school districts in the State and the student achievement numbers are fantastic. And as you said, it is not just—military families don't necessarily, in terms of income or the other measurements that people traditionally use for achievement, they fit the profile of the great diversity of the State of Florida, maybe even more diverse, in which case there is a good indication that if you provide the right support to military families and to the bases, you are going to get better academic results.

Senator ALEXANDER. Senator Dodd and Senator Nelson, I will go to Senator Dodd now for questions. But I hope we can keep our eye on this subject, maybe in future discussions among ourselves or at a hearing. A lot of it falls under the committee that Senator Nelson is the ranking member of. I am all for efficiencies in the military, but if post schools are succeeding with families who are middle to low income, often minority, often have an absent parent, who sometimes have single parents, usually have a spouse working away from home, if they are succeeding in that environment and other schools are not, we can all speculate as to why.

But it would be worth knowing why and understanding why and we should be cautious about abandoning those schools, and we should also learn whatever we can about the districts that are heavily influenced by military bases and what causes those public and private schools to be better. So we will leave that for another time.

Senator Dodd?

Senator DODD. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. That is certainly, I think, one of the ideas maybe, to find out what they are doing right and try to apply it to the public schools nearby and see if there isn't some commonality there that would improve their performance levels.

Let me get back to the Reserve and National Guard, because I think the Governors play such an important role in this and can really become terrific advocates, as you have been, on behalf of your constituents who serve. As someone who is a former Guard

and Reservist—Thomas Jefferson was President when I was in the Guard and Reserves.

[Laughter.]

I want to come back to this point of retention, because I think it is going to be a big issue in time. Just in the anecdotal conversations you have with families and others about what they have been going through over the last couple of years—and I stopped the other day. We had a wonderful ceremony in Connecticut last Sunday where Senator Lieberman and myself, our new Governor in Connecticut along with others showed up. We had about 6,000, 7,000 people show up to welcome back the most recent returnees from Afghanistan and Iraq. It was a great, great Sunday. It was just remarkable, the turnout at a minor league ballpark in Norwich, Connecticut.

And just in conversations there, talking with a couple—there were a couple of recruiters at the ballpark from the Guards and Reserves and I just stopped and said, how are you doing? How are things going? And they candidly said, not as bad as you think. They said, actually, things are a little bit better than some of the reports. But I do worry about this issue.

I was intrigued this morning reading a report that you Governors had, I guess with some of the Defense Department people yesterday, about some of the critical services that many of these Guardsmen and women and Reservists provide—fire, police, others. It is not uncommon to find people serving in those capacities in your States that are also members of Reserve and Guard units, and the pressures that this is putting on your local communities and elsewhere as a result. In Indiana, I guess, it is over 7,000 people. You ranked fifth in the country, which I was very surprised of, in the number of Reservists and Guardsmen in the country.

But how is that impacted—and I will ask two or three quick questions and then you can respond to them—I would like to know how that is impacting your States in terms of these critical jobs being filled by people who may be off in Iraq or Afghanistan. I am very intrigued about the health care idea, and again, part of this goes to retention. But to the extent we are able to provide for Guardsmen and Reservists, even when not on active duty, part of health care coverage, I think that would be a wonderful way, given I don't know how many of our Reservists and Guardsmen serve or have jobs in the civilian sector where there wouldn't be health insurance, but if it would lead into that 44 million to some degree, I think it would serve both purposes of covering more people but also keeping people on duty when we want to have them there.

And then going back, and again, Governor Kernan, you raised the issue, I have raised it, Senator Alexander has, the child care issue and the importance of it. If my numbers are right, we are looking at some 500,000 dependents of people in the Reserves and Guards and particular difficulty with one spouse serving and what happens then to those children in that situation. They don't get covered under the Child Care Development block grant program because of income levels, I suspect. They are not covered by the military. They fall between the cracks. It seems to me to be a critical issue, particularly during those periods of service.

Again, I think it relates to retention. I think the kind of messages on health care, on child care, that if you can say to people, look, about how difficult this is and how awkward it is that you are going to be called up from time to time can be offset by the fact that we understand the kind of pressures that can occur. Here are several things we are going to do to see to it that this obligation you are willing to assume is going to be not as unbearable as it would be otherwise. So I wonder if you might comment on those three points.

Governor KERNAN. I would say, Senator, that if you look at the impact that this has on communities and those that fill those important first responder kinds of roles, it is just like on the business side. The smaller communities are the ones that are having the most difficulty.

Senator DODD. Right.

Governor KERNAN. When you take a greater percentage of your employees and you are unable to replace them in an effective way, it is very, very difficult and has caused hardship, particularly on smaller communities, just as it has on smaller companies.

The health care issue, again, is the same that we see in the private sector, the difficulty that, and it was mentioned earlier, the 25 percent of those that are in the Guard have no health insurance unless they are on active duty. I think to try to bridge that gap and get more of them involved in TriCare, effective ways to provide basic coverage for them and for their families, would be very, very important from a retention side, and it is the same on the child care side.

If you have, again, a parent who is deployed and someone who is there, and because the circumstances, particularly on the Guard side, on the Reserve side, are unusual, they are not used to a deployment. They don't know that they are going from sea duty to shore duty over a particular period of years, that this is all new business and happening very quickly. And so our ability to be able to respond to that, child care being one of the things that is at the top of the list is very important.

Our retention numbers are not as bad as we had feared they might be. We are seeing, though, what we think are some false positives, that we meet the National Guard standard of about 18 percent that are deciding not to re-up. We are at a little bit less than that. But what we don't take into account is the number of people who are currently deployed or who are on active duty and stop-loss provisions take effect so they are not able to get out. Their contracts, in effect, are extended. So if you roll those in, our sense is that instead of being at around 80 percent, we probably have something that is more in the neighborhood of 60 to 65 percent.

Now, we have people that are coming back and they make the decision that they are going to get out because of the length of deployment or difficulties that they have had or their families have had and who, after a month or two or three are deciding that they miss it, that they want to come back into the Guard, and we obviously are welcoming them back. But that transition, the uncertainty and all that surrounds it, as I said earlier, is really the thing that is at the heart of retention right now because they don't know

when they are going to go or for how long they are going to be gone.

Senator DODD. Thank you very much.

Governor Bush, anything else?

Governor BUSH. I would just say that, intuitively, I think any increase in benefits in the two areas you mention would be two significant ones, and obviously any kind of income supplement for work, if you are making more, provide some support in that regard, those would be three areas where if there was certainty of that, one would think that that would help with retention.

But what we have found is that we are meeting our numbers in Florida without them. Now, how long will that last? I can't tell you that. But we are recruiting new National Guard men and women and our retention rate is above the standard that is expected of us. So, so far, so good in that regard.

And the other issue as it relates to strains on the services of local communities, I think, Governor Kernan, you are absolutely right. The smaller the enterprise, whether it is public or private, the greater the challenge. We worry because of the fact that Florida is a State similar to Indiana. We have different plagues and pestilences, but we all have them all over with hurricanes, and the primary role the Guard plays in hurricane evacuation, it is essential that we have the manpower there to do it. So I ask regularly to the Adjutant General, how are we doing, particularly now that we are in hurricane season, and even with the increase in deployment, he is absolutely confident that they can meet their State requirements as well as the Federal requirements.

Governor KERNAN. And I would give you one example, Senator, if I may, that we just sent 1,200 men and women from our Guard that have been deployed to Afghanistan. There are 300 more who have complemented our Guard that come kind of from the middle management side, from majors and captains to senior NCOs, that have been recruited from 15 other States to go with this group of 1,200 of ours, and the reason being that if we had deployed all of those folks in that area from our Guard, it would have depleted us and our ability to be able to respond at home. So again, there was great cooperation as the Army, the Guard, recognized the need for us to maintain that capability to go and get those folks from other States, not hurt anybody else, and complement what is the main force, which is 1,200 of our men and women.

Senator DODD. Could you clarify something for me, by the way. As Governors and the Guardsmen and Reservists, or Guard or Reserve—there is a big question mark, I ought to say, at the end of it—how long does your jurisdiction last? At what point do you lose jurisdiction over these people, when they go on active duty? Are the Governors out of the picture, so to speak, and is that true of both Reserves and Guards? I don't know the answer to that question, but I am embarrassed I don't know.

Governor KERNAN. The Guard is not a part of the State—or the Reserve is not a part of the State structure.

Senator DODD. Right.

Governor KERNAN. The Guard is.

Senator DODD. It is.

Governor KERNAN. And at such time as the President makes the decision that the Guard forces are required, then as they move into active duty, they are a part of——

Senator DODD. The battle system.

Governor KERNAN [CONTINUING].—the Army structure, the Air Force structure.

Senator DODD. OK.

Governor KERNAN. So I guess the jurisdiction for us would be when they are at home, and certainly and obviously we maintain relationships with all of those that are serving.

Senator DODD. Sure.

Governor KERNAN. Our Adjutant General, our—again, because of the structure that we are actively involved with them, but from a command standpoint, it is the President.

Senator DODD. I appreciate your advice and testimony today. Again, as I said a moment ago, you can become great advocates. We don't really have great advocates. They do with certain associations, but I think particularly with the Guards and certainly the Reservists as well, these people who are part-time deployments and so forth sort of fall, again, between the cracks a lot and really need some advocates here, particularly in some of these areas. We have talked about their families. So your testimony is really very helpful and I thank you both.

Governor KERNAN. Thank you, Senator.

Governor BUSH. Thank you, Senator.

Senator ALEXANDER. And I have joined Senator Dodd in this, and I would encourage again, and Governor Bush will think I am becoming a little bit of a broken record on this, but this concern cuts across several natural lines of authority. We have cobbled together two Senate subcommittees here. For example, we found out in our hearings that the pay increases that we were giving people, who were deployed, was making them ineligible for Head Start and other Federal benefits. We didn't want that, and so as a result of these hearings and discussions, we amended the law to take care of that. Now, that may seem like a small thing, and it really is in the whole picture, but it is not for the men and women who are serving.

It has become—another example, one of the members of this committee suggested in a debate we had on the Senate floor that she noticed that when a child moves from one State to another, which is a special education child, it takes a long time for that child to get under the special education, the IEP, the special education plan for that child. So the proposal was made, well, let us just pass a Federal law saying that when a kid from Florida who is special education moves to Texas, we have to apply the Florida law. Well, I don't think we should be doing that, not because we don't want to help the child, but because we don't know how that law fits here.

So there are some things that involve military families, whether it is spouse certification, whether it is graduation requirements from State to State, that I believe we could take a step up on, some things that you could pass model legislation. In some cases, you could advise us to change some of our rules. My experience with the Governors Association is it usually takes a lead Governor or

two to cause something to happen because you are all very busy and you are in your own States most of the time. So I hope this is a continuing relationship and we are very grateful for your leadership and the time you have given us today, Governor Bush and Governor Kernan. Thank you very much.

Governor KERNAN. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Senator ALEXANDER. Mr. Abell, if you will come on up, we will move to you. I want to thank Dr. Nolan Jones and General Reimer and Holly Petraeus for your patience. We continue to be interested in what you have to say and we will go to you right after Mr. Abell.

Mr. Charles Abell is the Principal Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness. He advises the Secretary on force management, structure, readiness, reserve components. He has 26 years in the United States Army. He is a decorated veteran of Vietnam, retired with the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. He knows the Senate very well. He knows the subcommittee very well because he formerly was here.

Dr. Abell, we have your testimony and it will be made a part of the record. You are familiar with our procedures and ways of operations. If you could take time to summarize your comments, I would appreciate that. I will ask a few questions and then we will have time for the third panel, as well. Thank you very much for being here.

STATEMENT OF CHARLES S. ABELL, PRINCIPAL DEPUTY UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR PERSONNEL AND READINESS, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

Mr. ABELL. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I appreciate the opportunity to speak before these two committees about the initiatives and programs the Department has to support families and children of our service members, both active and reserve.

As you have spent a lot of time discussing in the first panel, the Department doesn't do everything internally. We have entered into partnerships with States, counties, local governments, as well as creating partnerships with private sector firms and support organizations.

The Governors in the first panel described many of the initiatives that they are working with the Department to meet the needs, and I congratulate both Governor Bush and Governor Kernan for their support. I especially want to point out that Governor Bush has been personally chairing the semi-annual meetings, as he mentioned, since 1999, well before the global war on terror began, and his leadership and support of the military is well known and very much appreciated throughout the Department of Defense.

I also want to point out that Purdue University in Indiana is our partner in a number of ongoing research projects involving military families. We are jointly studying ways to assist children transitioning between schools, looking how to make child care more affordable, determining what elements would make up a world class reunion program for service members returning from deployment, for working with an Indiana National Guard unit studying the effects of mobilization and the deployment on families, and we have a special project with Purdue University to assist the families

of the First Armored Division, which was extended in Iraq beyond its 12 months, as you know.

We are busy working every day on programs to assist military families and we are very grateful for the funding in the global war on terror supplemental appropriations bills that were directed toward family support, child care, and other family-related initiatives. We use these funds, along with the resources in the defense budget, to continue our work with the Military Child Education Coalition, the Military Impacted School Association, as well as with local educational agencies to improve the transition between schools and to enhance the reciprocity for all types of school events from the curriculum to sports and band participation. We are making progress, but as you noted earlier, there is more to do.

We are also focused on programs such as obtaining State approval for in-State tuition rates for military families based on where they are stationed. Enhanced opportunities for spousal employment, including programs to recognize certifications, licenses, and qualifications earned in another State. Gaining unemployment compensation for spouses who must change jobs because the service member moved on military orders. And State legislation regarding payday lending and other predatory activities aimed at military personnel and their families. And a new initiative to help us find jobs and help to rehabilitate disabled veterans.

Key to these programs is communication. We can have the best, most comprehensive programs in the world, but if our military families don't know about them, then we don't really have anything. We use the power of the Internet to help us communicate with our folks, especially those who do not live adjacent to a military base. We have Web sites linked to one another so that when a family member finds an interesting reference on one Web site, they can move to the other interesting Web site by merely clicking on the icon.

We publish papers, booklets, pamphlets, and notices that are available almost everywhere, including through the family support groups. We have also created the Pentagon Channel, that broadcasts not only via our Armed Forces Radio and Television Service overseas, but is provided via satellite to all our bases in the United States and, Mr. Chairman, to any local cable or TV station that wants to broadcast the programs. We are finding more and more local access channels and local cable outlets that are using programming from the Pentagon Channel as part of their weekly schedule.

Mr. Chairman, I could go on and on. My prepared statement has a good list of many other initiatives, but I know the next panel is waiting and so I will stop, take a breath, and respond to your questions.

Senator ALEXANDER. Thank you, sir. Thank you for your statement.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Abell follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HONORABLE CHARLES S. ABELL

Mr. Chairman and Members of this distinguished Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to be here today and for your continuing support of the men and women who serve in our Armed Forces and their families.

Today, I will be addressing the myriad ways the Department of Defense (DOD) is supporting Service members and their families as we continue to attract and retain the best and brightest for our high quality all-volunteer force. The Defense Planning Guidance 2003–2007 challenged us to determine the adequacy of current quality of life programs and address the needs of over 60 percent of our military members and families who live off base as well as members of our Reserve component. We have also been challenged to realign support to coincide with the movement of troops and families. In the global posture planning, more jointness is expected.

To retain dedicated men and women, we must ensure that education, family support, a sense of community, and other quality of life benefits are comparable to American society. To that end, DOD has entered into a new social compact—a written commitment to improve life in the military, and underwrite family support programs. We acknowledge the reciprocal nature of the relationship between the accomplishment of the DOD mission and quality of life. Families also serve.

Military families are a top priority for the Department, especially those families directly impacted by deployment. The Department is sensitive to the hardships and challenges faced by military families when Service members are away from home for lengthy periods. Service members perform tough duty in challenging locations, while their families deal with the stress and anxiety associated with extended separations. Current deployments necessitate robust support. Examples of increased support service include:

• Increased access to e-mail, telephone cards, and satellite phone services. The frequency and duration of Health, Morale and Welfare (HMW) calls are determined by the commander so as not to interfere with the mission. Over 55,000 HMW calls are made daily, at no cost to the Service member. The Armed Services Exchanges provide unofficial telecommunications systems using the AT&T network. Call volumes using Exchange AT&T Global prepaid phone cards from Exchange phone centers in Kuwait, Iraq, Afghanistan, and aboard ships is nearly 12.3 million minutes. There are approximately 57 call centers (1,649 phones) and 583 satellite phones in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Kuwait. The Department has also authorized the Exchanges to sell their prepaid phone cards to the general public for use by military members and their families, through the "Help Our Troops Call Home" Program, which is available to the public on the three exchange Internet homepages.

• Service members have free access to the non-secure military Internet and they also have free Internet access through approximately 32 MWR-operated mobile Internet cafes in Iraq. The Services have provided a broad assortment of morale, welfare and recreation (MWR) support to forces deployed to fight the war on global terrorism. The MWR sites in Iraq and Afghanistan provide library books and periodicals, large screen televisions, DVD/CD players, Playstation II's and game CDs, exercise and sports equipment, and first run movies.

• The Armed Forces Entertainment Office, in cooperation with the USO, has, and will continue to provide much welcomed celebrity and professional entertainment to our forces engaged in the war on global terrorism. Robin Williams, Robert De Niro, Conan O'Brian, David Letterman, Drew Carey, Gary Senise, Paul Rodriquez, George Gervin, Lee Ann Womack, Miss Universe, several NASCAR and World Wrestling Entertainment stars, and several NFL cheerleading squads, are some of the many entertainers who have generously donated their time to bring a taste of home to our deployed forces.

• America wants to support troops and families. Service members and families have enjoyed the outpouring of support. Donations of frequent flier miles to help with family reunions, special televised tributes, celebrity entertainment, and corporate contributions from companies including Home Depot, Sony, Circuit City, and Sears are but a few of the ways our citizens have shown support for the troops.

The Department of Defense is committed to meeting the quality of life needs of our Service members and their families as we transform our military to meet the needs of the 21st century. DOD leaders, at all levels, are monitoring the status of the force and seriously evaluating family support issues as we engage in major transformation efforts. Our commitment to provide the very best programs for the military families during deployment is a certain and significant contributor to readiness and retention.

I am pleased to report that the Department has made significant strides in the area of deployment support since the Persian Gulf Conflict of 1990—1991 by taking the lessons learned and building highly responsive support networks and systems in each of the Service components.

FAMILY ASSISTANCE CENTERS AND DEPLOYMENT SUPPORT

Central to our system are family assistance centers. Today we have 700 family assistance centers around the world that meet the short-notice "surge" mobilization requirements to provide services to active duty, Guard, and Reserve families. About 400 of these centers are managed by the National Guard and provide mobile outreach capabilities to families not located near a military installation. During deployments, the centers focus on increased education, outreach, and personal assistance to Service members and their families.

Each of the Military Services has comprehensive deployment support programs. These programs educate families and help them cope with the demands of military life including separations and reunions. Personal contact with families on a regular basis is essential to the outreach effort. Through technology, families can access information or link to services around the clock. Personal services include emergency assistance, respite care for children, counseling, financial assistance, and help navigating the often complex military support systems.

Surveys and anecdotal information indicate that we are addressing the needs of families and we know there is always room for improvement. We must continue to emphasize the "basics" of family readiness, our efforts must be for a joint and total force, and our goal remains 100 percent contact with families.

The Department is committed to facilitate family readiness during uncertain times. We formed a Joint Family Readiness Working Group in October 2002. The group plays a critical role in our efforts to monitor deployment and family readiness and serves as an advisor to DOD leadership on emerging policy and operations issues.

MILITARY ONESOURCE

The Department has leveraged the power of technology to deliver information and referral services to Service members and their families regardless of where they are located. Military OneSource delivers a customized approach and is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days of the year from anyplace, tailoring services specifically to individuals and individual families. By calling the toll free telephone number—which is always answered by a masters level consultant—military families can obtain information on topics as diverse as child care, parenting, housing, education, and medical services. It is sometimes vital while a Service member is deployed, for a spouse to ask for some help with referrals for home repairs, finances, and major purchases. Military OneSource offers support to all members of the Armed Forces, including the Reserve and National Guard members and families who do not live on military installations and may not be able to take advantage of DOD offerings. Military OneSource is an augmentation to, not a replacement of, the installation family centers. Each of the Military Services fully implemented this service in fiscal year 2004.

FAMILY ASSISTANCE COUNSELING

DOD is extending its OneSource outreach by implementing a program of face-to-face non-medical counseling for military families experiencing the normal stress of deployments and reunions. Families who contact the toll-free number in need of specific assistance in coping with current challenges can schedule counseling from a licensed counselor within their immediate geographic area anywhere within the continental United States. This counseling is outside of the TRICARE benefit, and includes issues such as parent and child communications, single parenting, deployment stress, financial pressures, and career and education counseling. On average, counseling consists of about six sessions. Access to this kind of counseling is particularly beneficial to families of Service members on an extended tour of duty in Operation Iraqi Freedom or mobilized Guard and Reserve units who do not live within proximity of installations and the services they offer. We deployed these counselors to support the families of the 1st Armored Division soldiers whose deployment was extended 120 days. The mission was so successful that other overseas communities are exploring ways to provide counseling support.

SITES4

Frequent relocation has always been a stress point in military life. Even for career military family—experts in moving, having the right information in a timely manner is essential. The SITES4 Web-based information helps families locate housing, schools, community services, spouse employment, medical assistance, and other aspects of daily life. It is a planning tool for families whose complex and busy lives demand instant and accurate information and guidance.

