WHY SHOULD I PAY MY NGAUS DUES?

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:

- The National Guard was formally and legally designated as the militia as mandated in the Militia Clause of the Constitution. This was seen as something 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—luck for us more than him—MG Ellard A. Walsh, the NGAUS president during that era, had been president of the Army for medical reasons shortly after he was mobilized as commander of the 54th 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 technic officer 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 the survivor of a Guardman who dies, 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 Guardman while on duty. You can not be sued individually, in other words.

Recruiting 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 reenlistment and reenlistment bonuses enacted in those years. In 1984, we were one of the principal voices in getting 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.

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.