STATE OF CALIFORNIA Edmund G. Brown Jr., Governor

MILITARY DEPARTMENT
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State of California Little Hoover Commission
925 L Street, Suite 805
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Mr. Stuart Drown:

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in this important effort to better understand the experiences and needs of California's veterans. Below is my written testimony for the hearing scheduled for January 22, 2013. My comments are submitted in response to questions posed by the commission in your 18 December 2012 letter.

How have veterans' needs emerged and evolved in recent years?

Ten-plus years at war have created a new generation of combat veterans, with unique attributes and challenges that reflect how modern wars are fought, the economic downturn, and generational differences from Vietnam era veterans.

Among this large new generation of veterans, those serving in the National Guard and Reserves have experience the greatest evolutionary shift. This is due to the rapid shift of the Guard and Reserves from the nation's strategic reserve to an operational force following the attacks on 9-11-01.

The National Guard and Reserves embraced this new status as an operational force and fought shoulder to shoulder with our active duty counterparts in a manner that exceeded all expectations. At one point during the height of the Iraqi war, the National Guard and Reserves comprised more than 50% of the combat power deployed in theater. In support of this effort, the California National Guard, the largest in the nation, has deployed over 38,000 Servicemembers since 9/11/2001. This sustained operational tempo created challenges for the California National Guard that are unique to the contemporary National Guard or Reserve veteran.

An active duty Servicemember who returns from deployment overseas returns to a large military base that is the size of a small city, with all the services and support structure he/she needs to successfully reintegrate into life at home. These services include housing, a medical center, military schools for his/her children, behavioral health services, marriage councilors and

chaplains, recreation benefits, military shopping centers, etc. Most importantly, the Servicemember returns to their unit, where their chain of command is directly responsible for their personal well-being and that of their family.

Many active duty veterans that choose to leave the armed services have several months or years to resolve medical and behavioral issues on base before they separate from the military. Many who retire remain near a military base where many of the services and support structures they need are readily available.

The experience for a member of the California National Guard is very different. Unlike our active duty counterparts who don't become veterans until they are discharged from the Armed Forces, Soldiers and Airmen in our ranks who have deployed to war and returned to their civilian lives have full veteran status, but remain in the military. We call them "serving veterans". They face many of the same challenges that an active duty veteran faces, while still maintain their requirement to be physically and mentally ready for the next deployment.

A Solder or Airman in the Cal Guard will leave active duty following a deployment after out processing at a de-mobilization platform, typically a Reserve or National Guard base in the middle of the country. During this process they are screened for physical or mental health issues. If an issue is discovered, the Servicemember is held at the base or transferred to a medical holding unit hundreds of miles away from home for treatment before being released from active duty and sent home. As a result, many Servicemembers do not report physical or behavioral problems so they can return home to their families as soon as possible. Once home, they are often hundreds of miles from a U.S. Dept. of Veterans Affairs Medical Facility or a military base. There is often no support network, other than their chain of command that will only see them only two days per month. The post-deployment medical screening process, though effective, can only catalogue issues that are self-reported.

The serving veterans in our ranks are our responsibility. Their health and well being is critical to the readiness of the California National Guard, and allows us to respond to state emergencies more effectively than any other National Guard in the country.

What are the most common needs that you see among veterans who are members of the California National Guard? What are the most serious?

The most pressing needs among our serving veterans include employment assistance, reintegration training, and behavioral health support. The most serious of these is behavioral health support, because it is the last line of defense against suicide.

How have you structured your programs to meet these demands?

There is no job more important than supporting our personnel. They have met every challenge placed before them and it is up to us as a department, state and nation to see to it that their needs are met. This is true for all of our Servicemembers, but is especially true for those returning from combat that have experienced both the immeasurable benefit of having met and overcome conflict, as well as the challenges of reintegrating back into civilian life. In this context we continue to learn and adapt to the dynamic needs within our force in the areas of reintegration and family care, behavioral health, and unemployment. In addition we recognize the individual needs of our members and understand that they may face unique challenges based on their gender, cultural background, and economic circumstances. With the assistance of the legislature we have expanded our behavioral health outreach capability and we have initiated an effort to reduce unemployment and underemployment within our force.

Reintegration

In 2008 Congress mandated that each National Guard unit provide reintegration services for the Guard member and his or her family upon returning from and prior to a deployment. While federal funding levels have been inconsistent, each Guard unit has developed a plan to fully implement the *Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program (YRRP)* at the unit level.

Since the beginning of the current conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq the military community has made great strides towards meeting the needs of our deployed Soldiers, Airmen and their families. As a result, I have confidence in our current reintegration efforts; and while there is still more to be done, we have established effective programs that provide measurable results.

The YRRP continues to provide service members access to a number of resources. The following agencies participate and support YRRP events:
Work for Warriors, Army One Source, Military One Source, CNG State Military Reserve Behavioral Health Office, CNG Military Department Mental Health Office, Employer Support of the Guard/Reserve, Military Family Life Consultants, USAA, Veterans Affairs, Education Service Office's approved colleges/universities, Tri-Care, Chaplain, American Red Cross, Military Attorneys, Family Readiness Support Assistants, Family Readiness Coordinators, Employment Development Department, Transition Assistance, Immigration Support (ICE), Small Business Administration, Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (SAPR), Joint Service Support, Financial workshops, Marriage Enrichment workshops, CNG Child and Youth Program, Master Resiliency Trainers.