STATE SUPPORT/PARTNERSHIPS

Not all solutions to fulfilling the quality of life needs of Service members and their families are within the purview of the Department of Defense. State governments and local communities often influence answers to some of the military's most compelling quality of life needs. As a result, the Department is encouraging partnerships of excellence among the States. Military friendly States foster a climate that is very favorable to our Service members and their families. The Department recognizes financial stability, spouse careers, and school support for military children as three areas in which State governments, nonprofit organizations, and industries can assist DOD in addressing quality of life issues.

These partnerships have already yielded very important and tangible results. Thank you, Governor Bush for recently signing into law a series of measures, which, among other things, improved transition for military dependent students and increased military spouse access to unemployment compensation benefits. In Georgia, Governor Purdue and the legislature listened to military leaders and personnel concerning the corrosive nature of payday lending and enacted statute in the face of considerable opposition from the payday lending industry. Governor Warner has established a Citizen-Soldier Council charged with advising him on support of military members and their families living in Virginia.

The Department has emphasized financial well-being through a financial readiness campaign designed to enhance the education and awareness of the Military Services through the support of 26 Federal agencies and non-profit organizations. These organizations and the military Services have collaborated to implement needed interventions. Through partnership with these organizations the Department is also attempting to alleviate the impact of difficult issues such as payday lending by advocating alternative solutions and by supporting State initiatives to curb predatory practices. Governor Purdue and the Georgia Assembly recently established a statute that will significantly inhibit the predatory nature of payday lending and will particularly protect military families from these corrosive practices.

We are employing a similar collaborative approach to improve employment opportunities of military spouses by partnering with Federal, State and local governments to address legislative and regulatory barriers that may inhibit financial stability and portability of jobs. The goal is to develop partnerships with State government, non-profit and private sector organizations to enable spouses to develop careers. Barriers to the transfer and acceptance of certifications and licensure that occur when State rules differ can have a dramatic and negative effect on the financial well-being of military families. Military spouses routinely lose 6 to 9 months of income during a military move as they try to re-instate their careers. And, as with civilian families, military families depend more and more on two incomes. Differing licensing requirements limit advancement or deter re-entry into the work force at a new location. Removing these barriers, creating reciprocity in licensing requirement and creating placement opportunities can not only ensure financial stability of the military family but speed the adaptation of the family into its new location. In addition, military spouses represent a desirable new employee pool for a State, especially in education and health care.

Issues such as the transfer of certifications and licensure between States can have a dramatic effect on the financial well being of military families. Spouses may seek jobs below their qualifications in order to sustain necessary family income because of differing State certification or licensing requirements. The military families transfer between States to fulfill military requirements; hence, military moves should be recognized as involuntary moves that require accommodations.

The Department plans to work with States, especially those heavily impacted by military families, to encourage them to consider policies and statutes that are supportive of military families. Governor Bush and the Florida legislature have established the model for State support of military families. The Florida Senate 2003 interim report on support of military families clearly outlines the benefits and impediments experienced by military families residing in Florida. The comprehensive legislation that resulted from the report will assist spouses with employment, help military children transition into Florida public schools and support housing agreements for military families.

Allowing the Department to participate in your meeting with Governors Bush and Kempthorne to discuss the actions State governments can take to support military families provided an entree into discussing possible collaborations with States to resolve financial stability, spouse employment and school support issues. As a result of this interaction, the Department has met with officials from Texas, North Carolina and Virginia, in addition to Florida and Idaho, to explore means of removing

or minimizing barriers that inhibit military families from achieving stability in their lives.

The proposed collaboration was extended to include the unique requirements of Guard and Reserve families. The Department sent a team of subject experts to an Idaho Guard Family Readiness Workshop in Boise. Our intention is to assist States with supporting Guard and Reserve who are called to serve. Through cooperation and collaboration, the Department intends to make best use of its resources to support the total force: Reserve, Guard and active duty in their various roles.

At the invitation of the National Governors Association, Dr. Chu (the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness) participated in a Governors-only lunch and working session this past Sunday to talk about The Federal/State Military Partnership. This meeting provided an excellent opportunity to talk with Governors about key issues and mutual concerns that impact the quality of life of our active duty, Guard and Reserve members and their military families. Dr. Chu asked the Governors what would be the best way to work with them on these issues, perhaps opening dialogue through an Advisory Group. Regardless of what form this should take, the Department is committed to open collaboration with the Governors and will aggressively work with them to support our Service men and women and their families that serve us so well.

At the same time as my appearance before this subcommittee, Mr. John Molino (the Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Military Community and Family Policy) is addressing State legislators at their National Conference in Salt Lake City. Mr. Molino is sharing with them how the Department supports military families in their communities and the importance State laws and policies may have on impacting military families as they move between States or overseas.

To facilitate collaborative efforts with States, as well as nonprofit organizations and industry, the Department has also established a Web site: www.USA4MilitaryFamilies.org. The site will provide a forum for sharing information about State and local initiatives that support military families.

REGIONAL DOD QUALITY OF LIFE COORDINATORS

To under gird our strong belief in the importance of establishing working relationships with States, a Quality of Life liaison will work in four regions across the United States. These liaisons will be responsible for working with State, local and community officials, as well as corporate America, to address the issues of school-aged children of military families, spouse employment, and financial stability. They will promote awareness of the issues of military families who move frequently and are deployed, facilitate partnerships between military installations and surrounding communities, and encourage legislation and reciprocity within and across States.

SPOUSE EMPLOYMENT

Quality of life for our military families is also defined by the successful employment of spouses. To succeed we will need the help of corporate America. Sixty five percent of the 700,000 spouses of active duty personnel are active in the workforce. Working military spouses move, on average, every 25.2 months and these frequent moves are a tremendous barrier to the development of a career track, consistent employment benefits and tenure. Reflective of American society, over 40 percent of the spouses report that their pay represents a major contribution to the family income. The Department is committed to enhancing the employment and career opportunities of military spouses.

The historic partnership agreement, signed by Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld and Secretary of Labor (DOL) Elaine Chao in July 2003, affords both Departments a unique prospect to increase employment opportunities for military spouses while enhancing the competitiveness of the American work force. Since July, DOD and DOL have made great strides in collaborative use of DOL's One-Stop Career centers and in creating a broad spectrum of Web-based services exclusively for military spouses, including the online Military Spouse Resource Center, www.milspouse.org. An Interagency Work Group has convened to address issues of spousal employment and a joint initiative is underway to coordinate recovery and employment assistance for families of transitioning injured Service members and surviving spouses. A multi-pronged approach is being used to address related priority issues such as expanding the availability of portable telework career opportunities, and the previously discussed initiatives to improve the portability of State licenses and certifications. DOD and DOL are also developing a military spouse employment index to measure spouse participation in the work force and determine the impact of military spouse employment on retention.

DOL-funded career advancement centers in San Diego, CA; Fort Campbell, KY; and Hampton Roads, VA, have significantly reduced employment challenges facing military spouses who have been dislocated from jobs at their previous duty site. The San Diego facility has proven especially effective in dealing with the licensing and certification issues.

DOL is demonstrating its commitment to the employment aspirations of military spouses in Texas, Colorado, North Carolina, California, Kentucky, Tennessee, and Virginia. Since last fall, DOL has awarded three grants totaling approximately $15.5 million to assist military spouses and DOD civilian personnel transition to new jobs. A grant for $6.8 million has been providing transition services to 663 military spouses and 200 civilian DOD personnel at Fort Hood in Central Texas. Another grant for $2.6 million has been providing reemployment services to 1,500 military spouses and DOD civilian personal at Fort Carson Army Post, the Air Force Academy, Peterson Air Force Base, and Schriever Air Force Base in the Colorado Springs area. The most recent grant for $6.1 million has been providing job training for spouses of military personnel and DOD employees at Fort Bragg and Pope Air Force Base.

DOL, through its Office of the Assistant Secretary for Veterans' Employment and Training, in cooperation with DOD through the Transition Assistance Program workshops, is also providing employment-related support and information to separating Service members and spouses designed to enhance their competitiveness in the civilian workforce.

DOD is also exploring innovative placement strategies. In April 2004, DOD began a 1 year pilot program establishing a network of local, regional, and national corporations interested in employing the spouses of military personnel. The program, called IMPACT JEMS (Jobs/Employment for Military Spouses), will initially focus on aiding 1,600 military spouses who are relocating this year to Scott Air Force Base in O'Fallon, IL. The program will also be open to spouses currently located at the base.

In October 2003, the Department of the Army entered into a partnership with over a dozen private corporations to enhance employment opportunities for Army spouses. Among the areas being explored by the partnership are proactive use of Web-based employment tools and spouse-friendly human resources policies. It is anticipated that successful strategies will be expanded to include spouses from other Military Departments.

SPOUSE-TO-TEACHERS

Built on our highly acclaimed Troops-to-Teachers initiative, DOD is establishing a similar program to encourage spouses to enter the teaching ranks. America's public schools need more highly qualified teachers dedicated and committed to public education, who can also serve as positive role models. The leadership skills and expertise that military spouses bring to public education make them effective candidates.

Spouses with degrees who may require additional certification will be aided by a Web site that will provide information regarding State licensure and reciprocity requirements, credentialing programs, potential teaching jobs, and installation contacts. Spouses who desire to pursue a degree and acquire teacher certification will also have access to a Web site for career mapping contacts and information regarding educational requirements for specialized degrees, lists of teaching areas with the greatest hiring potential, lists of colleges offering degrees on and off base, and an expanding Teaching as a Second Career Seminar on installations in the continental United States.

To date, over 6,000 former Service members have been hired in 50 States by nearly 2,500 school districts through the original Troops-to-Teachers initiative. We anticipate similar successes with our Spouse-to-Teachers program.

REBASING

Quality of life considerations are reflected in our development of the new global rebasing strategy designed to meet future national security strategy requirements. Although the operational dimensions are paramount, improving the quality of life of relocated forces and their families is also significant. For this reason, the Department intends to consider quality of life in its rebasing strategy recommendations. Considerations include schools, health care, housing, child care, spouse employment, standard of living, transportation and safety.

HEALTHY PARENTING INITIATIVE

Our dedication to quality of life enhancements is also reflected in the programs we sponsor for the benefit of our military children. Due to current deployments, parents often struggle with intermittent single parenting concerns, separation from extended family members which limits their access to family-based parenting advice, frequent relocations, and children's concerns about their parent(s) working in dangerous situations. Recognizing that our military families face challenges quite unlike those experienced by civilian families, we have produced tools and resources that address their needs and their concerns.

Through the Healthy Parenting Initiative, DOD in partnership with the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture's Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service, created a number of military-specific parenting resources. These materials, designed for parents with pre-school through adolescent children, offer military families dozens of activities and tips to help them through deployments, relocation, and the challenge of reassuring a child whose parent works in dangerous conditions. The materials are easily accessible, are available on CDs, DVDs, and VHS videos and can be downloaded from the Military Family Resource Center Web site. The materials are available at every installation that supports military families.

NEW PARENT SUPPORT

Because military parenthood often presents challenges compounded by deployment, the four Military Services have developed programs to help new parents create safe, nurturing environments for their children. The New Parent Support Program is a home visiting program for expectant parents and parents of children from birth to 3 years of age who are considered to be at-risk for child abuse or family violence. Participation is voluntary and available to family members who live both on and off the installation. New Parent Support staff provides services such as parental role modeling, mentoring, respite care referrals, health care support, and parent support group referrals, as well as information on child development. These services create a much-needed support system for new mothers and fathers while enhancing parenting skills.

CHILD AND YOUTH DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

The Department of Defense operates the Nation's largest employer-sponsored childcare system, serving more than 200,000 children daily. The DOD system is a model for the Nation. We have received recognition as an exemplary program from national organizations, and researchers. Under normal circumstances, balancing home and work demands is a challenge for all parents. These demands are amplified today, in the midst of the Global War on Terror. The Services initiated many special support programs.

The Army has an infrastructure to support the child care and youth supervision needs of soldier parents. This systematic approach may range from ensuring there is a cadre of well-trained in-home care providers who can handle overnight care or respite care to support the single soldier or geographically-single spouse, to guaranteeing extended hours at child development centers that mirror the installation duty day. The Army, in conjunction with the Department of Agriculture, 4-H, and Military Child Education Coalition, is launching a new community-based initiative, "Operation Military Kids," to create community support networks for geographically dispersed military-connected youth.

The Marines have added supplemental child care for families when their regularly scheduled child care is unavailable. A recent beneficiary was a child whose ill mother had to be hospitalized while dad was deployed.

The Navy approached the need for longer periods of care by launching two round the clock programs in the Hawaii and Norfolk regions. The sites include two delivery systems: the Child Development Group Home concept and specialized in-home care providers. They have proven successful. A central enrollment and waiting list approach helps to make placements faster, and allows parents flexibility as their needs change.

The Air Force programs such as Returning Home Care for the period when the sponsor returns from deployment, and during the well-deserved rest and relaxation periods. The Air Force's Guard and Reserve Home Community Care and Installation Care Programs provide full time and weekend care for Air National Guard and Reservists. One of the most appreciated services is the Air Force's Extended Duty Care Program for parents who work extended hours or experience a shift change or other emergency. Help is provided through high-quality licensed family child care homes at nominal or no cost to members.

All of the Services are testing ways to expand child development spaces by partnering with civilian centers and homes. While this will be tested at limited sites, the partnerships forged and the types of agreements made may assist with expanding spaces and meeting the long-term need for quality care.

YOUTH

The Defense Department and the Boys and Girls Clubs of America (B&GCA) have enjoyed a long, collaborative relationship as they open their doors to our military youth to provide wholesome recreation and nationally recognized programs designed to help young people succeed in school, stay healthy, and learn important life skills.

The National Military Family Association (NMFA) and Sears have recently partnered with the military to conduct several summer camps for youth with deployed parents. NMFA and Sears, their corporate sponsor, are currently funding at least 13 camps in various regions for 50 youth each.

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE EDUCATION ACTIVITY

The Department of Defense Education Activity (DODEA) has been an active partner in supporting students and families during the Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation Iraqi Freedom. All schools within DODEA have Crisis Management Teams to assist students and teachers during stressful times. Working in collaboration with military and civilian communities, they provide support before, during, and after each deployment.

The Department has a great deal of pride in its school system and continues to address quality issues in the areas of curriculum, staffing, facilities, safety, security, and technology. Our schools are comprised of two educational systems providing quality pre-kindergarten through 12th grade programs: the DOD Domestic Dependent Elementary and Secondary Schools (DDESS) for students in locations within the United States and its territories, possessions, and commonwealths, and the DOD Dependents Schools (DODDS) for military students residing overseas. DOD schools are located in 13 foreign countries, seven States, Guam, and Puerto Rico, serving more than 100,000 students in 223 schools. Students include both military and civilian Federal employee's dependents.

The quality of DOD schools is measured in many ways, but most importantly, as in other school systems, by student performance. DOD students regularly score substantially above the national average in every subject area at every grade level on a nationally standardized test.

In addition, students participate in the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) tests. NAEP is known as "the Nation's Report Card" because it is the only instrument that permits a direct comparison of student performance among States and jurisdictions across the country. DODEA students, and in particular its Africa-American and Hispanic students, score exceptionally well on this test, often achieving a first or second place national rank when compared with their contemporaries.

DODEA's 2003 graduates were awarded nearly $33.5 million in scholarship and grant monies for further education. Graduates in 2003 reported plans to attend over 800 different colleges and universities worldwide.

To meet the challenge of the increasing competition for teachers, DODEA has an aggressive U.S. recruitment program. The program emphasizes diversity and quality, and focuses on placing eligible military family members as teacher in its schools.

DOD SUPPLEMENTAL IMPACT AID

The DOD supplemental Impact Aid program provides funds to heavily impacted school districts in addition to the funds provided by the Department of Education through the Federal Impact Aid program. The Department of Education's Impact Aid program provides financial support to school districts educating military dependent students, students who reside on Indian lands, and students who live on, or whose parents work on, Federal property. The DOD supplemental Impact Act program provides funds to school districts in which the enrollment of military dependent students constitutes at least 20 percent of the total student enrollment. As in the case of the Federal Impact Aid program administered by the Department of Education, funds are provided to offset the revenue loss due to the presence of Federal lands or activities.

For fiscal year 2004, $30 million was appropriated for the DOD supplemental payments to heavily impacted districts while $5 million was appropriated for the program for military children with severe disabilities.

MILITARY CHILD IN TRANSITION AND DEPLOYMENT

A significant percentage of Service members who dedicate their lives to the security and well being of our Nation are parents, too. The education of their children is of utmost importance to them. In fact, the quality of education is a major factor in Service members choosing assignments.

The Department is committed to supporting students of military families involved in frequent moves and deployments. The Educational Opportunities Directorate actively seeks to assist schools in providing quality education to military dependent students.

In order to affect significantly, the children of families of the Total Force, the Department has developed the Web site, (www.MilitaryStudent.org). It provides military children, their parents and teachers with important information related to student needs. Seven Web sites on one site, (www.MilitaryStudent.org) provides special sections for children ages 6–12, teens, parents, special needs families, military leaders, and educators with articles, videos, guidebooks, resources, and bulletin boards to address the challenges of frequent moves and deployed parents.

The Promising Practices Program, featured on the Web site promotes worldwide replication of school programs and policies that make a difference for military children during deployment.

Skilled educators, counselors and mental health workers associated with the public schools attended by military children generally do not have an awareness of the lifestyle, issues, or challenges of the military child. To be effective, they must be trained in military child issues and appropriate interventions.

The Department has initiated several partnerships that have addressed the awareness issues for educators. A partnership with the Department of Education's Safe and Drug Free Schools program has expanded to include work with the National Child Traumatic Stress Network (sponsored by UCLA, Duke University, and the Department of Health and Human Services) and world-renowned trauma experts, to develop publications such as: Educator's Guide to the Military Child During Deployment and Educator's Guide to the Military Child During Post Deployment: Challenges of Family Reunion. In addition, Parent's Guide to the Military Child in Deployment has been written in collaboration with the same agencies. All three guidebooks are available on the DOD Web site (www.MilitaryStudent.org). A partnership with the Child Study Center of the New York University School of Medicine has made their outstanding guidebook, Caring for Kids After Trauma and Death: A Guide for Parents and Professionals, available on the Web site.

A partnership with Generations United is allowing DOD to work with this nonprofit organization to develop a literacy tutoring program for children of deployed military families by training retired military members in their community as tutors and mentors offering educational and emotional support on a one-to-one basis.

The National Child Traumatic Stress Network and DOD are also partnering to develop a program to work with children of severely wounded military members returning from Iraq and Afghanistan in order to help children comprehend the life-altering changes of the military member and the impact on the their family.

MILITARY FAMILIES WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

I would be remiss to talk about programs for military children without mentioning the efforts we have made for families with special needs. The National Center for Health Statistics estimates that approximately 15–20 percent of the child population will be identified as having physical, learning, or emotional disabilities that will require special education services and/or special medical rehabilitative services associated with their education programs. Among the 1.8 million family members of active duty military personnel, prevalence rates suggest that over 270,000 of them have special needs.

Although the military healthcare system provides quality care to military beneficiaries, assistance is needed in priority housing, case management for involved medical problems, access to community programs, and family support personnel who can direct them to community programs.

The Department has taken a number of steps to address this situation. In February, we launched a Web site (www.EFMconnections.org) for military families with special needs that provides a secure location to exchange information, ask questions, and obtain support from other military families with special needs. At the Web site, family members can reach a point of contact at their next assignment, connect with school personnel, and learn about community programs.

In July, we partnered with other Federal agencies to provide a training opportunity for military family support personnel to gain knowledge of the programs and services available and mechanisms for obtaining services.

CONCLUSION

Mr. Chairman, thank you and the Members of this Subcommittee for your outstanding and continuing support of the men and women of the Department of Defense. I appreciate the opportunity to share with you our many successes in the quality of life arena. Our objective is to ensure that our Armed Forces remain the best in the world and that military families are a reflection of that same desire for excellence.

Senator ALEXANDER. Let me continue the line of discussion I was having with the Governors that we had. For the last year, our two committees, two subcommittees, Personnel in Armed Services and Children and Families and our staffs and your office, the Department of Defense, and representatives of the next panel, who basically involve the Governors and the private sector, we have been working very well together and we have been impressed. We in the Senate have been impressed with what you are doing as well as we have been impressed with the needs that still need to be met.

I have had the inclination, I guess, probably as a former Governor, to try to take the lead in trying to make all this happen, but as I listen and realize this, I think the legislative branch isn't the right place to put the lead person. I think it is in either the Federal administration or among the Governors, just because that is the executive. It is harder for the Governors because Governors in their own State are used to being in charge and taking the lead, but when they are out of their State, there is sort of an unnatural territory. It is like I used to think Governors' conferences were like having 50 roosters in one barnyard. It is not a natural environment for Governors to work together. So they get together, but they don't really work together. They swap ideas.

So I think that leaves you as the lead, and I think probably you accept that, but let me try to be a little more specific. I hear very specific things that could be done, some of which I believe you are working on, that could make a big difference in the everyday lives of military families. I mentioned spouse certification, the idea of taking the three or four areas where spouses are most likely to want to go to work, like child care certification, try to come up with a model certification program and then at least go to the States with the largest number of military personnel and say, will you adopt this? My guess is they would adopt it very quickly, particularly if it were part of a small list of things they could do to support military families.

The payday lending idea that Governor Bush talked about and you have talked about, if legislators in major States suddenly begin to think of that as an issue involving support for military families and they heard that from the Department of Defense, I think that would make a big difference to them. The graduation rate issue, the movement of a disabled or a special education child across State lines and suddenly finding a different environment.

States have passed the Uniform Commercial Code without the Federal Government passing a single law. They have passed a lot of laws without making it a Federal law. And so my question is, do you think that the Department of Defense is the right place to put the lead responsibility for assembling a small group of us, including Governors, the private sector, and those in the Senate and the House who are interested, and kind of move this agenda along to make sure it doesn't get on a slow track?

