



Maj Gen Raymond A. Matera, President, NGAUS

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

### WHY SHOULD I PAY MY NGAUS DUES?

The elected leaders of the National Guard Association of the United States sometimes get the question from Guard officers: "What have you done for us lately?" The best way to start answering that question is to give a few examples of what the NGAUS has done for the National Guard historically, as well as the past year and the year ahead.

One hundred and eight years ago the situation was this: The Civil War had been over for 13 years, but Reconstruction had concluded only about a year before. The officers of the North and South were trying to reorganize their militias into functioning, effective forces. To do this, they concluded that some standardization of training, equipment and uniforms was required. And to accomplish this, more federal money would be needed. Indeed, the fact was that the congressional appropriation for the militia had been established at \$100,000 in 1803 by President Thomas Jefferson and remained unchanged 75 years later.

The first 25 years of NGAUS were difficult. But by the turn of the century, the fiasco that surrounded the mobilization for the Spanish-American War in 1898 had so scandalized the nation that the time was ripe for improvements in National Guard funding and training. Those years also brought us a fortuitous convergence of circumstances. One of the heroes of the Spanish-American War was Colonel Charles Dick of the Ohio National Guard. Upon his return to the Buckeye State, he was elected to Congress. And in the meantime, he was appointed adjutant general of Ohio.

By 1903, Dick was chairman of what we know today as the House Armed Services Committee. Thus, it is easier to understand why the Dick Act of 1903 was passed. I also should mention that General Dick was elected president of NGAUS at the General Conference of 1902, and he served in that position until 1909.

By 1908, it was obvious that some additional improvements were needed to the Dick Act, and General Dick, by that time, was Senator Dick and chairman of what we know today as the Senate Armed Services Committee. Among the features of the two Dick Acts were:

□ That the National Guard was formally and legally designated as the militia as mandated in the Militia Clause of the Constitution. This may seem obvious to us today, but 85 years ago, the leaders of the War Department were seeking—as has been sought several times since—to relegate the National Guard to a purely state role.

□ A Militia Bureau was created in the War Department. We know this today as the National Guard Bureau.

Let's skip ahead to 1916. The National Defense Act of 1916 is worth mentioning for two reasons. First, it specifically cleared up the question of whether the National Guard could be deployed overseas.

Second, the 1916 act brought drill pay.

The entire Guard was mobilized in 1940 and 1941 and served in World War II. But, it also should be noted that even while our Guardsmen were fighting in Europe and the South Pacific, some leaders of the War Department were planning to vastly reduce the role of the National Guard in the postwar era.

As luck would have it—lucky for us more than him—MG Ellard A. Walsh, the NGAUS president during that era, had been levied out of the Army for medical reasons shortly after he was mobilized as commander of the 34th Infantry Division. He returned to his job as adjutant general of Minnesota. From that perch, as well as the NGAUS presidency, he was able to monitor the War Department's activities throughout the war.

What about the recent past, today and tomorrow?

Let me first mention a few of the

items the Guard Association has fought for in recent years.

**The Technician Act of 1968.** This brought our military technician force under federal Civil Service, to include the Civil Service retirement system.

**SBP.** The Survivor Benefit Plan or SBP allows all those who qualify for a Guard and Reserve retirement after 20 years military service to elect an SBP option that will continue benefits to your survivor after you die, even if you do not reach age 60.

**Tort claims.** This law, enacted in 1981, provides that the federal government is the sole agent that can be sued due to any act of commission or omission of a Guardsman while on duty. You can not be sued individually, in other words.

**Enlistment bonuses and the GI Bill.** After the end of the draft and during the rest of the 1970s, our main problem in the Guard was personnel. We did not have enough people. NGAUS obtained from Congress the enlistment and reenlistment bonuses enacted in those years. In 1984, we were one of the principal voices in favor of the New GI Bill that was enacted and is law today.

Today, your Association is one of the principal voices in Washington defending the New GI Bill against efforts to abolish it. We believe we are winning.

We continue to push for equipment procurement and improvements in Civil Service retirement, issues we believe are vitally important to the future readiness of the Guard because they impact not only on our ability to go to war in the future, but our ability to train to go to war today.

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I hope this is at least a beginning in answering the question: What has NGAUS done for you lately? And why all National Guard officers should join. We have a proud history of accomplishment. And we continue to work today as the voice of the National Guard on Capitol Hill.

*National Guard*

# NATIONAL GUARD

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### COVER:

A Washington Army National Guard Officer Candidate takes to the monkey bars like there was no tomorrow. There will be a future in OCS since she is determined to measure up physically. Photo, SFC Joe Zambone. Cover, Johnson Design Group.

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