Be a Part of the National Guard's Future

There was no way any of us could have known where our future would lead that day. For me, however, it didn’t matter. Something in his words suddenly made membership in the Association perfectly logical to me. I renewed immediately and, eventually, became a life member.

Now, as I look over the shoulders of those who are hanging up their uniforms, see faces—youthful faces—dedicated and eager to serve. I do not, however, see them as supporting or being active in their state associations. Instead, I hear the versions of the old question: "Why should I support this organization?" What have we done for you lately? The answer today is still as simple as it was back then. Those of you who are just starting your careers in the National Guard follow in our footsteps. The question was never whether your Association had done or was doing for you. Your drill pay, benefits and the equipment you work with today are part of a long line of examples that are the answers.

The question, instead, is: Where is the National Guard going in the future that will be a part of your life? How much of a role will you play in shaping the direction it takes? Do you want some control over our destiny, or do you want to have some positive impact upon your organization and the people in the National Guard, look no further than your state and national association.

I'm not saying you will take the wheel at the top. Learning the process of change is a political and emotional process that takes time. You have to learn more about the issues and take responsibility for making and preparing resolutions. You'll also have to develop your ability to analyze and consider new concepts, as well as to defend them in public debate. It is the citizen part of the organization. And that, in my opinion, is one of the best parts of being a member of the National Guard. That's why I urge all of you—senior officers, captains and crew members—to build the future together, and to take the lead in the decades to come.

Generations of great men and women have come since the late 1860s. We are all part of the National Guard Association. Therefore, I urge you to come now and stand on top of those who have just joined the Conference and be a part of the priorities that the National Guard has set for the future. Be a part of the program. Be a part of the National Guard Association. Be a part of the future.