Mr. ABELL. Sir, I absolutely think the Department of Defense is the right place, and within the Department of Defense, I think our office is the right place. And we are, as you said, trying to do that, perhaps not on as structured a scale as you described, but last Sunday, Dr. Chu addressed the National Governors Conference and went over almost the same list that you just went down of things that we would like them to focus on and to help us with.

As I am testifying here, Mr. John Molino of my office is out meeting with the State Legislatures Conference in Salt Lake City, talking about exactly this same issue and talking to them about things that we hope we could find, certifications that would be honored across States, the curriculum and enrollment dates and things like that that you have discussed in the first panel.

I think it was Senator Nelson who asked, was there a place where we were sort of share these best practices or good ideas, and again, the Department of Defense has those in two places. One of them you mentioned early on, the USA for Families-dot-org Web site, and the other is in our Military Student-dot-org Web site. We have a promising practices section there, where we try to identify the good things that we find in other States and put them up there so folks can see them and copy them.

But what you are really suggesting is more proactive and I am willing to be more proactive about that.

Senator ALEXANDER. Well, thanks, and I am not sure I have got the right idea, but I think it is a pretty simple thing. I am not suggesting a complex structure. My experience has been when I was Governor, if I wanted a road built, the best way for me to do that was to get a competent road commissioner and agree on where it should go and then meet with him once a month to see if it was going. I think it may be as simple as your convening a session, either by telephone or in person, every quarter, every 45 days, every so often, with a specific list of 10 things that are the most promising things and just working down the list.

I am not sure what we here can contribute to that other than be a part of your group just so when things come up that require Federal legislation, we can do it. Another thing we might do is our two subcommittees could have an oversight hearing every 6 months, which would be an opportunity for your office and others to come report on progress and on help that you need. That is a discipline that we might provide.

But I don't think we should be the lead agency. I think you should be. I think what we would like to do is to participate in it, and then second, have an oversight hearing from time to time to make sure it is on track. Does that make sense?

Mr. ABELL. It absolutely does, sir, and thinking back to my days in the military, one of the leadership axioms was that the troops do well what the boss checks. So if you have oversight hearings, we will be prepared for those hearings.

Senator ALEXANDER. Thank you, sir. Thank you for your time. I was thinking of those post schools, too. I think one reason the post schools do well is because I think the principal reports to the commanding officer.

Mr. ABELL. No, sir, he actually reports to me, but——

Senator ALEXANDER. Oh, he reports to you, of all the post schools?

Mr. ABELL [CONTINUING]. Yes, sir.

Senator ALEXANDER. Is that right?

Mr. ABELL. The military schools all report up through, ultimately to me. The reason they are good are many. The reasons that they are good are many. They are well resourced, probably better resourced than most States can afford. But there is also, I think most importantly, a very rich cultural tradition of parental involvement and command involvement in the schools and in the students. So when a school has a bake sale to buy band uniforms or something, they will sell out of goods before the goods would go bad, if you know what I mean.

But the parents are also engaged with the teachers. They are engaged with the students. It is something we would hope that those schools outside our bases would emulate. But those are probably the biggest reasons, the command involvement, the parental involvement, and the resources that we devote to that.

Senator ALEXANDER. What happens if a military parent doesn't attend a parent-teacher conference?

[Laughter.]

Mr. ABELL. The military would not do anything about it. Probably the other parents would have a discussion with them. I have, in a town hall meeting in Italy, had a young Navy petty officer complain to me that the school expected her to do too much as far as parental support, and her colleagues in the audience booed her down. I didn't have to respond at all.

[Laughter.]

Senator ALEXANDER. Senator Chambliss?

Senator CHAMBLISS. Secretary, how are you?

Mr. ABELL. I am well, sir. How are you?

Senator CHAMBLISS. It is good to see you, as always. I have just one quick question. Is there anything going on relative to school closures, anywhere?

Mr. ABELL. No, sir. Nothing has changed since we last talked about it. The data collection has been completed. We are in the analysis stage. It will ultimately percolate its way up to me. I don't expect that that is a process that will happen or be completed anytime soon. Once it gets to me, we will look at it and see where we are. We will certainly come, as I promised you before, have a discussion with you and other members who are concerned before we would begin to do anything.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Let me just reiterate my concern. You and I have talked about this. I won't go into all the detail of it, but that certainly is one of the greatest assets, in my opinion, for military families, to be associated, or their children to be associated with other military kids. I know you are very sensitive to it. At the same time, I know and understand that there are reasons why we have to make changes within our military education system from time to time, so we look forward to staying in touch with that.

I may have a couple of other questions that we will submit to you for the record, and we just ask that you get those back to us. I am going to be easy on you, Charlie. We will get those to you.

Mr. ABELL. Thank you, sir. I look forward to seeing them.

Senator ALEXANDER. After you go see Senator Chambliss about the post schools, would you drop by and see me and tell me what you are—[Laughter.] I am not on that committee of jurisdiction, but I am very, very interested in the impact that post schools have on our entire education structure in the United States. I am very interested.

Mr. ABELL. I will commit to that, Senator, and I expect that before the end of the day I would meet with 100 folks on this side of the Hill.

Senator ALEXANDER. OK. Thank you very much for coming.

I would like to welcome our final three witnesses and thank them for listening to what I hope they would agree has been a very interesting set of witnesses. I will introduce them while they are sitting down so we gain time.

Dr. Nolan Jones is Deputy Director of Federal Relations. He represents the National Governors Association. You have had a pretty big build-up here in the other two panels, Dr. Jones, and we welcome you. He specializes in military issues and homeland security and holds a Ph.D. in political science from Washington University in St. Louis.

General Dennis Reimer is well known in the United States military, former Army Chief of Staff, 37 years in the Army. When he goes to a base, everyone knows who he is. He is the founder, though, of the Military Child Education Coalition and it is that that brings him here today.

And Mrs. Holly Petraeus, thank you very much for being here. I became acquainted with her because her husband was the commanding general at Fort Campbell, which has a Kentucky address but is mostly in Tennessee. David Petraeus is now back in Iraq, training Iraqis to maintain their own security. Mrs. Petraeus has lived many places in the military. She has moved lots of times. She has known lots of military families, and we found in working with her at Fort Campbell that she had a real sensitivity to the needs of families there—who were not complaining. We have talked about this before. We asked them what their needs were and how their lives were and they were honest with us. It wasn't a complaint. It was just an answer to a question. We are grateful to her for coming. She has been honored many times for her own work.

I would like to suggest we start with Dr. Jones, we go to General Reimer, and then to Mrs. Petraeus. If you could each summarize your remarks, we have your statements. We have read them and are grateful for them. If you could summarize your remarks in about 5 minutes or so, then Senator Chambliss and I would have a chance to have a conversation with you.

STATEMENT OF NOLAN JONES, DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF FEDERAL RELATIONS, NATIONAL GOVERNORS ASSOCIATION

Mr. JONES. My name is Nolan Jones and I want to thank you on behalf of the Nation's Governors for this opportunity to testify. The Executive Director, Ray Scheppach, regrets that he is unable to join you today. I bring you greetings from the Nation's Governors, who have just completed their 96th annual meeting in Seattle, Washington, and to say that many of the issues that you have been discussing——

Senator ALEXANDER. Dr. Jones, if you could pull that up just a little closer, we could hear you better. Thank you, sir.

Mr. JONES [CONTINUING]. Many of the issues that you have been discussing today were discussed by the Governors during their annual meeting.

Chairman Alexander, the Governors wish to commend you for your continuous work on behalf of the Nation's children and families, and during the past year, you and your subcommittee have been at the forefront of developing policies to assist the Nation's children and this hearing is a continuation of that.

You have heard and we know that with more than 40 percent of the National Guard and Reserve participating in overseas and military operations, Governors and their States are supporting these men and women and their families with a variety of services and benefits. States are protecting families from foreclosures, extending hiring practices for State jobs for spouses of military personnel, offering child care, facilitating easy access to professional licensing, providing health and life insurance while activated. And North Carolina has provided assistance to their National Guard during deployment by supplying them with hand-held radios, body armor, and laptop computers.

A recent survey of the Nation's Governors conducted by the National Governors Association, along with the Department of Defense, Under Secretary of Military and Community Family Policy, revealed that States are offering various benefits to assist all military personnel and families, and I would like to submit a copy of that report for the record.

Senator ALEXANDER. We would be glad to have it.

Mr. JONES. I would say offhand that this report sort of does what you were asking earlier and it serves for States learning from each other. We have been conducting this report, or the survey, rather, starting in March with a survey letter sent out by our chairman, Governor Kempthorne, at that time, and since then, I have received requests and we have sent drafts out and other States have begun enacting legislation and calling other States about these actions and how did they do it. So it is doing what we wanted to do, which is States learning from one another.

All of the States are required to enforce the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act. These benefits—States are going far beyond these benefits. Our surveys show that States are doing things in six areas, and you saw those six areas with the display from the State of Indiana.

First, family support. According to the NGA survey, approximately 47 States offer one or more of the following programs and benefits to families: Extending hiring preferences for State jobs to spouses of military personnel; giving credit counseling to spouses and family members; offering family survivor benefit plans similar to veterans' cemetery benefits; providing rosters of volunteers who will assist families with needs and organizing support groups; and giving free Internet service at public libraries.

Over 40 States offer information about family benefits and support programs on their Web sites. In some States, the first ladies have taken on projects to assist military families, especially those deployed, by organizing camps for children and family picnics.

The second area was education benefits. Approximately 35 States are offering some type of education benefits to members of the Guard and their families as well as other military families, including tuition assistance, refunds and reimbursement when activated, scholarships for spouses and children, and special recognition and support for families whose members have died in the line of duty. In addition, Governors are using their bully pulpit to encourage private universities and colleges to offer refunds and reimbursements to activated soldiers and to place scholarships on hold until the men and women return from service.

Third, licensing and registration benefits. Approximately 24 States extend or waive deadlines for professional licenses and drivers' license renewal and exempt or extend deadlines for certain tax liability for Guardsmen and women when they are called to active duty. States are also joining mutual compacts for certain professional licenses in recognition of military families who transfer from State to State.

Fourth, tax and financial benefits. Approximately 27 States offer some form of tax relief by extension of filing deadlines for the National Guard and Reserve members on active duty. Several States have no income tax for Guard and Reserve members during the period they serve on active duty. For example, Nebraska provides an exemption for motor vehicle taxes of residents in other States that are living in Nebraska while serving on active duty, and Montana suspends property taxes for up to 1 year after cessation of hostilities or deactivation.

Fifth, State benefits. Twenty-five States give their State employees the difference between their regular pay and their pay in the National Guard when they are on active duty. Approximately 16 or more States provide health insurance and life insurance benefits to National Guard members and their families. A few States even offer help with private insurance.

Then another category that fell in "other benefits" that we could not put into those categories. Those other benefits include health and life insurance coverage during activation; giving cost-of-living pay increases while activated; offering reemployment protection, including seniority and pay-up on returning from service; giving veterans' preference on exams for employment; providing hiring preferences for service-connected disabilities; providing families with foreclosure protection during activation; providing servicemen and women hiring preferences for State, municipal, and county employment; and allowing the accrual of sick leave and vacation leave while activated.

Many States are providing support for men and women returning from activation with help through integrating and reintegration into their societies and with their families. Governors are also using their bully pulpits to encourage private businesses to offer discounts to military families.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, the chart that I presented to you will be placed on the NGO Web site, as I said earlier, and DOD, I understand, will be placing it on their Web site. This chart will show these best practices and States will help to learn from one another.

During that recent meeting, the Governors met with Dr. Chu, the Under Secretary for Personnel from the Department of De-

fense, and discussed how they could continue working together with us to enhance benefits and support for our military men and women and their families. The Governors also passed a policy position concerning military families and encouraging States to continue working together as we submit this policy position and how we work with this policy. I would like to submit a copy of the policy for the record, Mr. Chairman.

Senator ALEXANDER. Thank you. We will be glad to do that.

Mr. JONES. Mr. Chairman, in addition, the Governors appointed two lead Governors on National Guard and military affairs during that recent meeting. Those two lead Governors are Governor Kempthorne, our recent chair, of Idaho, and Governor Easley of North Carolina. They will be working with DOD and Congress to assist military families to see what Governors can do to do more in assisting military families.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, in conclusion, Governors in our States have been stepping forward to assist families of men and women who have been called to active duty, both regular military and the National Guard and Reserve.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my remarks and I will be happy to answer any questions. Thank you.

Senator ALEXANDER. Thank you very much, Dr. Jones.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Scheppach follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF RAYMOND C. SCHEPPACH

Mr. Chairman, on behalf of the National Governors Association (NGA), I want to express appreciation to you and ranking member, Senator Dodd, for your continuous work on behalf of the Nation's children and families. During the past year, you and this subcommittee have been in the forefront of developing policies to assist our Nation's most precious resource—our children. This hearing today continues your commitment.

We are brought together today by your continued interest in families and children, especially those who are separated because of a call to military duty. As you are aware, more than 40 percent of the men and women on active duty participating in Operation Iraqi Freedom, Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Noble Eagle, and other overseas military operations, are members of the National Guard and Reserves. The dual mission of the Guard, which is supported by the Nation's Governors, means that they are ready and available for national defense when called by the President; and are available at the Governors' command to assist the citizens of the States and territories, should the need arise.

The Nation's Governors have historically been very supportive of the National Guard whenever they have been called up by the President for national defense purposes. States enforce the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA) that was enacted by Congress to:

- Prohibit discrimination against National Guard and Reserve service;
- Ensure continued medical, dental and vision benefits by employers;
- Ensure participation in employer pensions, thrift savings, and stock options—even during military duty;
- Permit Guard and Reserve members to file a claim against the employer if USERRA rights are violated.

States have also incorporated benefits suggested by the State Soldiers and Sailor Civil Relief Act. However, most States and Governors have gone far beyond these rights. Each time that there has been a major mobilization of National Guard members, there has been a major response by Governors and their States to support these men and women and their families with services and benefits. For example, during the Gulf War, the Guard call-up after September 11, and the current Iraq War, Alabama has implemented Operation Family Shield, a program where the State Board of Education refunds tuition to Alabama military personnel called to active duty. Currently, five counties in Florida forgive the property tax of military persons while deployed, and offer a one-time grant of $600 to renters who are deployed.

In the wake of the September 11 attacks, Governors expanded the use of the National Guard in homeland defense and security. During this period, Guard activities included securing strategic facilities such as airports, pharmaceutical labs, nuclear power plants, communications towers, and border closings. They also have been a cornerstone in protecting our citizens from domestic terrorism. While the Guard men and women were providing protection for our homeland, States began to provide and expand benefits for them and their families.

Given the number of National Guard men and women who have been deployed in the current war effort, the focus of my testimony is on programs, benefits, and services offered by the States in support of these Guardsmen and women and their families. The NGA Chair and Vice Chair recently wrote to Governors asking them about the benefits and services they were providing National Guard men and women in military service and their families. I have attached a chart that lists the benefits and services each State is providing.

Let me say at the outset that some of the benefits offered by States apply to both regular military service members and families, and some apply only to the members of the National Guard and their families.

BENEFITS CURRENTLY PROVIDED BY STATES

The benefits currently provided by States can be divided into six categories.

- Family support.
- Educational benefits.
- Licensing and registration benefits.
- Tax and financial benefit.
- State employees benefits.
- Other support and benefits.

FAMILY SUPPORT

I will first focus on the family support services States are providing the families and children of Guardsmen and women and regular military families who have been called to active duty. According to the NGA survey, approximately 47 States are offering various programs and benefits to families including: extending hiring preferences for State jobs to spouses of military personnel; giving credit counseling to spouses and family members; offering family survivor benefit plans similar to State veterans cemetery benefits; providing rosters of volunteers who will assist with family needs and organizing family support groups; and giving free Internet service at public libraries. Forty States offer information about family benefits and support programs on their Web site.

As a specific example, the State of Washington has established the Washington National Guard Family Support Program that uses volunteers to keep families informed about benefits and other issues that spouses and families need while family members are on active duty. The Guard in Washington has published two documents that are available on their Web site (http://familysupport.washingtonguard.com) to assist families in planning and obtaining assistance. One of the documents provides guidance on planning real estate, wills, and powers of Attorney; the other document is designed to prepare families of Washington National Guardsmen and women to reunite upon returning from deployment. Many other States, including Minnesota, Nebraska, New York, and North Carolina have similar programs that offer assistance to children and family members of Guardsmen and women who have been called to active duty. Nebraska has organized monthly emotional support group meetings throughout the State (113 to date) that are sponsored by the Chaplain Corps for the families of active Nebraska National Guard soldiers. In addition, the Governor of Nebraska has hosted a series of picnics across the State for the families of deployed soldiers. In North Carolina, Project Community Action Readiness provides emergency vehicle and home repair, child care assistance, and transportation for military families.

The First Lady of Minnesota spearheads the Military Family Care Initiative to link military families with organizations and individuals willing to help them while their family members are deployed overseas. She encourages service organizations, community organizations, and faith-based groups to volunteer their services to families of military personnel through her State Web site. Families of military personnel who have been deployed can log on the site to search for groups near their homes that are willing to help with routine tasks, such as mowing the lawn or preparing a meal.

EDUCATION BENEFITS

A growing number of States are providing educational benefits. Overall approximately 35 States are offering some type of educational benefits to members of the Guard and their families as well as other military families, including tuition assistance, refunds and reimbursement when activated; scholarships for spouses and children; and special recognition and support to families whose member died in the line of duty. For example, Connecticut requires the State's public colleges and universities to waive tuition for wartime veterans who have been accepted at an approved institution. The waiver applies at community-technical colleges, Connecticut State University, and the University of Connecticut; and covers credit-bearing undergraduate and graduate programs. In addition, Nebraska provides tuition assistance for the spouse or children of any member of the Nebraska National Guard who dies while serving in the active service of the State. And high school seniors of military families who transfer to school systems in Florida are exempt from exit exams, and may substitute the SAT or ACT.

LICENSING AND REGISTRATION BENEFITS

Approximately 24 States extend or waive deadlines for professional license and drivers license renewals, and exempt or extend deadlines for certain tax liabilities for Guardsmen and women who have been called to active duty. A statute in Maine says the State-authorized authorities who license and regulate any profession or occupation can waive or defer all or any portion of any continuing education requirement in current law as a condition of license renewal for a "person who is a member of the National Guard or Reserves under an order to active duty in support of an operational mission." Likewise, New York provides that any professional license, certificate, or registration that expires while the holder is engaged in active military service shall be automatically extended for the period of active service plus 12 months after the end of service.

States are also streamlining requirements and joining mutual compacts for certain professional licenses in recognition of spouses of military families who transfer from State to State. For example, in 1998 the National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN) approved a policy goal to remove regulatory barriers to increase access to safe nursing care. The NCSBN began their mutual compact in January of 2000 with four States. Currently 20 States are part of the Nurse Licensure Compact.

TAX AND FINANCIAL BENEFITS

Approximately 27 States offer some form of tax relief or extension of filing deadlines for the National Guard and Reserve members on active duty. Several States have no State income tax for Guard and Reserve members during the period they serve on active duty. A Connecticut statute requires towns to provide a property tax exemption of at least $1,500 for war veterans and their surviving spouses. New York State permits localities, at their discretion, to extend the payment period for any tax owed on real property. Eligibility is limited to a person who has been ordered to active military duty for a period beginning with a declaration of war by Congress, or during any period of combat designated by presidential executive order or while on hazardous duty. In addition, Nebraska provides an exemption from motor vehicle taxes to residents of another State that are living in Nebraska while serving on active military duty; and Missouri provides for an extension for State income tax or property tax on personal or real property for persons performing military service or their spouse when filing a combined tax return. Montana suspends property taxes for up to 1 year after cessation of hostilities or deactivation, and suspends the collection of income tax debts for up to 6 months after deactivation.

The Governors of some States are also encouraging stores and facilities to provide discounts to Guard members and their families. The Arizona Governor, in particular, has a list of "Governor's Homeland Heroes," which consists of businesses that are providing payment extension plans, financial contributions, services, and discounts to spouses and dependents of deployed members of the National Guard and Reserves. In North Carolina, bankers have donated $100,000 to extend childcare for military families. And New York has two programs under their Patriot Plan—the NY-USA Proud Employer of Distinction Award and the Patriot Support Discount Program—aimed at recognizing employers and retailers in the State who show extra support to members of the military.

STATE EMPLOYEES BENEFITS

Twenty-five States give their State employees the difference between their regular pay and their National Guard pay when they are on active duty. Approximately 16 States provide health care and life insurance benefits for Guardsmen and women and their families. A few States offer assistance with private insurance. Nebraska reimburses National Guard members for up to 102 percent of costs incurred for employer-provided or personally held health insurance during any period of activation; Pennsylvania requires employers to provide health insurance and other benefits for the first 30 days of activation; and Wyoming allows National Guard members to maintain their health insurance by paying the employer the cost that would come from compensation.

OTHER SUPPORT BENEFITS

New York State and some other States offer various benefits and programs to military personnel and their families. In New York, the "Patriot Plan", which is a package of benefits and protections for service members created by a Governor's Executive Order and the State legislature, includes the following protections and benefits.

• Life insurance not to lapse for non-payment of premiums. Life insurance policies will not lapse for nonpayment of premiums for a period of 2 years following the period of active duty with the Armed Forces of the United States.

• Protection against enforcement of storage liens on household goods. Prohibits the foreclosure or enforcement of any lien for storage of household goods, furniture, or personal effects of a person in military service during such person's period of active duty military service and for 3 months thereafter.

• Professional liability insurance protection. Professional liability insurance for persons ordered to active duty is suspended, upon request, for the period of military service plus 30 days.

