

ROA secures significant successes in annual defense bill

WASHINGTON, D.C., UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, December 19, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Last week, the U.S. House and Senate both passed H.R.2670, the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2024.



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ROA executive director, Maj. Gen. (Ret.) Jeffrey Phillips, U.S. Army

The NDAA enables the Department of Defense and the reserve components to execute the National Defense Strategy by authorizing personnel benefits, weapons systems, and other defense-related programs.

Despite constituting close to 50 percent of the Total Force, Reserve and National Guard priorities have often fallen below that of the active force. As the only national military organization that solely and exclusively supports the Reserve and National Guard, the Reserve Organization of America fights to right this wrong through its advocacy.

In the FY 2024 NDAA cycle, ROA’s advocacy yielded many

successes, including:

- 1) Extending TRICARE Reserve Select coverage for survivors of reserve component service members from six months to three years.
- 2) Increasing special and incentive pays to that of the active component.
- 3) Providing full parental leave parity by giving reserve component parents adopting a child or accepting the placement of a child for long-term foster care 12 weeks of leave.
- 4) Funding the National Guard and Reserve Equipment Account at approximately \$1,000,000,000.
- 5) Increasing the accession bonus for Reserve and National Guard nurses from \$20,000 to \$40,000.
- 6) Delivering dual basic allowance for housing for single reserve component service members on active duty for training from 140 days to fewer than 365.

However, ROA’s leading NDAA priority, no-cost dental care through the TRICARE Dental program, was not included.

“ROA was disappointed at congressional opposition to providing members of the Reserve and National Guard with the dental care that enhances military readiness,” said its executive director, retired Army Maj. Gen. Jeffrey E. Phillips. “Access to affordable dental care remains an issue for reserve component service members. ROA will continue to fight for affordable dental care and sustained Total Force medical readiness until the job is finished.”

According to the FY 2024 NDAA conference report, the “importance” of this issue was “recognized” because DoD contracted a federally funded study on the feasibility and cost of this proposal. However, neither yet another study nor its findings will help Reserve and National Guard service members unable to afford dental care and arriving at the mobilization station unfit for service.

“What will solve this problem is action,” Phillips said. “No more studies. No more delays. Congress and the nation expect their military – all of it – to be ready to fight. Dental care is health care; it affects military readiness, and it must be made fully available to those in the reserve components expected to ‘fight tonight’.”

The FY 2024 NDAA also included a new personnel management model for the nascent Space Force. ROA learned late last year of the new concept that could potentially eliminate the “active versus reserve paradigm” which has impeded Total Force integration for nearly a century.

The concept is an integration of the components into one component – the Space Component. The intent is to “maximize flexibilities” in force development, personnel management, and leadership opportunities for the component.

This would include a single promotion process for all personnel and a single authorization and appropriation to eliminate the tribal rivalry and perennial competition for limited resources and provide sound options for prioritization of mission-requirements.

Being the first new military service in more than seventy years, this model seeks to address questions regarding what the Space Force should look like, as well as the continuum of conflict in the space domain.

The implementation of this proposal, which of course will not be done without difficulty and challenge, would nonetheless be history in the making.

ROA looks forward to working with Air and Space Force leadership in the historically significant effort to shape the use of the reserve components within the Space Force. While formally supportive of the more conventional approach of a reserve component or components within the Space Force, ROA takes great interest in the unprecedented and innovative approach to Space Force staffing found in this NDAA.

ROA thanks the Congress, the president, and his military leadership; we now direct our focus on

the FY 25 NDAA cycle and meaningful national security readiness advocacy campaigns for the second session of the 118th Congress.

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