President's Message

Be a Part of the National Guard's Future

First, I hope this message finds you and your family well, getting ready for that time when thoughts go to past memories of heart and home. On behalf of Carol and myself, we wish all of you a most joyous holiday season.

As I write this, however, the deadline I try to keep in mind is 1 January. The elections of November are still fresh in my mind, and Veterans Day looms on the horizon. It is the latter that I would like to dwell on for a moment. Though long past the time you read this, I hope each of you took a moment to remember with pride those who have served in the armed forces of this nation. Whether they acted in war or peace, whether they served on the front line in combat or kept in supply data on a rear echelon computer, they all stood up to the same oath. Veterans Day is for the living. If you allowed it to pass, take a moment now to honor a veteran. I can think of no better one to start with than the one you see in the mirror each day.

Having said that, my memory goes further back to the first message I sent to all of you in October. In that message, I recall asking you, through your respective state associations, to start compiling lists of those elected officials with whom you or other Guard members have personal acquaintance. Now the elections are over. The winds of change are blowing in a new direction.

Newly elected representatives will be traveling to our nation's and our states' capitol. While it may be the first time many of them will assume new responsibilities, it will not be the first time many of them have won an election.

I want to get at this: Most of these new representatives and senators are members of city council, county commissioners, treasurers, district attorneys, and so on. Many of our people who currently serve in the Guard know them then. They know them now. As these newly elected officials take their seats of power, they will be asked to make decisions that will affect the course of this great land. Decisions on our economy, health care, environment, and, of course, defense. In the latter area, it is crucial that we reach out to them NOW, before they go into session, to ensure they are educated about the National Guard.

They need to know not just who we are, but why we are. They need to know how we work, how we train, how we go to war, and how and when we go to the aid of our fellow citizens in times of disaster. The lawmakers need to know what we need to continue the level of combat readiness and citizen service they've come to expect from us. They must be clear on the issues that affect us, and how, ultimately, those issues affect them and their constituents.

We cannot reasonably expect them to support our needs, particularly, if they have no clue as to who we are.

That is why we haven't given up. Soon, I'll be sending a letter to state associations about creating the database I've already discussed. I use the term database because in today's day and age, the use of computers has made detailed tracking of information relative easy. At the core, though, is the basic information we both need. For us to have a reasonable expectation of success, the core information must be tracked. It also must be accessible and shared easily between the state and the national levels.

At the grassroots level, the amount of information will make your job easier, and even more effective. Access will facilitate even more the partnership between the NG and the state association to work together to improve the readiness of the Guard. This is the direction in which we need to go. We have a ways to go.

In the meantime, executive directors and state presidents, take a tip, DON'T WAIT GET ON IT!

What has happened this past November is the result of political grass-roots work based in every voting precinct in this country. Turnout for this election was historic. The message is clear, Americans want a representative form of government that reflects the will of the people. The message is that government exists only as long as the people support it.

Now it is our turn to grasp the moment. I urge you to act and set action. By working through the elected representatives, we can effect local changes that will result in helping to shape the future roles and missions of the Guard in both the near and the long term.

We can make this happen on a local level. As I promised last October, I will do my part. Now, I count on you to do yours.

Good luck!