• Prohibition against foreclosure of mortgage. Prohibits the sale, foreclosure, or seizure of property for nonpayment of mortgage during the service member's period of service or within 6 months thereafter.

• Adverse Credit Reporting. Adverse action in future financial transactions including adverse credit reporting against an individual who has previously obtained a stay, postponement or suspension of obligations under the State Civil Relief Act, is prohibited.

• Termination of motor vehicle lease contract. Permits individuals who enter into a car lease prior to entering active military service to break the lease upon entry into active service.

• Maximum rate of interest. Extends the 6 percent interest cap on debt incurred prior to entering active duty.

• Suspension of repayment of public retirement system loans. Permits a public retirement system, at its discretion, to suspend the obligation to repay any loan while a member is absent on military duty.

Other States are:

• Providing health and life insurance coverage during activation;

• Giving cost of living pay increases while activated;

• Offering reemployment protection including seniority and pay upon returning from service;

• Giving veteran preference on exams for employment;

• Providing hiring preference for service connected disability;

• Protecting families from foreclosure during activation;

• Providing service men and women hiring preference for State, municipal and county employment;

• Allowing the accrual of sick leave and vacation time while activated.

Mr. Chairman, North Carolina has even given assistance to their National Guard Members during deployment in Iraq. The State has supplied them hand held radios, body armor, and laptop computers.

NGA ASSISTANCE TO STATES

In a significant number of policy areas NGA assists States in highlighting "best practices" of other States. Since Governors openly admit that they like to "borrow and steal" the best ideas of other Governors, this is an important role for NGA. Since so many States have expanded their benefits to the National Guard and Reserves, this is an area that lends itself to sharing of "best practices." The information that I have provided was collected through the NGA survey. NGA intends to

post the state-by-state listing on our Web site. The Web-site will be updated as more information is received from States.

We will also investigate those areas where implicit or explicit reciprocal action or agreements may be appropriate, especially relating to military families transferring to schools in different States, military families receiving public assistance, and the process of obtaining professional licenses. Further, if a formal voluntary compact or memorandum of agreement may be appropriate we will also investigate these options. For example, States could agree to recognize professional licenses from other States during the term of service. The Nurse Licensure Compact is a good example. As mentioned earlier, this compact has been in operation for approximately 4 years and currently has 20 member States, and several other States are considering adopting the compact.

Mr. Chairman, currently there is an initiative in the Department of Defense (DOD) to examine benefits and services in States. NGA has been working with DOD in this effort and looks forward to a continued relationship. This is an opportunity for States to share information about programs and services that they are providing military personnel.

In summary, Mr. Chairman, Governors and their States have been stepping forward to assist families of men and women who have been called to active duty, both the regular military and National Guard and Reserves. State employees who are members of the Guard are receiving pay differentials while on active duty; children are receiving subsidized tuition in some cases; spouses are obtaining counseling and assistance with childcare and other needs; and the men and women on active duty are receiving tax breaks, as well as postponement or waiving of drivers and professional license renewal until they return from active duty.

STATE SUPPORT FOR NATIONAL GUARD AND REGULAR MILITARY MEMBERS AND THEIR FAMILIES

A Report by the
National Governors Association

With the Support of the
Office of the Deputy Under Secretary of Defense
(Military Community and Family Policy)

July 21, 2004

State Support of National Guard and Reserve and the Regular Military Members and Families

State	State Employees	Educational Benefits	Tax and Financial Benefits	Family Support	Licensing and Registration	Other Support
Alabama National Guard and Reserve (NG &R) Members: 28,193 Spouses: 14,610 Children: 24,510	• Receive pay difference between military pay and state salary	• Operation Family Shield for Operation Nobel Eagle (ONE), Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF): refunds and waivers of tuition, scholarships for members, spouses and children (2003/2004)		• Operation Family Shield for ONE, OEF and OIF: group counseling services • Additional information about family program available at: http://www.alguard.state.al.us/FRP/index.htm		• November 17 – 23, 2003 proclaimed as Employer Support for Guard and Reserve (ESGR) week
Alaska NG&R Members: 4,469 Spouses: 2,537 Children: 4,687	• Continue health and life insurance benefits	• Pay tuition of surviving dependents of member who dies in the line of duty		• Information about family program available at: http://www.ak-prepared.com/dmva/familyprograms/family-programs-home.htm		• Entitled to return to former employment position or a comparable position at the same pay, seniority and benefit level
Arizona NG&R Members: 12,025 Spouses: 6,661 Children: 11,330	• Prohibition against discrimination • Retention of vacation and seniority rights • No loss of time or efficiency rating • Exec Order to review policies and to draft legislation to assist and protect military member state employees	• Eligible for tuition and fees reimbursement • Exec Order examining possibility of providing tuition waivers for family members		• Arizona NG Family Assistance Fund established to provide emergency assistance • Information about family program available at: http://www.az.ngb.army.mil/Family_Readiness/AZfamilyhome.htm	• Vehicle license tax and registration fee exemption • Exec Order extending vehicle registration/ inspection • Eligible for special NG license plates with proceeds accruing to NG fund • Exec Order extending professional health services licenses	• Immunity of non-felony arrest while activated • Exempt from jury duty • No discrimination by public businesses • Governor's Homeland Heroes: businesses that offer financial assistance and discounted services to families

Information concerning the number of Guard and Reserve members, spouses and children includes members of the Army Reserve, Army National Guard, Navy Reserve, Marine Corps Reserve, Air Force Reserve, Air National Guard, and the Coast Guard Reserve. Information was generated by the Defense Data Manpower Center, dated March 2004.

State	State Employees	Educational Benefits	Tax and Financial Benefits	Family Support	Licensing and Registration	Other Support
						of activated members
Arkansas NG&R Members: 13,246 Spouses: 7,225 Children: 12,428	• Employment protection • 30 days of paid leave per calendar year • Cost of living pay increases while activated • Protected leave and retirement accrual and eligibility for recognition pay • Lump-sum payment of leave			• Information about family program available at: http://www.arguard.org/fa mily/index.htm		
California NG&R Members: 61,095 Spouses: 29,176 Children: 46,421	• Reemployment rights • Differential pay between state and military pay for school employees up 180 days • Differential pay for all state employees when called to federal or state duty for up to 365 days • Military leave up to 30 days • Paid leave during Independent Duty Training weekends	• Academic leave and other protections pertaining to attendance • Loan assumption program (unfounded)	• State Soldiers and Sailors Civil Relief Act, which expands benefits provided under (SSCRA) • Cal-Vet Home Loan for activated members and for those who have enlisted for 6 years (or commissioned) and 1 year of service	• Support to families authorized through Non Appropriated Fund activities • Information about family program available at: http://www.calguard.ca.gov/readyfamilies/	• Restricted drivers licenses for NG soldiers entering 88M Military Occupational Specialty	• Prohibition against discrimination in financing and auto loan rates for membership in the NG or Reserves
Colorado NG&R Members: 17,468 Spouses: 9,670 Children: 16,304				• Information about family program available at: http://www.coloradoguard.com/webpages/family_program.htm		
Connecticut NG&R	• Paid leave and insurance coverage	• Tuition waiver for veteran declared	• $1,500 property tax exemption	•Information about family program	• Free vehicle registration to	• Food, clothing, medical and general

Information concerning the number of Guard and Reserve members, spouses and children includes members of the Army Reserve, Army National Guard, Navy Reserve, Marine Corps Reserve, Air Force Reserve, Air National Guard, and the Coast Guard Reserve. Information was generated by the Defense Data Manpower Center, dated March 2004.

State	State Employees	Educational Benefits	Tax and Financial Benefits	Family Support	Licensing and Registration	Other Support
Members: 7,091 Spouses: 2,800 Children: 4,409	for anti terrorism and war on Iraq, to include full state pay for up to 30 days; differential between military and state pay beyond 30 days); and continued health insurance • Reinstatement protection • Eligibility points when applying for state employment • Retirement credit for time activated	MIA, POW	• Specific income tax exemptions for taxes filed in 2004, based on gross income limits • Temporary financial assistance on a case-by-case basis	available at: http://www.ct.gov/mil/cwp/view.asp?a=1349&Q=257258&milNav=1	disabled veterans, POW and Medal of Honor recipients • Special license plates for disable veterans • Exemption from license and examination fee while activated	care, and burial expenses to needy wartime veterans and family members • Exemption from itinerant vendor's fee
Delaware NG&R Members: 5,241 Spouses: 2,853 Children: 4,684	• Receive pay difference between military pay and state salary • Allows for maximum of three years of military leave to count towards pension • Protection from reduction in pension	• Provides tuition, fees and book reimbursement for NG and Reserve members attending college in Delaware (at in-state rate, up to undergrad degree), subject to total appropriated.		• Information about family program available at: http://www.delawarenationalguard.com/home/ncw/content/aboutus/family.cfm		
Florida NG&R Members: 33,363 Spouses: 16,923 Children: 28,084	• Entitled to 30 days of pay upon deployment • Receive pay difference between military pay and state salary • Continued health insurance coverage during activation	• Priority placement in gifted, special needs and voucher programs for children of military • High school seniors of military families transferring to Florida are exempt from exit exams and substitute of SAT or ACT • Prepaid 4 year	• Extends SCRA to include early termination of auto leases, cell phone agreements, and other commonly leased/contracted items • 5 counties forgive property tax while deployed and one-time grant of $600 for deployed renters	• Spouses who leave jobs to accompany Service members are eligible for unemployment compensation	• Spouses with nurse licenses from other states can transfer to Florida by endorsement • Licensing requirements streamlined, reducing time from as much as a year to 90 days • Spouses can work up to 90 days	• Landlords prohibited from discriminating against military • Regulation of payday lending

Information concerning the number of Guard and Reserve members, spouses and children includes members of the Army Reserve, Army National Guard, Navy Reserve, Marine Corps Reserve, Air Force Reserve, Air National Guard, and the Coast Guard Reserve. Information was generated by the Defense Data Manpower Center, dated March 2004.

State	State Employees	Educational Benefits	Tax and Financial Benefits	Family Support	Licensing and Registration	Other Support
		scholarship program for Florida military members who die in the line of duty • Military and family members receive in-state tuition (residing in state or contiguous county)	• Cap on interest and fees on title loans • Homestead exemption for disabled veterans of $5,000 in addition to standard exemption of $25,000		pending licensing approval	
Georgia NG&R Members: 27,637 Spouses: 14,588 Children: 25,309	• Allowed to receive differential pay between military and public employer salary. • Receives 18 days paid military leave when on active duty. • Receives additional 12 days paid military leave if Governor declares an emergency. • Allowed to buy back up to 5 years of creditable service with employees' retirement system. • May choose to continue health benefits, life insurance, etc., during deployment.	• Priority for tuition assistance for NG members returning from deployment. • All NG members and families receive in-state tuition, regardless of actual residence. • Special educational loans available for tuition assistance. • Partner with college & universities to secure tuition reimbursement, etc., in the event of deployment. Increased the number of "full-ride" scholarships available to selected recipients.	• Combat zone pay not subject to state taxes. • Members deployed overseas have an automatic 6 month extension to file state tax returns without penalties or interest. • Low-cost group insurance provided through the State Insurance Trust.	• Information about family program available at: http://www2.state.ga.us/gadod/news/Family/pages/Family3.html	• Provides National Guard distinctive auto plates at no cost. • Provides National Guard driver's license at no cost.	• Retirees eligible for additional pension from State of Georgia. • Job fairs for unemployed service members. • On-line job database for Army NG members and their spouses at: www.virtualarmory.com • Increased employer support and community outreach activities through the ESGR Program.
Guam	• 15 days military leave	• Tuition Assistance for Guard members (75%-100%)		• Family Support Website (Coming Soon) • Family Assistance Center (Fort Juan Muna)	• Vehicle license indicating member of National Guard (NG) or Reserve (R)	
Hawaii		• Tuition assistance for	• No state income tax	• Information about		

Information concerning the number of Guard and Reserve members, spouses and children includes members of the Army Reserve, Army National Guard, Navy Reserve, Marine Corps Reserve, Air Force Reserve, Air National Guard, and the Coast Guard Reserve. Information was generated by the Defense Data Manpower Center, dated March 2004.

State	State Employees	Educational Benefits	Tax and Financial Benefits	Family Support	Licensing and Registration	Other Support
NG&R Members: 9,417 Spouses: 4,544 Children: 7,129		NG members • Pending legislation: Full tuition refund when activated for 60 days or more	while serving in a hostile fire zone • State income tax exemption of $1,750 (regardless of activation) • Pending legislation: increase tax exemption to $5,000	family program available at: http://www.dod.state.hi.us/family/index.html		
Idaho NG&R Members: 5,363 Spouses: 3,009 Children: 5,288	• Reemployment protection • Receipt of benefits if employee dies while activated	• Protection of educational status if activated over 30 days • Pay up to 100% of fees and tuition	• SSCRA protection when activated by state over 30 days	• Protection of custody and visitation rights	• Recognition of military driver's license and extension of state license during activation	• Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA) coverage for state duty
Illinois NG&R Members: 25,333 Spouses: 10,062 Children: 17,719	• By Exec Order: full time employees are eligible to receive pay difference between military pay and state salary, plus continue to receive any health insurance and other benefits			• Information about family program available at: http://www.il.ngb.army.mil/familyreadiness/index.htm		
Indiana NG&R Members: 19,293 Spouses: 8,779 Children: 15,984	• 15 calendar days of leave without loss of time or pay • Hiring preference for Service connected disabilities • 10 percent preference to veterans on exams for employment • Preference for veterans for state merit jobs	• NG tuition supplement to state schools for tuition and mandatory fees (less amount received from other financial assistance), up to 8 semesters	• Military personnel receive up to $2,000 deduction on individual tax return • Military personnel have 60 day extension if outside state and 180 days if in combat zone or hospitalization due to service in a combat zone	• Information about family program available at: http://www.inarng.org/youthcamp.htm and http://www.inarng.org/familyprograms.htm	• For individuals serving abroad in the armed forces, drivers license remains valid for 90 days following the person's deactivation	• Non government employers must be granted leave for state active duty
Iowa NG&R	• Receive pay difference between	• Fully fund the NG Education Assistance	• Military pay is exempt from state tax	• Up to three free counseling sessions	• No penalties for expiration and	• Granted veteran status when

Information concerning the number of Guard and Reserve members, spouses and children includes members of the Army Reserve, Army National Guard, Navy Reserve, Marine Corps Reserve, Air Force Reserve, Air National Guard, and the Coast Guard Reserve. Information was generated by the Defense Data Manpower Center, dated March 2004.

State	State Employees	Educational Benefits	Tax and Financial Benefits	Family Support	Licensing and Registration	Other Support
Members: 13,287 Spouses: 6,126 Children: 11,173	military pay and state salary • Guaranteed re-instatement and health benefits	Program (provides 100% of tuition assistance for 2004-2005 academic year) • Tuition refunds when activated	and delayed filing during activation • $12,000 military death gratuity is state tax exempt • Terminate lease with written notice when activated more than 90 days • Automatic extension on late tax filing	this fiscal year for members and family upon completion of activation • Additional information about family program available at: http://www.iowanationalguard.com/PAGES/family/Index.htm	automatic extensions of licenses • Automatic extensions on expired licenses	activated for 90 days or more
Kansas NG&R Members: 12,198 Spouses: 6,602 Children: 12,180		• Up to 100% of tuition fees paid for enlisted members, based on funding	• Retirement pay exempt from income tax • Vehicle tax on two vehicles waived for activated members	• Information about family program available at: http://www.ks.ngb.army.mil/family/	• Free hunting and fishing licenses for NG members	• Free admission to state parks for NG members • Reimbursement of health care insurance premium costs at state employee rates for NG members on state activation over 30 days
Kentucky NG&R Members: 12,088 Spouses: 6,130 Children: 10,038	• Eligible to purchase 1month of retirement system credit for every 6 months served • Eligible to receive entrance examination points • Paid military leave (10 – 15 days annually) • Receive pay difference between military pay and state salary • Pending: Boards of Education are permitted to provide support to certified	• Tuition paid up to or equal to the in-state full or part-time tuition rate • No discrimination due to absence • Exemption from matriculation and tuition fee for family members when member dies or is permanently disabled due to service-connected cause, or member is POW or MIA • Waiver of tuition fee for disabled veteran	• Provide protection when activated under state law as under the SSCRA • Lump-sum payment of $75,000 death benefit • Receive additional $20 credit if member of the NG • Tax return extension when in a combat zone • Minimum NG pay of 12 times minimum wage • Pending: Same provision of federal Military Family Tax	Information about family support programs at: www.familyreadinesscenter.org	• Renew license by mail • Special NG license available for members and retirees • Permitted to renew expired license upon return without test • Pending: NG license for motorcycles	• Employers must grant military leave • Cannot deprive of employment or eligibility in membership in organizations • Exempt from paying tolls going to or returning from duty • June 24th is Kentucky National Guard Day • Established Kentucky Employer Support of Guard and Reserve • Provided legal representation for duty related civil concerns

Information concerning the number of Guard and Reserve members, spouses and children includes members of the Army Reserve, Army National Guard, Navy Reserve, Marine Corps Reserve, Air Force Reserve, Air National Guard, and the Coast Guard Reserve. Information was generated by the Defense Data Manpower Center, dated March 2004.

State	State Employees	Educational Benefits	Tax and Financial Benefits	Family Support	Licensing and Registration	Other Support
	education staff called to active duty		Relief Act of 2003 to apply to Kentucky tax revenue laws			• TAG may purchase liability insurance to protect NG members during state duty • TAG authorized to appoint attorney for criminal activities while on duty • Provided same powers and immunities as peace officers during state duty • Immunity from non felony arrests while on state duty • Pending: Free birth and death certificates if within 60 days of deployment
Louisiana NG&R Members: 21,541 Spouses: 9,537 Children: 16,827	• Military policemen who serve at least 1 year receive raises at the same rate as other state police/sheriff deputies • Receive pay difference between military pay and state salary	• Protection from academic penalties while activated	• State income tax relief to activated members	• Information about family program available at: http://www.la.ngb.army.mil/fs/home.htm		• Public and private sector employers authorized to pay supplemental income to activated employees • Continue cases where a subpoenaed witness or party has been activated
Maine NG&R Members: 7,288 Spouses: 3,922 Children: 6,,695	• 17 days per year of paid military leave, to include health insurance coverage • Authority to use annual leave to maintain benefits • Receive retirement program credit for activated service if			• Information about family program available at: http://www.me.ngb.army.mil/Family/	• Waive or defer all or any portion of continuing education requirements as a condition of license renewal when activate over 30 days	

Information concerning the number of Guard and Reserve members, spouses and children includes members of the Army Reserve, Army National Guard, Navy Reserve, Marine Corps Reserve, Air Force Reserve, Air National Guard, and the Coast Guard Reserve. Information was generated by the Defense Data Manpower Center, dated March 2004.

State	State Employees	Educational Benefits	Tax and Financial Benefits	Family Support	Licensing and Registration	Other Support
	return to position within 90 days of separation • Protection of seniority, pay and other benefits					
Maryland NG&R Members: 23,960 Spouses: 12,107 Children: 19,995	• Receive pay difference between military pay and state salary		• Incorporates provisions of SSCRA and USERRA when activated under state law	• Family support organizations at both unit and headquarters level • Additional information about family program available at: http://mdnatfamilysupport.com/		
Massachusetts NG&R Members: 14,422 Spouses: 6,283 Children: 9,944						
Michigan NG&R Members: 19,361 Spouses: 8,908 Children: 16,020	• Eligibility points when applying for state employment • Special provision to receive pay difference between military pay and state salary (9/11/01 – 9/30/04) • Emergency activation (up to 30 days) with differential pay (general provision is without pay) • Protection for re-instatement; abolishment,			• Information about family program available at: http://michguard.com/family/		

Information concerning the number of Guard and Reserve members, spouses and children includes members of the Army Reserve, Army National Guard, Navy Reserve, Marine Corps Reserve, Air Force Reserve, Air National Guard, and the Coast Guard Reserve. Information was generated by the Defense Data Manpower Center, dated March 2004.

State	State Employees	Educational Benefits	Tax and Financial Benefits	Family Support	Licensing and Registration	Other Support
	reclassification, and combination of positions; salary step increases; and requirement for evaluation; • Protection for employees on limited appointments					
Minnesota NG&R Members: 19,618 Spouses: 8,245 Children: 14,464	• 15 days of paid military leave per year • Receive pay difference between military pay and state salary	• Surviving family members receive 100 percent tuition if member killed in line of duty • 80 percent tuition assistance • Pending: 100 percent tuition assistance	• Pending: re-enlistment bonus of $1,000 • Pending: NG member's salary tax exempt while activated	• Protect child care assistance for NG members while activated. • First Lady initiative: link military families with organizations and individuals willing to help during deployments: http://www.governor.state.mn.us/flmain1.asp • Information about family program available at: http://www.dma.state.mn.us/FamilyPrograms/default.htm	• Charge $10 for special NG license plate	
Mississippi NG&R Members: 17,897 Spouses: 9,296 Children: 16,107				• Information about family program available at: http://www.ngms.state.ms.us/statefamilysupport/		
Missouri NG&R Members: 22,103 Spouses:			• Not required to maintain financial responsibility on motor vehicles • Pending: Income tax	• Child support payments calculated on military pay while activated • Missouri VFW	• Exempt from license and examination fee while activated • Exempt from delinquent vehicle	• Granted extension until 180 days after return for filing reports, paying indebtedness,

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State	State Employees	Educational Benefits	Tax and Financial Benefits	Family Support	Licensing and Registration	Other Support
11,669 Children: 20,382			exemption for military personnel	provides emergency support through "Hidden Heroes Project" • Youth programs, such as "Soldier for a Day," Project "Capitol Christmas Tree," "Operation Show-Me Graduation," and "Youth Deer Hunt" • Additional information about family program available at: http://www.moguard.com/FamilyReadiness/default.htm	registration fee • May renew expired license, registration or certification within 60 days of return	resolving a criminal summons for a traffic violation, and taking any required action to resolve obligations • Delay any disciplinary or administrative action until 60 days after return • Governor has asked employers to provide worker and family protection as well as compensation
Montana NG&R Members: 4,613 2,304 Children: 3,910	• Reemployment upon completion of service • Hiring preference for state, municipal, county and city employment • 120 hours of paid military leave granted annually	• Academic leave of absence • Flexible and liberal tuition refund opportunities, course curriculum protection, and support to complete courses prior to activation	• Suspension of property taxes up to 1 year after cessation of hostilities or deactivation • Suspension on collection of income tax debts for up to 6 months after deactivation • Active duty pay exempt from income tax • First $3,000 of retired pay exempt from income tax	• Delegation of power of attorney for families of Guard and Reserve members to another non family person while member serves on active duty	• Vehicle license fee waived for NG/Reserve members activated outside of the state • Extension of drivers license up to 6 months after deactivation • Suspension of licensing fees and continuing education fees for occupational/ professional licenses during activation, with procedures for reinstatement upon deactivation • Extension of teaching license while activated up to 5	• General relief from court actions similar to SSCRA for state activation • Exemption from 7 year wait for moose, sheep or goat permit drawing for deployed members if license is turned in unused

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State	State Employees	Educational Benefits	Tax and Financial Benefits	Family Support	Licensing and Registration	Other Support
					years • NG license plate with no additional fee	
Nebraska NG&R Members: 7,125 Spouses: 3,366 Children: 5,604	• 120 hours of paid military leave granted annually	• Educational leave of absence with protection of credits, scholarships/grants, refund of tuition/fees • 75% reimbursement of tuition costs; limit of $900,000 and 1,200 members per fiscal year • 100% tuition assistance for family of NG member who dies in active service to the state	• Exempt from state income tax while in combat zone, plus period of continuous hospitalization, plus next 180 days • Member killed in action is exempt from state income tax for year killed • Residents of other states are exempt vehicle taxes while residing in state	• Since 9/11/01, providing monthly emotional support group meetings • Individuals, churches, private organizations and businesses providing support • Family program support through potlucks, briefings, and meetings • Governor sponsored picnics • Governor authorized Homeland Defense Medal • Additional information about family program available at: http://www.neguard.com/family/index.htm	• Drivers license remain valid during activation; renewal is granted without test for 60 days following separation •	• Expedited demobilization through in-state conducted program • Adopt specific portions of USERRA when activated by the state • Reimburse NG member for up to 102% of costs incurred for employer provided or personally held health insurance during any period of activation
Nevada NG&R Members: 4,506 Spouses: 2,265 Children: 3,843	• 15 days paid military leave • Receive pay difference between military pay and state salary for periods over 15 days	100% tuition waiver for fall and spring semester at state schools (excluding tech and lab fees) 100% of summer semester costs through the Education Encouragement Fund		• Information about family program available at: http://www.nv.ngb.army.mil/index.cfm		
New Hampshire NG&R Members:	• Exec Order: special leave with partial pay for 18 months equal to the			• Information about family program available at: http://www.nharmyguar		

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State	State Employees	Educational Benefits	Tax and Financial Benefits	Family Support	Licensing and Registration	Other Support
3,737 Spouses: 1,983 Children: 3,432	difference between military pay and state salary. • Maintain health and dental insurance coverage for eligible family members • Continued retirement contributions			d.com/family_services/index.htm		
New Jersey NG&R Members: 20,317 Spouses: 9,014 Children: 14,523	• 90 days paid military leave during state activation			• Information about family program available at: http://www.nj.gov/military/familysupport/home.html		• State militia has same reemployment rights as NG • State militia entitled workers compensation if injury is in line of duty • Stays of pending litigation and allowance in some cases for termination of leases and protection from evictions • Militia eligible to receive workers compensation for duty related injuries
New Mexico NG&R Members: 5,645 Spouses: 2,931 Children: 5,424	• 30 days of paid military leave • Authority to use annual leave to maintain benefits • Reemployment protection if return to position within 90 days of separation • State contribution to insurance while on					

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State	State Employees	Educational Benefits	Tax and Financial Benefits	Family Support	Licensing and Registration	Other Support
	military leave • Reinstatement of insurance upon return if coverage lapses during activation					
New York NG&R Members: 30,466 Spouses: 13,881 Children: 23091	• Supplemental military leave benefits extended through 12/31/04	• Military Enhanced Recognition, Incentive and Tribute (MERIT) Scholarship program for disabled members and family of members killed in action, permanently disabled or MIA • Refund or credit for tuition during military leave of absence • Credit for military training towards civilian professional accreditation • Waive fees for the renewal of a temporary teaching certificate that lapsed while activated • Right of military children to continue to attend the public school attended prior to a military relocation.	• Life insurance not to lapse for non-payment of premiums for 2 years following activation • Professional liability insurance protection is suspended during activation plus 30 days • Prohibition against foreclosure of mortgage for nonpayment during activation plus 6 months • Prohibition of adverse credit reporting for members who previously obtained a stay of obligation under the SSCRA • Terminate vehicle lease contracts when activated • Cap interest rates at 6 percent on debts incurred prior to activation • Suspend the obligation to repay any loan to a public retirement system while activated • Receive bulk rate	• Free access to video teleconferencing centers for families of activated members • Free internet access at public libraries for communication between families and activated members • Additional information about family program available at: http://www.dmna.state.ny.us/dmna/family/family.html	• Waiver of professional continuing education requirements and extension of professional licenses until 12 months after activation • Extension of Emergency Medical Technician and other first responder certifications until 12 months after activation • Fees waived for renewal of temporary teaching certificate • Extension of driver's licenses and motor vehicle registration • Free hunting and fishing licenses	• Freedom from discrimination based on military service • Prohibition against solicitation or requiring waiver to SSCRA rights • Extension of State Civil Relief Act benefits to family members (stay of court proceedings, foreclosures, evictions; reduced interest rates on loans and tolling of the statute of limitations) • Free admission to New York state parks • Veteran's health care information program • NY-USA Proud Employer of Distinction Award to recognize employers • Patriot Support and Discount Program to recognize retailers

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State	State Employees	Educational Benefits	Tax and Financial Benefits	Family Support	Licensing and Registration	Other Support
			telephone service • Localities allowed to extend payment period of any real estate tax during imminent danger duty • Supplemental burial allowance of $6,000 for members killed in action			
North Carolina NG&R Members: 22,789 Spouses: 11,848 Children: 19,304	• Receive pay difference between military pay and state salary	• Tuition assistance for NG members (state budget $1.8M annually) • In-state tuition for out of state resident members of the NC NG	• State tax exemption for pay when in combat zone • Pending: expansion of state tax exemption for military pay upon activation	• Operation Reaching Out to Children (ROTC): 133 banks provide toll-free financial counseling • Bankers have donated $100,000 to extend child care for military families • Project Community Action Readiness Effort (CARE) provides emergency vehicle and home repair, child care assistance, transportation and interpreter services for military families, plus support to local businesses and community • Additional support from the Governor's office available at: http://www.governor.state.nc.us/mil/waystosupportourmilitaryfamilies.asp • Additional	• Vehicle license plate extension when activated • Pending: special "In God We Trust" license plate with yellow ribbon with proceeds going to Soldiers and Airmen Relief Fund, plus contribution option on state tax form	• Delay all court actions when deployed • Supplemented hand-held radios, body armor and laptop computers to deployed NG units

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State	State Employees	Educational Benefits	Tax and Financial Benefits	Family Support	Licensing and Registration	Other Support
				information about family program available at: http://www.nc.ngb.army.mil/family/default.asp		
North Dakota NG&R Members: 4,812 Spouses: 2,235 Children: 3,992		• Special enrollment in North Dakota State University	• Special state tax deduction when activated	• Elementary schools identify deployed moms/dads • Wellness calls to families • Additional information about family program available at: http://www.guard.bismarck.nd.us/familysup/index.htm		• Emergency Relief Fund for soldiers and airmen • Special projects and donation programs • Special hunting deadlines and privileges
Ohio NG&R Members: 30,044 Spouses: 13,844 Children: 24,145		• 100 percent tuition assistance for NG members attending state schools		• Information about family program available at: http://www.ohionationalguard.com/fa/		
Oklahoma NG&R Members: 16,195 Spouses: 8,425 Children: 14,315	• 20 days paid military leave (full salary), followed by pay differential between military and state pay for duration of OEF (retroactive to 09/11/01) • Continue to receive seniority and longevity pay increases • Allowed to continue to participate in the deferred	• Tuition Fee Waiver Program to state supported colleges and universities for National Guard .				State law follows the federal USERRA.

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State	State Employees	Educational Benefits	Tax and Financial Benefits	Family Support	Licensing and Registration	Other Support
	compensation plan and receive employer contribution • Continue retirement contributions • USERRA applies to state employees					
Oregon NG&R Members: 11,033 Spouses: 5,596 Children: 9,322	• Receive continued health care benefits up to 12 months while activated • Employees can donate leave to NG members within their agency	• Tuition assistance for NG members (90% for FY 2005)	• $170 uniform allowance to NG officers and warrant officers upon appointment • Military receive $3,000 tax exemption for first year entering and final year leaving active duty, and for duty spent outside the state • Governor directed death benefits above $3,000 not to be collected pending change in statute	• Information about family program available at: http://travelp.home.comcast.net/		• Eligible for workers compensation benefits for injuries while on state duty
Pennsylvania NG&R Members: 32,918 Spouses: 13,919 Children: 23,046	• Right to reemployment • Employee may receive paid benefits while on military leave			• Information about family program available at: http://sites.state.pa.us/PA_Exec/Military_Affairs/family/		• Allows 30 days for release from active duty to return to employment • Right to reemployment prior to conclusion of military leave • Prohibit discrimination in employment and reemployment. • Employer must provide health insurance and other benefits for first 30

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State	State Employees	Educational Benefits	Tax and Financial Benefits	Family Support	Licensing and Registration	Other Support
						days of activation • Receive full civil liability protection while activated by state
Puerto Rico NG&R Members: Spouses: Children:	• Receive pay difference between military pay and state salary • Eligible to receive Christmas bonus for 12 months prior to having been activated	• Tuition assistance for graduate degree (max of $1,350 per year) • Tuition assistance for under graduate/ vocational degree (max of $900 per year) • Tuition assistance for M.D. residency (max of $1,000 for two years)	• Exempt from tax on Service income while in a combat zone • 6 month extension for paying income tax debt without interest	• Information about family program available at: HQ Puerto Rico NG Office of Personnel, email: nydia.garcia@pr.ngb.army.mil • Counseling services available through the P. R. Department of the Family • Direct support from the Child Support Enforcement Agency		• Psychology seminars and workshops provided free by the University of P.R. and by a private university • Inter-service support network in cooperation with Vet Centers
Rhode Island NG&R Members: 5,126 Spouses: 2,580 Children: 4,037				• Information about family program available at: http://www.riguard.com/FAMILY/family.html		
South Carolina NG&R Members: 17,990 Spouses: 9,579 Children: 15,902	• 45 days annual leave and 90 days sick leave for activation • Exec Order: granted 30 additional days for military leave • Option during activation to continue state health plan and retirement plan by paying employee share	• Reimbursement of tuition for state institutions due to activation		• Priority given children of deployed members to attend the National Guard Summer Youth Camps • 10 staffed Family Assistance Centers • Conduct Family Readiness Briefs for every member of a deployed member's		

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State	State Employees	Educational Benefits	Tax and Financial Benefits	Family Support	Licensing and Registration	Other Support
				family • Morale calls forwarded to anywhere in the state without charge • Information about family program available at: http://www.scguard.com/familyreadiness/frgnewsletter/index.htm		
South Dakota NG&R Members: 4,963 Spouses: 2,511 Children: 4,469	• Receive pay difference between military pay and state salary	• 50 percent tuition reduction (under graduate and graduate degrees) for NG members at state universities, to include non resident members of the NG • Free tuition at state universities for children who die while serving	• Provide bonus to veterans: $500 for service in hostile areas since 1/1/1993 and $240 for service in non hostile areas since 09/11/01	• Information about family program available at: http://sdnguard.nsb.army.mil/family_support.asp	• Reduced hunting and fishing license fees for disabled	
Tennessee NG&R Members: 20,031 Spouses: 11,313 Children: 18,396	• Exec Order: special leave with partial pay (to extent possible, the difference between military pay and state pay but not to exceed $1,000 per month) for no more than 6 months • Continue to accrue annual and sick leave, longevity pay, and retirement time	• Tuition assistance for NG members to attend state education institutions		• Information about family program available at: http://www.tnmilitary.org/familyreadiness/index.htm		• Class E felony to refuse employment or terminate individual for being a member of the NG
Texas NG&R Members: 52,190	• No loss of pay or benefits for National Guard and Reserves while called into active	• A tuition reimbursement program enacted and funded at a minimum of $1 million	• Pay and allowances of Texas National Guard aligned with federal pay	• Created a family support program that is manned 24/7 at the Texas National Guard	• Free vehicle registration to disabled veterans, Medal of Honor, Purple Heart,	• State reemployment rights of Texas National Guard members aligned with federal law and

Information concerning the number of Guard and Reserve members, spouses and children includes members of the Army Reserve, Army National Guard, Navy Reserve, Marine Corps Reserve, Air Force Reserve, Air National Guard, and the Coast Guard Reserve. Information was generated by the Defense Data Manpower Center, dated March 2004.

State	State Employees	Educational Benefits	Tax and Financial Benefits	Family Support	Licensing and Registration	Other Support
Spouses: 26,295 Children: 45,310	duty and reemployment rights • Entitled to receive differential pay between military and state salary • Fifteen days of paid military leave per year for training and placement into emergency leave status for entire period a Guard member is called into active duty to ensure continued state benefits	per year for Texas National Guard members • Allows military dependents residing in Texas to pay in-state tuition rates even if the military sponsor is stationed outside of Texas or retires from the military • Exempts certain military personnel and veterans from the requirements of the Texas Academic Skills Program • Requires the Texas Education Agency to develop reciprocity agreements with other states to facilitate the admission into public schools the personnel and dependents of military personnel	and allowances • Deferral of property taxes for mobilized members of the Reserve Component • Allows military members who are deployed out of state or out of country due to military service to continue to be able to claim the homestead tax exemption on their home for up to two years	Headquarters in Austin, Texas which acts in an ombudsman role for families of deployed troops. There is a full time staff at the armories of deployed troops plus a volunteer network around the state	Pearl Harbor Survivors, former POWs, and other certain medal recipients • Issues free specialty license plates to active and retired Texas National Guard, U.S. Armed Forces Reserve, and veterans of wars • Over twenty-five low cost specialty license plates are available to military and veterans	further tightened to shift burden of proof to employer • Texas National Guard in state active duty are now protected by the federal statute language contained in the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act (formerly the Soldiers and Sailors Civil Relief Act) and the Uniformed Services Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA) • Texas National Guard members on State Active Duty brought under Texas Workers Compensation laws for injury, disability, and death benefits • State requires municipalities to continue health, life, and dental insurance coverage benefits to police and fire fighter employees for the entire time they are called into active military duty • Extended the time a person called into active duty during a war or national emergency may claim a winning lottery prize

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State	State Employees	Educational Benefits	Tax and Financial Benefits	Family Support	Licensing and Registration	Other Support
Utah NG&R Members: 9,535 Spouses: 5,794 Children: 11,477		• Tuition waiver for purple heart recipients for under graduate programs		• Information about family program available at: http://www.ut.ngb.army.mil/family/Default.htm	• 90 day extension for licenses and certification that expire during deployment and exempts continuing education or other training need for renewal	
Vermont NG&R Members: 4,199 Spouses: 2,312 Children: 3,778	• Eleven days of paid military leave per year • Receive pay difference between military pay and state salary • Continued health care coverage for member and family during state activation when military health care is not available • Retirement service credit for period of activation • Salary, benefits, seniority, and job protection when activated • Allow disabled veterans and spouses access to jobs being recruited internally • Veterans receive preference points on civil service tests • Diligent effort to recruit and hire qualified veterans	• Paid tuition for surviving family members of NG member who dies on active duty		• $50,000 emergency assistance fund for families of activated members		

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State	State Employees	Educational Benefits	Tax and Financial Benefits	Family Support	Licensing and Registration	Other Support
Virginia NG&R Members: 25,252 Spouses: 12,964 Children: 21,754	• Exec Order: eligible for supplemental pay equal to difference between military and state pay • Supplemental pay for teachers as determined by the local education agency • Allow full time employees to carry over annual leave accrual above maximum amounts • Provide credit for military service in retirement system	• Colleges/Universities strongly encouraged to provide tuition credits or reimbursement to students forced to leave due to mobilization	• Extend protections of the SSCRA to members activated under state law • Allows death gratuity payments to be subtracted from state income tax when death occurs in line of duty	• Children whose parents are divorced and whose custodial parent has been called to active duty would be allowed to attend school where the non-custodial parent lives • Information about family program available at: http://www.virginisguard.com/ and select family assistance from options listed on the left of the website	• Extension of drivers license and vehicle registration while serving outside of the state	
Virgin Islands						
Washington NG&R Members: 21,033 Spouses: 11,389 Children: 19,124	• Veterans preference points on employment exams for at least 180 days of federal service • Allowed to share leave with activated employees to continue health and life insurance benefits	• Provide tuition waivers and conditional scholarship programs to reimburse certain education fees to members of the NG • Retention of class standing and grade credit	• Income from NG service is excluded for unemployment compensation purposes • Extends SSCRA to certain real estate deeds of trust and provides relief from penalties on property taxes during the period of deployment	• Information about family program available at: http://familysupport.washingtonguard.com/		• Employment and reemployment protection • National Guard Association (NGA) of Washington provides insurance programs and administers an emergency assistance fund • Excludes NG membership for unemployment compensation • Same right to reemployment when activated by the Governor as under

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State	State Employees	Educational Benefits	Tax and Financial Benefits	Family Support	Licensing and Registration	Other Support
						the USERRA
West Virginia NG&R Members: 8,694 Spouses: 4,347 Children: 6,640	• Protection from loss of pay, status or efficiency rating while activated • 60 days paid military leave per year • By Exec Order: provide health and life insurance after their leave has expired	• Up to 100 percent of the resident tuition and fees at any state education institution • In-state rates for non resident members of the NG and Reserve • Provide matching 25 percent for NG members receiving 75 percent tuition from Army program	• Minimum pay of $75 per day, plus subsistence and quarters while on state duty • Officers/warrant officers receive $100 uniform allowance per year	• Information about family program available at: http://www.wv.ngb.army.mil/About%20WV/Family_readiness.htm	• National Guard license plates for one-time fee of $10	• NGA of West Virginia provides supplemental life insurance coverage • Provided workers compensation for duty related injuries • Provided legal representation for duty related civil concerns • Eligible for workers compensation as a result of state duty
Wisconsin NG&R Members: 17,438 Spouses: 7,226 Children: 12,290	• Receive pay difference between military pay and state salary. • Accrual of sick leave and vacation as if no interruption in state service. • By Exec Order, pay and benefits may be extended up to a period of 2 years from activation. • After discharge from active duty, up to 160 hours of accumulated paid leave may be used before employee resumes employment with state. • Unused accumulated paid leave may be carried over into next fiscal year. • Reemployment	• 100 percent tuition reimbursement for eligible NG members attending in-state public institutions. • Reimbursement calculated at 100% of actual tuition charged or 100% of the maximum resident undergraduate tuition charged by the UW-Madison for a comparable number of credits, whichever is less. • Additional information available at: http://dma.wi.gov/devops/section.asp?linkid=63	• Financial/credit protection replicating SSCRA • Individual income tax exemption for pay received from federal government while on active duty. • Terminate lease with written notice when activated more than 90 days. • Maximum interest rate on obligations or liabilities bearing interest. • State law replicates both SSCRA and USERRA.	• Information about family program available at: http://www.wingfam.org/index.asp	• Extension of licenses and certifications that expire during activation. • Extension at no cost if certain conditions met. • Extension expires 90 days after discharge from active duty.	• Stays of action in legal proceedings except by Court order. • Expedited absentee ballot procedure during activation. • Employment and reemployment protection. • Prohibition against discrimination and retaliation. • Option to continue health care coverage during activation.

Information concerning the number of Guard and Reserve members, spouses and children includes members of the Army Reserve, Army National Guard, Navy Reserve, Marine Corps Reserve, Air Force Reserve, Air National Guard, and the Coast Guard Reserve. Information was generated by the Defense Data Manpower Center, dated March 2004.

State	State Employees	Educational Benefits	Tax and Financial Benefits	Family Support	Licensing and Registration	Other Support
	rights. • Prohibition against discrimination and retaliation.					
Wyoming NG&R Members: 2,116 Spouses: 1,121 Children: 1,993	• 15 days paid military leave per year • Exec Order (11/9/01 – 10/31/03): receive pay difference between military pay and state salary while activated as well as payment of the employee's share of health insurance, accrual of leave, and ability to make contributions into differed compensation program with state match	• 100 percent union reimbursement for NG members attending state educational institutions	• Military Assistance Fund of $5 million dollars (trust fund) to alleviate financial hardships faced by military families • SSCRA protections for members activated by state or federal government for more than 30 days	• Information about family program available at: http://wyoguard.state.wy.us/family.htm		• Activated employees can maintain their health insurance by paying the employer by paying the sum that would have come from compensation • Governor urges businesses to follow state government lead in providing services to activated employees • Excludes NG membership for unemployment compensation

Information concerning the number of Guard and Reserve members, spouses and children includes members of the Army Reserve, Army National Guard, Navy Reserve, Marine Corps Reserve, Air Force Reserve, Air National Guard, and the Coast Guard Reserve. Information was generated by the Defense Data Manpower Center, dated March 2004.

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Senator ALEXANDER. General Reimer?

STATEMENT OF GENERAL DENNIS J. REIMER (RET.), FOUNDER, MILITARY CHILD EDUCATION COALITION

General REIMER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, first of all, let me start off by thanking you personally for the leadership you provided to the educational community at a lot of different levels. You and Senator Chambliss are to be congratulated. I have had the opportunity to serve in Georgia. I know the commitment that

that State has made. But I thank you for what you have done for the children, not only the military but across America. You have made a big difference, and this effort now, I think is tremendously important.

I appear before you—I am currently the Director of the National Memorial Institute for Prevention of Terrorism, so I get to see this national security issue from a different perspective today. I am also a former soldier who believes that the great strength of our military has always been our people, young men and women and their families, and also a father.

For me, the issue comes down to a matter of readiness. It has always been a matter of readiness, and we have talked about it earlier today. We recruit soldiers. We retain families. As you pointed out in the demographic, 60 percent of our military personnel are married. There are over 1.2 million children we have to educate. And if we take care of them, they will take care of us, and it has just been a basic principle for as long as I have been in the military.

The military, I think, has always identified quality of life as a critical component of readiness. During the draw-down in the early 1990s, we took a look at what core competencies out there in terms of quality of life we just had to retain as we drew down this force. We were very concerned that we would cut too much of the quality of life out of the force in our draw-down because the resources were not there to do everything. I think the military still faces the same challenge today.

One of the issues that kept surfacing for us as we looked at that, and it was kind of an off-agenda item, was the education of our military children, the education of children who had to live in different places. We had a worldwide mission, so they were going from school system to school system.

So in 1997, while I was Chief, we put together an Army educational team and basically took 2 years for them to visit different installations. They visited a number of different installations, 39 different school districts, and they gathered a lot of data. They gathered data from high school juniors and seniors. They talked to them about their issues. They talked to parents about the issues that they had, the counselors, the educators, and community leaders.

That data then was given to the Military Child Education Coalition to analyze and make something out of it, and I am one of the advisors for the Military Child Education Coalition, but the people who really did the work are people like Dr. Mary Keller, Lieutenant General Pete Taylor, and many others.

There were a number of challenges that came out of that raw data and it resulted in a study which we call the Secondary Education Transition Study. That study, unlike a lot of reports, didn't just sit on the shelf. It resulted in positive action, and let me just cite a couple of things.

First of all, with greater cooperation amongst communities that were involved with educating military children. That was our primary purpose and I think that has resulted from this effort. There is a Memorandum of Agreement that has now been expanded to 150 districts in 24 States, and as you said, Senator Chambliss, all

of the districts in Georgia are a member of that Memorandum of Agreement.

It has resulted in a Senior Stabilization Program, and we talked about that earlier in the afternoon, tremendously important. We are not pulling seniors out of their senior year in high school just because their parents have to be transferred. We are stopping transfers because they have seniors in high school. So I think it is a positive influence there.

There is a better quality of life for the families that have resulted from the study, and I think that has improved readiness for the total force, active, Guard, and Reserve.

I think the other thing that it brings to the table is a potential model, particularly if we use some of the technology that is available, to address some of the global issues associated with a mobile population, whether that be civilian and military, and address some of those issues while still protecting the integrity of the local school districts. That is a tough problem, and we have to find a way to do it. But I think if we use technology, we can address some of those.

I think your idea on sharing best practices has a lot of merit. We are doing that with working with first responders and emergency responders in Homeland Security. The idea of giving best practices to other people around the Nation, it is just a rising tide raises all boats, and I think that is very, very important and I think there is a lot of potential there.

Finally, let me just say how much I appreciate the work of your committee. But also let me say that, as you said, there is still much more to be done. We need you all to stay the course. This is tremendously important. It is about the future. It is about our kids.

And I guess the last thing I would say is I am delighted to be a part of this panel. I am particularly delighted to be here with Holly, because it is people like her who really are the real heroes of this effort. I am married to one of those heroes and she has carried me a long way, and I know Holly has carried David a long way, too. I have known him for a long time and we are very fortunate to have her with us on this panel.

Senator ALEXANDER. Thank you, General Reimer.

[The prepared statement of General Reimer follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF GENERAL DENNIS J. REIMER

Mr. Chairman, Committee Members, my name is Dennis J. Reimer and I live in Edmond, Oklahoma. I appear before your committee today representing the Military Child Education Coalition (MCEC) (www.MilitaryChild.org).

I am honored to be here today to talk about children. In 1999 I retired from the U.S. Army, after 37 years on active duty. I am currently the Director of the National Memorial Institute for the Prevention of Terrorism in Oklahoma City, and as such continue to have the opportunity to work in the area of National Security. My wife, Mary Jo and our two children served with me. Mary Jo has been a teacher, a mother and a leader in the area of improving educational opportunities for military children. I am proud of all three of them.

Today I appear before you as a father, a grandfather, a former commander, and as one of the initial National Advisors to the Military Child Education Coalition, a national non-profit organization. Begun 7 years ago in Texas, the sole purpose of MCEC is to serve as educational advocates for the children whose parents are devoting their talents, skills, and lives to our Nation.

On behalf of the MCEC leadership and community, thank you for the remarkable work of this committee and the visibility that you have brought to the challenges and needs of the military family, especially the children. Senator Alexander, last

year you along with Senators Dodd, Chambliss, and Nelson held six hearings in your home States and here in Washington. These sent a powerful message to military families that their concerns are being heard. We deeply appreciate what you are doing and welcome this opportunity to share MCEC's views on what is being done in other State and local communities as well as what needs to be improved.

First, some examples of "what's working" in the States: Gov. Bush has discussed the efforts stemming from the groundbreaking legislation that was enacted recently in Florida. They are to be commended for all they are doing on behalf of military children. It is also very encouraging to see additional actions supportive of the military child are taking place in other States.

Two examples from Texas: This year improved Texas policies outlining eligibility for in State tuition, opened doors for military dependents to affordable higher education. In the 2003–2004 school year over 10,000 military family members have qualified for resident rates at Texas institutions. Lindsey, a military child and a college student in San Antonio, is benefiting in real dollars—paying less than $50 in State rates per semester hour compared to more than $200 per hour non-resident rates. This is a good news example from just one of the 18 States that have enacted military friendly tuition policies that expand access to affordable higher education.

Secondly—The Texas Governors office is working with MCEC on an exciting initiative with components such as: statewide training of educators and school counselors on the unique needs of the military child—active duty, as well as the National Guard, and Reserve components.

Texas, Virginia, Georgia, Florida, and North Carolina are, right now, in various stages of collaboration to develop and codify educational policies that will ease transitions for both military-connected students and other students that experience frequent school moves. Maryland will soon join in this effort.

Working in partnership with their military communities, Maryland's Department of Education is developing plans to respond to recent State legislation that requires their State board of education to seek reciprocity agreements with other States. In Georgia all public school systems serving military bases have signed the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) joining in a community that now comprises 150 school districts from 24 States as well as the Department of Defense (DOD) schools (http://www.militarychild.org/SETS-MOA.cfm). The status of the MOA school signatories can be seen at:

(http://www.militarychild.org/PDF-2004/MOA%20Signatories%207_04.pdf).

The MOA represents an important call to action. It is a tangible commitment that is drawn directly from the real school and individual family experiences reported in the U.S. Army's Secondary Education Transition Study. This landmark research was a part of the Army's response to identified need. As Chief of Staff of the Army I commissioned the Military Child Education Coalition to conduct the Secondary Education Transition Study or SETS. The most comprehensive study done to date on school transitions SETS involved military parents, students, and campus educators from 39 public and DOD high schools worldwide. Not just another study that disappears on some shelf, SETS has resulted in two significant outcomes: The U.S. Army and now the U.S. Air Force policies on stabilization for families with seniors; and, the research-based Memorandum of Agreement (MOA). The MOA's far-reaching community of school systems brings together DOD schools and the civilian local schools that teach our military children in a collaborative way never before experienced.

Today we have military families deployed around the world—not just the Active component but also Guard and Reserve. As we see the footage of Soldiers, Sailors, Marines, and Airmen leaving home for the challenges that face our Nation, it is fitting to look at issues their very mobile children face because of their parents' career. To put a face to these issues let me cite the case of Renee.

Renee moved in her last semester as a senior. Both of her parents had died, so she lived with her sister and her sister's husband, a soldier who at that time was serving in Iraq. This was Renee's fourth high school, in four States. When Renee moved a few weeks into the start of the spring term, she faced the enormous challenge of meeting a new State's graduation requirements to include a high school exit exam. Unfortunately her sending school was so bureaucratic that compassion and professional collaboration were out of the question when the receiving high school requested that they work together for the sake of Renee and try to meet her urgent needs so she could graduate. Fortunately, by chance, Renee received extra-ordinary support at the new school and she made it. Not by intent, **by chance.** The Memorandum of Agreement, if signed by all governors, would have increased the likelihood that transition predictability is not just based on luck.

It is about Renee . . . and we have more work to do for others like her! Our research indicates schools do a fairly decent job of receiving students but a **very inad-**

equate job of preparing students for transitioning to the next school. The Agreement addresses records transfer—this is important because for kindergartners through seniors, one of the most effective ways to assist military children is to reduce the bureaucratic and sometime archaic processes that encumber the timely and accurate transfer of school records. Though this is a highly complex set of challenges for all kids, it is greatly intensified with special needs students who participate in special programs or if one or more parents are deployed and the student must live with a caregiver. The Agreement addresses flexibility in accepting coursework and program participation.

Another example is Brian an 8th grader who loves math. His family moved last year and shortly thereafter Brian's dad went to Afghanistan. Even though at his old school he was taking advanced math, the receiving school did not allow 8th graders to take advanced math without being in their gifted program—Brian missed the cut-off by a very slim number of points. Later, after discovering that the math book used was the same as the one in the previous class and gathering other documentation from the sending school, his mom appealed. The appeal was denied. Brian was not allowed to take Algebra. In a few months he will move again—his parents have already discovered that the next school will not allow him to take advanced math in 9th grade because 8th grade algebra is a prerequisite. The facts in this case just don't add up or pass the common sense test.

A third example is Ann who in first grade in a Department of Defense School, like most 7 year olds, was an emergent reader. When the family moved the receiving schools promotion policies stipulated that a student had to complete a particular sequence in the basal readers or be retained in that grade. Instead of welcoming Ann with loving understanding and professional flexibility, the textbook-based decision was that this new-to-the-system student, Ann, had to repeat first grade.

Lindsey, Renee, Brian and Ann are real children and representative of the challenges that thousands of military children face. The MOA, if it had been adopted by these school systems, could have changed their stories. This is personal for every family. States joining the Agreement can establish safety nets—safety nets for kids like Renee, Brian and Ann.

A specific example of what can happen if every State enlists in the Memorandum of Agreement and crafts it into a school transition bridge between States are policies that translate into reasonable grace periods for programs and respect the professionalism of other schools. For both Brian and Ann this would provide a fair and deserved chance to excel.

The military has changed! Our professional, highly skilled military is now made up of a large number of families. Most service members are married—actually over **60 percent.** In the Active duty force 58 percent (over 800,000m troops) are parents. In the Active, Guard, and Reserve forces the majority are families where only one parent is in the military. Still **35,000** moms **and** dads in the Active force and **22,000** in the Guard and Reserves are **both** wearing the uniform. Even though the military has fewer one-parent homes than the national average—over **80,000** single parents are serving in the Active duty and **65,000** are citizen soldiers. Military parents who have school-aged children are more likely to experience separations than their civilian counterparts. We can help for now and in the future by **taking care of the kids whose fathers and mothers are taking care of America.** This should be done immediately in a way that is practical and sustainable. Ultimately this is a readiness issue, precisely because military families—not just the uniformed member—live the mission.

An important part of that mission is quality of life—taking care of the kids who look at the empty chair at the kitchen table and know dad or mom is in harms way. Quality of life—policies and institutions that recognize these families are also called on to go through many school transitions. Military children move and experience the stress of separations because from new baby to the newly minted graduate, their families live foreign policy—they are on point for America. Military families have the challenge—but the schools have the responsibility and the opportunity to work together with the military communities to help their children. All of us working together can contribute and help build a brighter future.

These examples are why we urge this committee to reach out systematically to the States asking them to **adopt**, **sign**, and **act** upon the Guiding Principles in the Memorandum of Agreement. In the Southwest they have a saying **"all hat and no cattle"** it is in the **doing** not the showing where we can make a real difference for children. My military experience taught me that what gets measured, reinforced and institutionalized gets done. I hope the committee will strongly encourage the States to build in accountability mechanisms that ensure that the Agreement is the catalyst for **authentic action.** Then the MOA will have the potential to grow into compassion and flexibility for **all** mobile students.

It is true that many good things have begun to happen, but military kids cannot wait—should not have to wait for the 100 percent solution. With a life of transitions punctuated by separation the 800,000 K–12 children of the active duty military joined by the 500,000 "suddenly military" children of the National Guard and Reserve deserve our best efforts. Remember, each military child serves too! The MCEC stands ready to help and has provided a copy of our recommended "Action Plan for Improving Predictability and Support for Military Children During Educational Transitions."

Thank you again for your great work on behalf of children and for allowing MCEC this opportunity to participate in this important discussion.

MILITARY CHILD EDUCATION COALITION

GOAL: To improve the predictability and support for the children of those who serve our Nation.

Objective One: Support Existing Initiatives, Accountability, High Standards, and Reporting

Stressing the importance of No Child Left Behind and other State measures reinforces the access to a quality educational opportunity for all students. This is especially critical to the mobile family seeking information about good schools.

Actions:

a. Urge the States to assure that the State and school "report cards" communicate clearly to all parents. These report cards should be accessed easily through State and school system Web sites.

b. Reinforce that public reporting of academic progress and clear standards are especially important considering the patchwork of State standards that a mobile family encounters in moving from State to State.

c. Support efforts to strengthen standards, especially meaningful, rigorous high school standards.

d. Require that the Department of Education, through NCLB and IDEA, include attention to the access, opportunities and progress of mobile children.

Objective Two: Encourage States to Respond to Needs of Military Children as well as All Mobile Children

Schools can and should foster what is inclusive and accessible regardless of when the student enters, leaves, and if a child is experiencing turmoil as a result of separation from a deployed parent. The education communities, therefore, have a special role and responsibility to take care of mobile children through flexibility and by involving parents. There is a great deal the Federal Government and governors can do to support these schools and help encourage sensitivity for the issues faced by mobile, military children.

Actions:

a. Request that the governors give guidance to the appropriate State legislative committees and State education agency to review policies and procedures to ensure that implications are considered for mobile students and that decisions take into account the unique needs of military families. Barriers to the frequent transitions military children face may have been inadvertently created. Issues including the transfer of school records, grading policies and interpretation practices, school permission and participation authority, and school calendars should be examined.

b. Encourage all States to provide in-state tuition status to service members and their families immediately upon their arrival in the State and for that status to be retained as long as enrollment is continuous.

Objective Three: Encourage Sensitivity for the Growing Needs of the "Suddenly Military" Child

Too often schools serving children of National Guardsmen and Reservists have very little experience working with "suddenly military" families. Due to the large numbers of deployments in the Reserve Component, all communities are potentially realizing increasing numbers of children touched by mobilizations and deployments.

Actions:

a. Through the governors and State education agencies, encourage all schools educating military children, including children whose parents serve in the Reserves or National Guard, provide and evaluate programs that support children during times of extended separation from one or both parents.

b. Urge the governors to meet with their chief State schools officer, State Adjutant General, Reserve Components Senior Leadership, and the Active Duty Senior Commanders to coordinate efforts on behalf of the children of the Guard, Reserve, as well as those children of the geographically isolated service member.

Objective Four: Encourage Professionals to Presume Professionalism in Others

Educators across the world are concerned about what is best for children. Many educational policies and procedures vary from location to location. Most were developed to provide a quality educational experience for children. These variations can adversely impact mobile children as they transition from school to school. If the initial assumption of educators was that all policies are developed within the same framework, even if different ends are reached, perhaps the focus could shift for transitioning families. Instead of starting with policy differences, mobile families could instead begin with discussions of the unique needs of their children.

Actions:

a. Present a strong endorsement of the SETS Memorandum of Agreement (MOA). Now over 140 school systems, including the Department of Defense school systems, have signed the MOA to work both internally and with other school systems to respect each other while attending to the needs of the military-connected child and all mobile children.

b. Request States to allow students who have already begun Kindergarten or 1st Grade in another locale to continue in that same grade, even if the age requirements are different in the receiving State.

c. Request States to allow schools to accept vaccination documentation from other States. Also to allow families a limited amount of time to catch up on any new vaccination requirements held by the receiving school rather than delaying school entry. Urge public health officials at all levels to coordinate requirements and communication efforts.

d. Encourage States to begin creating reciprocal agreements regarding special education processes and accommodations so that school districts have the option of formally accepting the assessments, placements, and Individual Education Plans (IEP) of other districts. At the very least, allow schools to accept these documents while a new student moves through their own assessment process rather than delaying school entry.

e. Encourage States to consider policies that would require schools to give incoming students a grace period for participation in enrichment, gifted and talented programs, and advance courses if the student was either participating in or on track to be admitted to such programs at the sending school. Students need a reasonable adjustment period.

f. Ask governors and chief State schools officers to study models and processes in their own States that should be enhanced or improved in order to ease the transition of students from one system to another. The MCEC's research and experience have proven consistently that schools are doing a reasonable job of welcoming students, but a very poor job of "handing off" exiting students to the next school system. Parents also tend to underestimate the need to inform and involve schools in a timely manner when a move is planned or eminent. Low cost/no cost suggestions range from State public relations campaigns directed to parents to State required exit processes and packets. If every school systematically took care of and communicated an exiting child's academic, program document, social/emotional needs, and look-forward preparation—then the receiving school would have an accelerated likelihood of smoothly continuing the appropriate instructional services.

g. Encourage States to be flexible when accepting comparable schoolwork. For example, if a State has a graduation requirement, honor the student's completion of the sending State's credits and coursework such as State history courses to satisfy the receiving school's requirement.

h. Local school systems should be encouraged and given incentives to partner with State higher education systems to explore new ways to deliver instruction as well as assess academic progress.

Objective Five: Increase Stability for High School Seniors From Military Families

One of the most effective ways to assist military children is to reduce their mobility especially during the critical senior year. Military children currently attend from 6–9 schools by high school graduation. If the number of transitions can be reduced, one of the biggest barriers to the educational success of military children will have been overcome.

Actions:

a. Encourage all branches of the military to adopt the Army's policy of stabilizing military assignments for families with high school seniors. This policy allows families to request a short-term delay of new military assignments so a child can complete his or her senior year of high school. The requests can be denied due to military need, although with in the Army, less than 1 percent have been denied for

those reasons, so the strength of the military is not affected by this policy. It simply recognizes that the senior year of high school is a particularly problematic time for students to move.

b. Encourage the governors to re-double efforts to define and improve tracking of those students who begin their high school experience in the 9th grade and move prior to high school graduation. This is especially important in developing a comprehensive understanding and response to the needs of mobile students to discover precisely what are the implications of school moves in the junior or senior year.

Objective Six: Increase the Predictability of Services for Children with Special Needs

Advocate for the unique and amplified challenges of the students who receive special education services. The national average for students identified for service in special education programs is between 12 and 13 percent of the total K–12 population. With about 13 percent of military children with special needs, it is obvious that school moves are an amplified challenge. The numbers increase with the addition of students served under the Americans With Disabilities Act, § 504. The transition challenges are monumental and many of our military children with special needs go un-served or underserved for much of their time within some systems. All mobile students with special needs experience the same daunting prospect.

Actions:

a. Obtain from the States a commitment to launch an effort between States and working with through the Department of Education share information and consider ways to keep the mobile child with special needs in mind.

b. Reciprocity is once again a solution to this monumental transition issue. Though education is a local issue, with respect for each systems requirements and a focus on the mobile child, districts can begin serving children by honoring each other's Individualized Education Plans as well as related services and programs while conducting their required assessments and considering permanent placement options.

A similar "grace period" of services should also be applied to students served with § 504 accommodation plans.

c. As IDEA is reauthorized and the work is done to improve the services to children—please bring to the forefront the unique needs of children who experience school moves.

Objective Seven: Standardization and Efficient Procedures for Student Records Transfer

One of the most effective ways to assist military children is to reduce the bureaucratic and sometime archaic processes that encumber the timely transfer of school records. Delays in processing school records and the subsequent confusion about interpreting those records impede the appropriate placement and may cause students to either re-take courses or fail to have access to others. Though this is a highly complex set of challenges, it is only intensified when students participate in special programs or one or more parents is deployed and the student must live with a caregiver.

Actions:

a. Encourage the States to study the internal consistency of the student records system. This includes the consideration of policies that would require clarity or uniformity in grading systems. Coherence in translation of records would also benefit States in improved internal mobility processes.

b. Request that the States initiate a process, including local districts, to analyze the student records systems through the lens of mobility and transportability. This analysis could include the following: record keeping procedures; clarity of documentation (course coding, test reporting, etc.); policies impacting the prompt transfer of records; unique issues related to the official documentation for special education and talented/gifted students; as well as the potential use of technology to more effectively track students from attendance to academic progress. A major consideration should be given to use and understanding for both parents and receiving schools.

c. Endorse the MCEC's work to effectively implement the use of the web to build a virtual student support community through the MCEC's Interactive Counseling Center (ICC). The ICCs provide a private, secure web-based system that facilitates the transfer, interpretation, and enrollment/placement decisions involving the sending school, the parents, the student, and the receiving school (See attached information).

Objective Eight: Endorse Purposeful Partnerships, Incentives, and Reciprocal Agreements

Initiatives like President Bush's budget item that would fund Department of Education grants that recognize and respect the capacities of States, systems, and organizations for their focus on local partnerships, collaboration, and innovative thinking. Efforts aimed at discovering and sharing solutions for the challenges faced by the mobile military child need to be endorsed and encouraged.

Actions:

a. Continue supporting the President's budgetary initiatives through the Department of Education.

b. Spotlight States, communities and organizations that are working effectively on behalf of military children.

c. Ask why not! Support an examination of the potential for reciprocal agreements that may include alternatives to State-by-State assessments. The current landscape of 51 standards, including the District of Columbia, is understandable because of State and local control of education; however, there are reasonable ways to move toward other conduits of performance measurement without lowering expectations. Affirm the positive efforts for reciprocity.

d. Support fair, high quality, accessible, and transportable assessments that correlate with post secondary requirements. The Military Child Education Coalition has a research-based approach for testing without compromising on quality or jeopardizing standards, rather it will underscore the K–16 drive for all children to achieve (See MCEC's "Tall Pole" alternative standard).

Reciprocity and High Stakes Testing

Purpose

The Military Child Education Coalition (MCEC) seeks support in our efforts to establish a model for reciprocity in the area of high stakes testing—specifically the exit level.

The rationale is basic fairness—students who experience frequent school moves often must take high school exit exams in several States. There are no significant reciprocal agreements in place.

Background

The path to fairness lies in reciprocal agreements among States that would allow military and other mobile students to substitute one State's exit graduation exam with another's—if the student has met all other requirements. The MCEC is presenting the case for reciprocity and outlining the process options.

As an example of a highly mobile population, military-connected students usually attend from 6–9 schools from kindergarten to graduation. They almost always attend two high schools and frequently three or more high schools in different systems with different standards and accountability. It is important that the model developed maintains a high standard for all students, mobile or not, while creating safeguards that protect students from being penalized. The model, based on rigorous standards [e.g., passage of a certain number of SAT II, ACT, Advanced Placement (AP), or International Baccalaureate (IB) exams as a possible substitute for State exit exams] that could be applied for students who move to a new high school, while juniors or seniors, to a high school outside of the State or DOD school system.

Concept: The "Tall Pole" Standard

The MCEC is proposing a consideration of alternative assessments with nationally recognized high standards that would fulfill the requirements for exit level (graduation or diploma required) testing. Rather than using a state-by-state strategy, knitting together agreements between States that have negotiated through the psychometric twists and turns for each exit level test, we are suggesting a more universal "tall pole" approach. The following option menu lays out the MCEC's concept for a strong standard approach with practical underpinnings for exit level reciprocal agreements:

Reciprocity Structure

The student fulfills the exit level exam requirement if:

1. The student passes the State required exit level test or the end-or-course exams (EOCs) required for graduation as administered by the school system from which the student transfers;

The "Tall Pole" options:

2. The student makes an acceptable/average score on three subject area tests-English (either the Literature and Writing Test or the English Language Proficiency

Test, mathematics, and one other (history, science, or foreign language) of the SAT II;

3. The student makes an acceptable composite score on the ACT (which will include the writing component in 2004–2005);

4. The student makes a three or better on AP exams in English, mathematics, and one other (history, science, or foreign language);

5. The student achieves a passing standard in IB three subsidiary exams, Language A, Mathematics, and one other).

OPTION CONSIDERATIONS

OPTIONS	PLUSES	CONCERNS
State Assessments The student passes an exit test or the end-or-course exams (EOCs) required for graduation in any state	+ A growing number of states have some type of exit or end-of-course testing—now about 50% of the students are in states with high stakes testing. + All states currently administering or planning high stakes assessment require, at least, assessment in reading and mathematics. +Many states are moving to 11th and 12th grade testing. + Tests are giving at school without charges or fees. + No Child Left Behind (NCLB) requirements are pushing states to strengthen their systems as each state submits the plan to the Dept of Education. + States either have or are developing public report systems for academic performance by district and campus, or "report cards." +The Army's Senior Stabilization policy has decreased the transitions during junior and senior year. (It is anticipated that the same benefit will be an outcome of the Air Force's policy).	- Not every state and system have exit testing–yet -DoDEA is exempt from NCLB ? Would the state NCLB plans permit school systems to report but exempt students achieving a passing score in another state as having demonstrated adequate yearly progress? –Could the "tall polers" be listed/reported as passing due to the demonstrated ability to achieve to a standard approved in the NCLB plan? -Home schooled students, non-public schooled students, and host nation students would be left out of this option -Passing standards and "cut scores" will vary greatly between state assessments -Currently the stabilization policy is only Army for in terms of a history. The Air Force adopted a senior stabilization policy—this will have its first impact on the senior class of 2005.

"tall pole" OPTIONS	"tall pole" PLUSES	"tall pole" CONCERNS
SAT II The student makes an acceptable/average score on three subject area tests- English, Literature & Writing, Mathematics, and one other (history, science, or foreign language) of the SAT II	+The access to the SATII is ubiquitous. Students who are receiving their education in any school setting could still take the SAT II. + The subject-area tests are well recognized as being of a determined quality. +The SAT II will have post-secondary application for the student. +There are online prep courses available and the Services might offer prep classes through the installation family services. +There may be research opportunity to develop longitudina cohorts of student data that are potentially useful to federal, state and local education systems and policy-makers as well as to the Services. + SAT II is given several times a year.	-Quality and consistency of instructional access that preps the student for the SAT II could be an issue—but, that is an issue regardless -The NCLB implications would be similar to those listed for state tests—though the SAT II might be approved by the Dept of Education as an acceptable option "outside the system" -Taking the SAT II will require planning for the registration and for going to the administration location.
ACT The student makes an acceptable composite score on the ACT. In 2004-2005 this will include the separate writing test.	+The ACT options pluses are similar to the SAT II advantages (See above). + The ACT could be used stand-alone as a college admissions test. + At least one state, Colorado, uses the ACT as the exit test. +Many states require inclusion ACT performance in district and/or high school "report cards" (e.g. Georgia) +Results are familiar to probably most, if not all, school counselors. + ACT is given several times a year.	- The ACT concerns are the same as the SAT II. - Social Studies is not a tested area. -Taking the ACT will require planning for the registration and for going to the administration location. ? Would it be best to consider as "acceptable" a composite score of say 24, or to look at separate scores meeting the "acceptable" criteria in: • Reading • Mathematics • Science • Writing (2004-05)

Advanced Placement The student makes a three or better on AP exams in English, mathematics, and one other (history, science, or foreign language),	+The AP option carries all of the same advantages as the SAT II. +There is a common curriculum for all AP courses. +Students can take AP courses any time during high school (depending on local requirements). +Like the SAT II and the ACT, the AP course tests are standardized in their administration and scoring. +Success in AP courses does boost post secondary opportunities. +Students can earn college credit, placement advantage, and/or advancement as a result of good scores on AP exams. + Strong AP scores are already recognized in some states (e.g. Virginia) as satisfying the requirement for a component of the state test. +Tiered diploma options already encourage AP courses at the highest level, "Recognized," "Honors." +AP performance is often included as a required component of district or campus "report cards."	-Though broadly available, this option is contingent upon the opportunity to take and complete the AP courses. - Not all high schools will offer pre-AP and AP courses. - Schools may place pre-requisites or eligibility criteria for students to be given the access to AP courses. - Though the tests are generally administered at the school, there are fees and logistics issues for the student to prepare for prior to the test date.

International Baccalaureate The student achieves a passing standard in three IB subsidiary exams	+The IB option carries many of the same advantages as the SAT II. +There is a common program structure and curriculum for all IB courses. +Though IB is most commonly at the junior and senior level, there are middle and elementary school programs. + Students in IB programs can potentially participate in any approved school (including a non-US, or host nation school) assuming the student meets the entry requirements. This is of particular advantage to military-connected students and other mobile students. +Unlike the AP program, high schools must apply and be accepted through a rigorous process before permitted to offer IB courses and certify the international IB diplomas—the IB program has a *built in* accountability system. +Like the SAT II and the ACT, but like the AP, IB course tests are standardized worldwide in their administration and scoring. +Success in IB courses does boost post secondary opportunities, in addition IB diploma students have extremely competitive resumes. +Students can earn college credit or advancement as a result of good scores on IB exams. (e.g. Virginia accepts a "3") + Strong IB scores are already recognized in some states as satisfying the requirement for a component of the state test.	-Students have to be enrolled in an IB school and accepted into the program. -This option is contingent upon the opportunity to take and complete the IB courses. - A smaller number of high schools will offer the IB program. - Schools may place pre-requisites or eligibility criteria for students to be given the access to the IB program and given the chance to enroll in IB courses. -Though the tests are generally administered at the school, there are fees and logistics issues for the student to prepare for prior to the test date.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR ADDRESSING THE ISSUES OF TRANSITIONING MILITARY STUDENTS

MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT

I. Purpose

This agreement is designed to facilitate the mutual development of reciprocal practices, conduits for information between systems about requirements, and accelerate the exchange of emerging opportunities. The fundamental architecture of this agreement is to sustain partnerships that serve as extraordinary models. The anticipated outcome will be institutionalized systems for transition predictability of the high school experience for the military connected student. The intent of this Memorandum of Agreement is to immediately address transition problems identified in the United States Army's Secondary Education Transition Study (SETS) data. For the sake of the child, this Memorandum of Agreement is adopted by the United States Army's Secondary Education Transition Study (SETS) partners in a way that models and exemplifies partnership, flexibility, inclusiveness, and information sharing for all schools that serve high school age military students.

II. Scope and Memorandum of Agreement Time Table:

Designed to address transition challenges that are primarily high school connected, the scope of this document and process is to agree on issues that can be immediately solved and to begin implementing those solutions as soon as possible.

III. Guiding Principles

Whereas, Military students are faced with numerous transitions during their formative years;

Whereas, Moves during the High School Years provide special challenges to learning and future achievement;

Whereas, There are some 175,000 secondary school-aged students of military personnel;

Whereas, The Army's Secondary Education Transition Study revealed that the average military-connected student transitions more than two times during their high school years;

Whereas, The participants of the Secondary Education Transition Study understand that there are many students in schools that face transition challenges.

Therefore, be it resolved that in the best interest of all students in transition, we the undersigned agree to:

Improve the Timely Transfer of Records

Practices may include:

1. Developing consistent systems that allow for hand carried or temporary records to be used for placement.
2. Cooperating and monitoring jointly with the supported military installation the effectiveness and efficiency of in/out-processing (school clearance).
3. Evaluating the processes through a determination of local critical effectiveness measures.

Develop Systems to Ease Student Transition during the First 2 Weeks of Enrollment

Practices may include:

1. Collaboratively developing "virtual" orientation (school and installation Web sites).
2. Creating and implementing combined awareness training of school and appropriate installation staff on the challenges a student faces as the "new kid."
3. Highlighting and monitoring the support systems and practices that increase the likelihood that a quick assimilation will be made.
4. Communicating information about specialized high school programs (e.g.: magnet or special schools admission requirements, timelines and pre-requisites).

Promote Practices Which Foster Access to Extracurricular Programs

Practices may include:

1. Reviewing local try-out timelines and systems with an eye to the opportunity to increase access and encourage inclusiveness.
2. Encouraging counselors, school coaches, and Youth programs staff to routinely write letters of referral and/or recommendations for students transitioning out of the system.
3. Posting current and accurate information (including calendars of events) on school system and installation Web sites.

Establish Procedures to Lessen the Adverse Impact of Moves From the End of Junior Year, as Well as Before, and During the Senior Year

Practices may include:

1. Using counselors and school transition specialists as outreach to students and resources to parents and staff.
2. Encouraging and supporting student networking and sponsorship groups.
3. Giving senior students and their parents additional assistance and support as needed for graduation completion and post-secondary application.

Communicate Variations in the School Calendars and Schedules

Practices may include:

1. Collaborating and posting current/accurate calendars and school year events in a manner that is easy for parents to access.
2. Sharing calendar and school year information.
3. Defining, explaining, and illustrating the type(s) of high school schedule(s) in-place at each high school.

Create and Implement Professional Development Systems

Practices may include:

1. Emphasizing strategies that support attention to individual student needs.

2. Developing, encouraging, and fully supporting joint installation and school professional development communities that share strategies, resources, and effectiveness indicators.

3. Discovering, recognizing, and consider replicating proven practices in sponsorship and peer mentor programs.

4. Ensuring that all professional school staff has the basic information about military life and culture. For example Army Family Team Building (AFTB) or other service modules could be used as a resource for professional development.

5. Developing joint training modules for schools and installation personnel.

6. Teaming school counselors with appropriate installation personnel/resources (chaplains, child and youth services, installation counselors) on the unique social/emotional needs of military students.

Continue Strong, Child-Centered Partnerships between the Installation and the Supporting School

Practices may include:

1. Connecting Installation School Liaison Officers and the school district counterparts in a working group in order to share ideas about partnership systems.

2. Including senior level military representation from the supported military installation as an ex-officio member or an advisor to the district school board/advisory council.

3. Encouraging site leaders to include an active duty member(s) and/or military spouse(s) as a member of the site based management team (or equivalent organization) of each high school that serves military students.

4. Collaborating with the installation to provide a community orientation program for military families.

Provide Information Concerning Graduation Requirements

Practices may include:

1. Communicating high school requirements (enhanced or alternative diplomas).

2. Communicating options and opportunities for earning graduation credit.

3. Communicating information about State testing.

4. Communicating opportunities available to senior students in transition to graduate from the sending high school through reciprocity.

Provide Specialized Services for Transitioning Students When Applying to and Finding Funding for Post Secondary Study

Practices may include:

1. Developing processes to inform parents and students of the best methods for completing college/vocational-technical application. Specifically highlight resident eligibility requirements and the opportunities and the other challenges for the mobile student.

2. Modeling what should be in a student portfolio.

3. Training counselors and teachers on how to best assist a transitioning student on preparing for college/vocational-technical application.

4. Supporting preparation programs for success on the SAT and ACT.

5. Publicizing scholarships and grants available to all students and those uniquely designed for military connected students.

IV. Commitment

The signatory leaders commit to continue developing and implementing best and promising practices that will assist the transitioning military-connected student, as defined and articulated above.

Be it resolved, therefore, that the following school system signatories enter into this agreement on behalf of their organizations.

Memorandum of Agreement

Signatories:

The Memorandum of Agreement has 146 Signatories and 150 Districts as of July 1, 2004.

Alabama
Dalevile City Public Schools
Enterprise City Public Schools
Fort Rucker Independent Schools DDESS
Huntsville City Public Schools
Madison County Schools
Maxwell AFB Dependent Schools DDESS
Ozark City Schools
Phenix City Public Schools
Russell County Schools

Alaska
Anchorage School District
Fairbanks North Star Borough School District

Arizona
Dysart Unified School District
Fort Huachuca Accommodation District No. 01
Sierra Vista Unified District No. 68
Tuba Elementary School District No. 1

California
Barstow Unified School District
Silver Valley Unified School District

Colorado
Academy District 20, Colorado Springs
Cheyenne Mountain District 12, Colorado Springs
Colorado Springs District 11, Colorado Springs
Elbert School District 2
Falcon District 49, Colorado Springs
Fountain - Ft. Carson District 8, Colorado Springs
Harrison District 2, Colorado Springs
Lewis Palmer District 38, Colorado Springs
Manitou Springs District 14, Colorado Springs
Widefield District 3, Colorado Springs
Woodland Park RE 2, Colorado Springs

Connecticut
Groton Public Schools, Groton
Ledyard Public Schools, Ledyard

Florida
Hillsborough County Public Schools
Miami-Dade County Public Schools
Santee County Schools

Georgia
Adams Public Schools
Bryan County School District
Chattahoochee County School District
Clayton County School System
Cobb County School System
Columbia County School System
Dooson County School System
Dekalb County School System
Dougherty County School System
Fayette County School System
Fort Benning DDESS District
Fort Stewart DDESS District
Fulton County School System
Harris County School District
Henry County School System
Houston County School District
Lee County School System
Liberty County School District
Muscogee County School District*
Richmond County School System
Robins DDESS District
Savannah-Chatham County Public Schools
Worth County School System

Hawaii
Hawaii Department of Education

Kansas
Fort Leavenworth Unified School District #207
Geary County Unified School District #475
Lansing Unified School District #469
Leavenworth Regional Catholic District
Leavenworth Unified School District #453
Manhattan-Ogden Unified School District #383

Kentucky
Christian County Schools
Fort Campbell DDESS*
Fort Knox DDESS District

Louisiana
Bossier Parish School System
Vernon Parish Public Schools

Maryland
Frederick County
Harford County Public School System
Montgomery County Public Schools

Michigan
Anchor Bay School District
L'Anse Creuse Public School District
Mount Clemens Community Schools

New Jersey
Monmouth Regional High School District
Pemberton Township School District

New Mexico
Alamogordo Public Schools

New York
Board of Cooperative Education Services for Jefferson, Lewis, Hamilton, Herkimer, and Oneida Counties
Carthage Central School District
Copenhagen School District
Gouverneur Central School District
Highland Falls-Fort Montgomery Central School District
Indian River Central School District
Lowville Academy and Central Schools
Thousand Islands School District
Watertown City Schools
West Point DDESS District

North Carolina
Camp Lejeune DDESS District
Cumberland County Schools*
Fort Bragg DDESS District
Hoke County Schools
Onslow County School District

Oklahoma
Bishop Public Schools
Cache Public Schools
Elgin Public Schools
Lawton Public Schools*

Pennsylvania
Big Spring School District
Carlisle Area School District
Cumberland Valley School District
Mechanicsburg School District
South Middleton School District

South Carolina
Charleston County School District
Fort Jackson DDESS District
Laurel Bay DDESS District
Richland School District One
Richland School District Two

Tennessee
Clarksville Montgomery County Schools

Texas
Alamo Heights Independent School District
Belton Independent School District
Copperas Cove Independent School District
East Central Independent School District
Edgewood Independent School District
El Paso Independent School District*
Fort Sam Houston Independent School District
Judson Independent School District
Killeen Independent School District*
Lackland Independent School District
North East Independent School District
Northside Independent School District
Seguin Independent School District

Utah
Tooele County School District

Virginia
Arlington County Public Schools
Dahlgren DDESS District
Dinwiddie County Public Schools
Fairfax County Public Schools
Hampton City Schools
Hopewell City Public Schools
Newport News Public Schools
Petersburg Public Schools
Poquoson City Public Schools
Prince George County Public Schools
Quantico DDESS District

Washington
Clover Park School District #400*

Wisconsin
Sparta Area School District
Tomah Area School District

Guam
Guam DDESS District

Puerto Rico
Antilles/Cuba DDESS District

DoDEA
HQ – Department of Defense Education Activity

DDESS
HQ – Domestic Schools

DoDDS Europe
HQ – Europe
Europe – Brussels District
Europe – Heidelberg and Benson Districts, Germany
Europe – Italy, Turkey, and Spain Districts
Europe – Kaiserslautern District, Germany*
Europe – United Kingdom (The Isles) District
Europe – Wurzburg District (Bavaria), Germany

DoDDS Pacific
HQ – Pacific
Pacific – Okinawa District
Pacific – Japan District
Pacific – Korea District*

*SEPTS ORIGINAL SIGNATORIES

For more information, visit www.militarychild.org

Senator ALEXANDER. Mrs. Petraeus?

STATEMENT OF HOLLISTER K. "HOLLY" PETRAEUS, WIFE OF LIEUTENANT GENERAL DAVID PETRAEUS

Mrs. PETRAEUS. Good afternoon, and thank you for inviting me to participate today. I am here to speak to you as an Army wife of over 30 years.

A little over a year ago, Senator Alexander held a field hearing at Fort Campbell, Kentucky, and asked a group of us how the 101st Airborne Division's deployment had affected our families. I was one of the members who spoke that day and I am honored to be asked to come back again.

First of all, I would like to say that I think Fort Campbell handled the deployment very well. We had great communication and teamwork between our family members, our active duty military rear detachment and garrison personnel, our DA civilians, and our local communities. Everyone showed a willingness to work together, to communicate, and to be flexible.

A sign of that success was the relatively light usage of our Family Assistance Center, as compared with the one that was activated during Operation Desert Storm. In fact, many of the questions to our Family Assistance Center came from Reserve and Guard families of soldiers who had deployed out through Fort Campbell and who did not have the same level of support that our active duty 101st families did.

I would like to spotlight a few of the improvements that have come about since the hearing last May. One issue that we raised was our desire to see some key family readiness group leader positions be salaried. On that issue, we owe a debt of gratitude to the former Forces Command Commander, General Ellis. In the end, the Department of the Army decided to fund the hiring of FRG site managers and assistants who would support FRG leaders on a number of Army posts which have a high operational tempo. Fort Campbell received funding for a site manager and seven assistants and they have all recently undergone training in Atlanta. I think the centralized training is a great idea, again, with the idea of best practices so different posts will all be sharing good ideas through their paid FRG personnel.

Another issue that was raised was our concern for wounded soldiers and their families. At the time, we were having difficulties with the unpredictable and uneven notification system, especially when the wounded were being cared for by another service's medical system. Since the 101st has been back for 5 months, I don't have firsthand knowledge of the notification system at this time, but I am happy to see that the Army has announced a new initiative called the Disabled Soldier Support System. This system is designed to provide the most severely disabled soldiers and their families with a system of advocacy and follow-up as they transition to civilian life.

I would like to note, by the way, that the care provided by Walter Reed Army Medical Center for the 101st soldiers, particularly the amputees, was wonderful. Not only did they provide state-of-the-art prosthetic devices, but they retained the soldiers in their care for many months rather than ship them out to face long-term rehabilitation elsewhere, in a facility that might not be so well equipped.

On the topic of casualties, Fort Campbell established both a Wounded Eagle Support Group and a Grief Support Group for surviving spouses. I met with the members of the Grief Support Group recently and they provided me with their insights on how the Army casualty system had worked for them. They said the overall process from notification to burial was handled very well, but their number one problem was dealing with the reams of legal paperwork that came afterwards. The Army provides a military Casualty Assistance Officer in each instance, but the CAOs are active duty officers who are tasked with the assignment after minimal training and they often do not possess sufficient knowledge to help survivors deal with paperwork and learn their entitlements.

Since casualties can be very high 1 month and very low or nonexistent the next, it is not practical to have a large group of military officers given a permanent CAO assignment. But the families suggested that each Casualty Assistance Office could have a few permanent civilian employees whose job it would be to know the system and its entitlements and requirements. They could then be a resource for the Casualty Assistance Officers, who often don't know where to look to find the information that families need.

One issue that came to my attention after the hearing last year was the fact that some of our soldiers who were eligible for Federal and State income-based aid were seeing that aid reduced when they deployed because of their extra combat pay and their absence from the household. To the families, this was perceived as receiving combat pay from the government's one hand and having it taken away by the other.

I know income-based assistance is complicated, as it does involve a number of Federal and State agencies, but I would like to thank the lawmakers who worked so hard on this issue during the past year and their efforts have borne fruit in a number of initiatives—the Child Nutrition Act of 2004, the Agricultural Appropriations bill for 2005, and Senator Alexander's own amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act. All of these initiatives are great news for our most financially-challenged military families.

I mentioned earlier that National Guard and Reserve families often came to our Family Assistance Center for help. I am very happy to see that the members of these committees are working with DOD and the National Governors Association to create a series of summits between State officials and DOD subject matter experts in an effort to educate the States about what they can and should be doing for their military personnel.

I happened to speak with a National Guard wife this week. Her husband has just begun his third active duty deployment since February 2002. She told me of her difficulties in getting her bank to reduce their mortgage interest rate under the Soldiers' and Sailors' Civil Relief Act, as it was called at the time. Each time he has gone on active duty, she has had to fight the same battle with the bank all over again, and she is an attorney, so she can advocate effectively for herself. But I hope that the better communication afforded by the State summits will eliminate some of the headaches for Guard and Reserve families who often do not have the same support system available to active duty families.

In the past year, I have seen Members of Congress advocate very forcefully for our military families, both in legislation and in their questions to DOD officials about the strains of repeated deployments on the soldiers and their families. We are grateful for what you have accomplished on our behalf thus far, and as a military spouse, I thank you for your continuing interest in supporting our Nation's warriors and their families as they serve our Nation during these challenging times.

Senator ALEXANDER. Thank you, Mrs. Petraeus.

[The prepared statement of Mrs. Petraeus follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HOLLISTER K. PETRAEUS

Good afternoon, I'm Holly Petraeus, wife of Lieutenant General David H. Petraeus, the Chief of the Office of Security Transition in Iraq, and I'm here today to speak to you as an Army wife of over 30 years.

A little over a year ago, Senator Alexander came to Fort Campbell, Kentucky, and asked a group of military spouses and Department of the Army (DA) civilian experts how the 101st Airborne Division's deployment had affected the community's military families. I was one of the family members who spoke that day, and I'm honored to be asked to come back and give my impressions on where we stand a year later.

First of all, I'd like to say that I think that Fort Campbell handled the deployment, which lasted a year and ended in February 2004, very well. We had great communication and teamwork between our family members, our active duty military rear detachment and garrison personnel, our DA Civilians, and our local communities. Everyone showed a willingness to work together, to communicate with each other, and to be flexible as the need arose. A sign of that success was the relatively light usage of our Family Assistance Center, as compared with the one activated during Operation Desert Storm. In fact, many of the questions to our Family Assistance Center came from the families of Reserve or Guard soldiers who had deployed through Fort Campbell, and who did not have the same level of support as our active duty 101st families.

I'd like to spotlight a few of the improvements that have come about since the hearing last May. One issue that we raised was our desire to see some key Family Readiness Group (FRG) leader positions be salaried. On that issue we owe a debt of gratitude to General (now retired) Larry Ellis, the former Forces Command commander, who made it a priority. In the end DA decided to fund the hiring of FRG site managers and assistants who would support FRG leaders on a number of Army posts which have a high operational tempo. Fort Campbell received funding for a site manager and 7 assistants, and they have all recently undergone training in Atlanta. I think the centralized training is a great idea, so different posts will all be operating on the same sheet of music, and, hopefully, sharing good ideas through the paid FRG personnel who have trained together.

Another issue that was raised was our concern for wounded soldiers and their families. At the time we were having difficulties with the unpredictable and uneven notification system, especially when the wounded were being cared for by another service's medical system. Since the 101st has been back for 5 months, I don't have firsthand knowledge of how the notification system is working at this time, or if it has improved. But I am happy to see that the Army has announced a new initiative called the Disabled Soldier Support System, or DS3. This system is designed to provide the most severely disabled soldiers and their families with a system of advocacy and follow-up as they transition to civilian life. I'd like to note, by the way, that the care provided by Walter Reed Army Medical Center for the 101st's soldiers, particularly the amputees, was wonderful. Not only did they provide state-of-the-art prosthetic devices, but they retained the soldiers in their care for many months, rather than ship them out to face long-term rehabilitation elsewhere in a facility that might not be so well-equipped.

On the topic of casualties, Fort Campbell has established both a Wounded Eagle Support Group and a Grief Support Group for surviving spouses. I had the opportunity to meet with the members of the Grief Support Group before I left Fort Campbell, and they provided me with their insights on how the Army casualty system has worked for them. They said the overall process from notification to burial was handled very well, but their number one problem was dealing with the reams of legal paperwork that came afterwards. The Army provides a military Casualty Assistance Officer (CAO) in each instance, but the CAOs are active duty officers who are tasked with the assignment after minimal training, and they often do not

possess sufficient knowledge to help survivors deal with paperwork and learn their entitlements. Since casualties can be very high one month, and very low or nonexistent the next, it's obviously not practical to have a large group of military officers given a permanent CAO assignment and longer training. But the families suggested that each Casualty Assistance Office have a few permanent civilian employees whose job it is to know the system and its entitlements and requirements. They could then be a resource for the CAOs who often don't know where to look to find the information the families need.

One issue that came to my attention after the hearing last year was the fact that some of our soldiers who were eligible for Federal and State income-based aid were seeing that aid reduced when they deployed because of their extra combat pay and their absence from the household. To the families this was perceived as receiving combat pay from the government's one hand, and having it taken away by the other. Income-based assistance is complicated, as it involves a number of State and Federal agencies, but I'd like to thank the Tennessee State and Federal lawmakers who worked hard on the issue during the past year. Their efforts and those of their fellow legislators have borne fruit in the Child Nutrition Act of 2004 (PL 108-265), the Agricultural Appropriations Bill for fiscal year 2005 (which included a provision to not count combat pay when determining eligibility for food stamps), and Senator Alexander's amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 2005, which precluded combat pay, the supplemental subsistence allowance, and the family separation allowance from being counted as income when determining eligibility for a number of federally administered social services. All of these initiatives are great news for our most financially challenged military families.

I mentioned earlier that National Guard and Reserve families often came to our Family Assistance Center for help. I'm very happy to see that members of these committees have worked with the Department of Defense and the National Governors' Association to create a series of summits between State officials and DOD subject matter experts, in an effort to educate the States about what they can and should be doing for their military personnel. I happened to speak with a National Guard wife from Maryland this week. Her husband has just begun his third active-duty deployment since February 2002. She told me of her difficulties in getting her bank to reduce their mortgage interest rate under the Soldiers' and Sailors' Civil Relief Act. Each time he has gone on active duty she has had to fight the same battle with the bank all over again. And she is an attorney, so she can advocate pretty effectively for herself! I hope the better communication afforded by these State summits will eliminate some of the headaches for Guard and Reserve families, who often do not have the same support system available to active-duty families.

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Senator ALEXANDER. Senator Chambliss?

Senator CHAMBLISS. Thank you, Senator Alexander, and let me say thanks to all the panel. Dr. Jones, we appreciate you being here, particularly coming at the last minute to provide us with an insight into these issues. I think you answered one of my questions when you mentioned Governor Kempthorne and Governor Easley being the two point people on these issues. Senator Alexander, Senator Dodd, and Senator Nelson, I will be in touch with them. I think it is important that we establish that dialogue that we alluded to earlier.

Mrs. Petraeus, I can't tell you how honored we are to have you here. Your husband is certainly a true American hero, but we know that the commitment of the soldier is a commitment by the family. We know your commitment and we hold you in the same high esteem as we do your husband, and boy, what a terrific job he is doing over there.

General Reimer, we miss you. In my days on the House Armed Services Committee, you were there many times and you were such

a great leader, not just as Chief but in the many other positions, including your tours at Fort Mack and Fort Benning.

Let me ask you, Dr. Jones, very quickly about one issue that is of extreme importance to military families and that is this issue of voting this year. Can you tell me anything the National Governors Association is doing to ensure that we don't have another disaster like we had in 2000 relative to absentee voting by our military families?

Mr. JONES. Thank you, sir. Dr. Chu raised that issue with the Governors and many of them said that they would go back and be working on it. Some of them are. We haven't seen much and I haven't seen much, but we have been working on it. We are working with the States and working with the National Election Commission on just how this will come about. But some of the suggestions that Dr. Chu raised are being taken under consideration.

Senator CHAMBLISS. OK. Well, like in Georgia it is the Secretary of State, whatever entity has jurisdiction over that in the other States, I hope they are geared up to make sure that we certainly have the ballots in the hands of all of our soldiers, sailors, airmen, and Marines around the world to allow them the opportunity to get those ballots back in well in advance of November 2.

General Reimer, let me ask you a practical question. You have had a number of years of experience on active duty and we are talking a lot about schools today and particularly transfer of children among schools, as well as DOD schools versus public schools. I know we provide, of course, impact aid to our communities where we don't have DOD schools on bases and that is very important and we need to continue to do that.

But I am a fan of our DOD schools. I think they do a great job, and particularly in this time when we are in an unusual conflict, and I say unusual because never before have we had embedded reporters who carry cameras on armored vehicles and children are going home at night and in some instances seeing their parents on the battlefield. Our military children have always had special problems, but this, I think, is an even heightened special problem for a lot of our kids.

It emphasizes the importance to Senator Alexander, Senator Dodd, Senator Nelson, and myself as we have been around the country over the last year and a half and talking with parents of those military kids about how important it was to be associated with kids who had the same experience, but just as important, that you had teachers who understood the military aspect of family life. I would like your comment on that as to what you think about the importance of DOD schools and how they serve our children.

General REIMER. I am a big supporter, Senator, of DOD schools. Our kids have gone to those schools. The units I have served with, the people in those units have had their children go to those schools and I think they do a wonderful job. It has been overseas. We have some in the United States here that I think are very important, also.

If you take a place, for example, like West Point, New York, where we have the United States Military Academy, you are trying to attract high-quality people over there to teach the cadets and to educate the cadets. These people place a great deal of emphasis on

education. In my mind, and the last time I looked at it was probably about 5 years ago, but the education there, they are getting a good education in the DOD schools at West Point. Whether they would get the same type of education off-post or not, I don't know. And whether you could attract those kind of people if you close the DOD schools at West Point, attract the kind of people you need to educate those cadets, I don't know that, either.

So I think they provide a big value added. Beyond that, I think with all the turmoil, and this military force has got their rucksack full. They are moving out very quickly. I thought they were busy when I was there. We were kind of standing still compared to what they are doing right now. I think the less change you make in quality of life issues now, the better off you are, because any time you change something, it will be perceived as a degradation of quality of life and that is not what we need right now. We need to show our support for these soldiers, sailors, airmen, and Marines who are supporting the Nation.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Mrs. Petraeus, is there anything you would like to add to that? I know, again, you have had practical experience in this area.

Mrs. PETRAEUS. Well, I did notice one of the Governors' remarks and it did resonate with me about predictability being important to the families. Even in an active duty division like the 101st, the first thing I heard from the families when the 101st came home was, when are they going again? So that is a quality of life issue right there, to provide some kind of predictability. And I will note that several thousand of the 101st will be going again in September after 7 months at home.

There is no denying that that is hard on families, and I would agree with General Reimer that anything that can be done to support those families is a real positive right now in terms of retention.

Senator CHAMBLISS. We are doing our best to try to make sure that the operational tempo is not any greater than it has to be, but I will have to tell you, I am amazed at the resilience of our families. Our soldiers expect it. They know when they sign up to go that they are going to be called on and they salute and move on. It is that spouse that is left behind to change the flat tire that they have never changed before and pay the bills they have never paid before that we have to make sure that we are taking good care of and we are going to continue in that direction.

Relative to the schools, General Reimer, Senator Alexander and I have talked about this. We need to commission some sort of study, and we haven't figured out exactly how we could structure the study, relative to the children of active duty military personnel and their education. I would be willing to bet that their SAT scores are higher, the percentage of those individuals going to college is higher, and the discipline problems of those children is much lower than whatever the average is. I don't know how you come up with an average like that, but we are trying to figure out some way to maybe let us look at that so that we can have some facts and figures to consider as we think about restructuring on-base schools in the future.

Thank you all very much again for being here, and thank you for your service to our country.

Senator ALEXANDER. I just have a couple of questions. It has been a very interesting and a long hearing. Then we will come to a conclusion.

Mrs. Petraeus, I was interested in your comment that the Family Readiness Center at Fort Campbell was relatively more used by National Guardsmen and Reservists during the most recent deployment than it was by active duty. Did you want to say more about that as to why?

And then the second thing is, now that we have so many Reservists and active duty people in Afghanistan and Iraq, could we learn anything from how we served those families last year that might help us do a better job with those Readiness Centers as we try to shift their focus a little bit to be more helpful to Reserve and Guards families?

Mrs. PETRAEUS. Your question about why it was less used by the active duty families, I think really is because the Army did learn a lot of lessons after Desert Storm and they put a very good Family Readiness Group system into place where the family members, the active duty family members have had answers to their questions really before deployment and they had the assistance that they needed and they didn't end up with nowhere to go but a Family Assistance Center because they didn't know the answers.

I think that support is also partly why a lot of the family members during this deployment did not move home away from Fort Campbell. They stayed in the area because they were getting great support there.

Now I think that the Guard and Reserve are maybe at the same level that the active duty were back at Desert Storm, where we got a lot of families who would call our hotline saying, can you tell me where my soldier is? He left from Fort Campbell. Sometimes they wouldn't even know what unit he was in. They were just really starting from ground zero. They just did not have any knowledge of who to turn to, where to go, what the information was.

So I hope now that we can work on a better Family Assistance System for the Guard and Reserves since it does seem that they are going to be so much more activated than they were in the past, and maybe the States is the way to do that, having State Family Assistance Centers, because not every State has large active duty installations that can pick up the slack.

Senator ALEXANDER. Thank you.

General Reimer, we have talked a lot about students and about transferring students. Does your coalition have any plans to do anything that would help teachers deal with the phenomenon of what one might call suddenly military children, which in this case would be children of Guardsmen and Reservists who are not around a military base like Fort Campbell but who might be in Athens or Maryville or somewhere and suddenly mom or dad is gone for 12, 14, 16 months and they are presented with that situation? Are you doing something about that or is someone else doing something about it?

General REIMER. Mr. Chairman, it is one of the principles in the action plan. They identify that and address it. One of the reasons

that I am here today as opposed to some of the real leadership of the Military Child Education Coalition is that they are off at a conference at Colorado Springs where they are talking about issues like that and how they can come up with best practices so that they can share those with other States.

I don't know the specifics in terms of what they are doing, but it is one of the principles that their action plan is based upon. So they recognize it and I think they are trying to figure out how best they could assist in this particular area.

I think a lot of it has to do with the education of teachers, to realize that Johnny's father has been deployed and maybe as his math starts to fall off, that may be the reason. I think a recognition that this has happened by the teachers is tremendously important.

Like so many of the other things that we are talking about, it is sharing ideas and providing information and talking about what is happening that is really very, very important in this area. I think that is why that best practices idea is a great idea.

Senator ALEXANDER. Thank you, General. Marguerite Sallee, who is Staff Director of our subcommittee, will be at your conference tomorrow.

General REIMER. Great.

Senator ALEXANDER. Excuse us for scheduling this right in the middle of it, and thank you for being here instead of there.

Thank you all for being here. This has been a good hearing. I think we have made some contribution to this issue in the last year and a half, or a little more than a year. I think our seven hearings, six before this, have uncovered some issues—Mrs. Petraeus talked of several—where Federal legislation was able to make a difference, for example, in trying to make sure that if we give a bonus for deployment, it is not taken away with the other hand because it changes eligibility for other Federal programs.

I think that we are working better with Governors and the Governors have stepped up their very impressive list of activities. The fact that you have now appointed two lead Governors on this subject will make it easier for us to work with them and make it clear that this is, among all the many things Governors have to do, that this is a very high priority.

Dr. Chu's office of the Department of Defense has the ball, really, in terms of coordinating all of us working together. I think he is doing a good job and we stand ready to do that. The private sector, General, your efforts and that of Operation Child Care and others are very impressive.

So what my hope would be is that over the next year, and I will just take it a year at a time, is that with Dr. Chu's office as the action agent, we can swap ideas. We can make a list of the eight or nine things that seem most important to work on at this minute and see if we can just knock them off the list and move other things on. That is the simple, logical way to do things.

I will talk with Senator Chambliss and Senator Dodd and Senator Nelson. I note that we will all continue our interest. We will probably plan to have other hearings, but maybe every 6 months or so, we would like to have either a formal hearing like this or just a roundtable meeting for a couple of hours, which might even be more useful, of all those parties who are involved and we will

go down an agenda, swap notes, make sure we all know what each other is doing and see what we can learn.

Thank you very much for your time in being here. Thanks for your contribution.

The hearing is adjourned.

[Additional material follows.]

ADDITIONAL MATERIAL

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR,
RICK PERRY, GOVERNOR,
July 22, 2004.

Honorable LAMAR ALEXANDER,
Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee,
U.S. Senate,
Washington, D.C. 20510-6300.

DEAR SENATOR ALEXANDER: Thank you for the invitation to testify before the United States Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee, Subcommittee on Children and Families.

Texas has long recognized the importance of military families, as well as the need to provide support in light of the unique challenges that they face. I am submitting the attached written testimony that describes how the State of Texas has sought to assist military families in addressing their educational needs.

Please feel free to contact me or my office to discuss these issues further.

Sincerely,

GOVERNOR

STATEMENT OF GOVERNOR RICK PERRY

The State of Texas has long recognized the unique needs of the military community, that provides critical support to this State's character and economy. The defense community of Texas includes over 228,000 civilian, active, reserve and guard personnel that generate an economic impact of over $43.5 billion annually. As a result, Texas has continuously sought to establish ways to support members of the military and their families. As Governor, I have nurtured this way of thinking by recreating the Texas Military Preparedness Commission within my office, which is tasked as the liaison for the State to its 45 defense communities. This supportive mind-set has been adopted throughout the Texas executive branch and is clearly illustrated by the Texas Education Agency (TEA).

In the area of education, TEA has joined forces with private organizations and defense communities to address the needs of military children who face the challenges of frequent and repeated relocation. The agency is currently pursuing the creation of reciprocity agreements with the States of Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, and Virginia. These agreements will ease the transition of military dependents who transfer between the State of Texas and those who agree to reciprocity by creating a process for transferring records, awarding course credit and waiving exit-level examinations for successful performance on comparable State exams. This effort by the TEA has also expanded this effort and is engaging in ongoing communications with the States of Louisiana, Maryland, New York, and South Carolina.

My administration has also proudly supported the efforts of the nationally recognized Military Child Education Coalition (MCEC). This group has championed the goal of providing reliable support for the children of those who serve our country by placing Interactive Counseling Centers (ICC) in schools that serve military communities. Although there are now 52 schools in 16 States and overseas with this equipment, the State of Texas will dramatically expand this number by providing a $500,000 grant that will place ICC's in each of the 39 Texas school districts that educate military dependents serving at military installations in Texas.

Currently, the State of Texas is also developing a policy of allowing military dependents to receive exit-examination waivers if the student has achieved a certain score on advanced placement examinations in other States. The enactment of this policy will provide an additional alternative to students who, as military dependents, have achieved academic success before arriving in Texas, and deserve to have their progress recognized.

Finally, Texas' support for the education of its military children is demonstrated by the recent passage of legislation that waives out of State tuition of dependents whose military parents served in the Lone Star State then later deployed outside of Texas. As long as their children remain continuously enrolled at one of Texas' 140 institutions of higher learning, those students will continue to enjoy in-state tuition rates. This exemplary public policy will continue the assistance provided to military families beyond grade school while allowing the State of Texas to benefit from the bright minds and deserving qualities of our Nation's military children. As Sam Houston said, "The benefits of education and of useful knowledge, generally diffused through a community, are essential to the preservation of a free government." I agree.

These initiatives by the State of Texas illustrate a widely held respect for the military families within our borders and throughout the United States. This posture will continue to develop under my leadership and I will continue to work with the Texas Legislature to seek out additional support for our military service members serving our Nation in Texas. I am proud of what the State of Texas has accomplished and I applaud your efforts in addressing this issue in the United States Senate.

[Whereupon, at 4:35 p.m., the subcommittees were adjourned.]

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