The California National Guard offers these resources to all Soldiers and Airmen, along with the many benefits inherent to being a Guard service member. Other benefits include the GI Bill, Federal and State Tuition Assistance, employment assistance, transitional medical benefits for service members returning from mobilization, and mental health counseling referrals.

Soldiers and their families that have attended Yellow Ribbon events have given overwhelmingly positive feedback about the program. I will continue to mandate participation in these programs by our returning CNG veterans and ensure that we provide these men and women with an effective and worthwhile reintegration experience.

We have several important enhancements planned that will dramatically improve the effectiveness of the Yellow Ribbon program.

See attached information paper on the Yellow Ribbon program.

Behavioral Health Outreach Liaison Program

Proposition 63 funding has dramatically improved access to mental health care for Soldiers and Airmen of the California National Guard. It has enabled the California National Guard to implement a behavioral health program that is recognized as the best in the nation. Commonly referred to as "The California Model," our approach to delivering behavioral health services is being replicated by state National Guards across the country.

The Military Department's Behavioral Health Outreach Liaison (BHL) program was established in 2009 with the assistance of the leadership of the California Legislature. Using Proposition 63 funds, this program provides two licensed therapists who are assigned to Northern and Southern California regions, and one agency coordinator.

Our BHL program is a comprehensive effort that supports the behavioral health needs of our Guard members. Our BHL program has proven outreach capability, embedded clinicians, peer-to-peer training and an array of supporting programs. Continued deployments and the recognized long-term effects of past missions will require ongoing resources to care for Guard members; some effects are readily apparent, while others will be revealed as time passes.
As our Guard members require specific attention from trained and credentialed professionals, we carefully select academic and community-based organizations to partner with. As such, we have partnered with the University of Southern California (USC) and the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) to collaborate on programs for California National Guard members. Specifically, with USC's School of Social Work, an amazing network of services is now available, such as decompression, resiliency training, and employment services. At UCLA, in collaboration with the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health, we have helped expand the Navy-sponsored *Family FOCUS Program* to include CNG members and their families. Additionally, the Department led an initiative with the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research to bring empirical science to validate our programs. As a result, the Institute has completed pre-deployment personnel surveys of 12 CNG military units that deployed in 2011 and will track these Soldiers until 90 days after they return home. Our program staff is also working with the University of California at San Diego and the United States Veterans Administration on new Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder/Traumatic Brain Injury diagnostic tools.

The BHL Program also receives invaluable help through many state volunteers who dedicate their time to assist our state's combat veterans. Without this network of volunteers, our BHL teams could not help nearly as many National Guard members in need.

See attached information paper on the California National Guard Behavioral Health Outreach Liaison Program

Work for Warriors

Unemployment and underemployment are among the most critical issues facing our Servicemembers and their families. Personnel returning from deployments face a particularly high unemployment rate. The California National Guard was the first in the nation to implement a National Guard Employment Initiative, *Work for Warriors (WFW)*. The California National Guard Employment Initiative aggressively addresses unemployment in our ranks. We are leveraging existing resources in the public and private sectors and utilizing the military chain of command to link returning Soldiers and Airmen to employers who have stepped forward and expressed a desire to hire serving veterans. This pilot program, established with support from the Assembly Speaker's Office, has already gone a long way toward significantly reducing the rate of unemployment within the California Guard.

See attached information paper on the Work for Warriors program.

Transferability Initiative

The Governor's Interagency Council on Veterans Employment Working Group has identified the transferability of military skills and training to state licenses and certifications as a top priority and designated a brand new working group within the Interagency Council on Veterans Employment Committee. The working group is chaired by Jeff Mason of the Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA); and includes the Military Department and members of the legislature among its members.

The Military Department has had success working with boards, bureaus, and agencies on the transferability initiative, demonstrating that state agencies can work together to create efficiencies and streamline procedures to help put veterans to work in California.
To date the Military Department has met with the DCA, the Department of Public Health (DPH), the Peace Officers Standards and Training (POST) Council, the Department of Motor Vehicles, and others to formalize procedures that recognize military training and experience for professional licenses.

As a result, the Contractors State License Board has agreed to accept service in the military with the rank of E-4 or higher in a construction-specific military specialty as equivalent to a civilian journeyman. We are also working with POST to give graduates

of the Military Police Academy the same credit in California as police officers that graduate from law enforcement academies in other States. Additionally, we are meeting with the Department of Motor Vehicles to design the process to waive the driver's testing requirement for military truck drivers going for a California commercial driver's license. These new programs represent significant new benefits for our service members and veterans from the other branches of the armed forces.

See attached information paper on the Military Skills and Education Transferability program.

What effects have you seen on these Soldiers as a result of the programs?

Reintegration

We measure success for our reintegration program in terms of the delivery of services to our personnel and their families as well as through continuing internal assessments of our programs. In 2011 the Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program (YRRP) conducted 68 separate events, with a combined total of 19,554 attendees, of which 7,743 were Soldiers. Each event included subject matter experts addressing a wide variety of topics, such as employment support, counseling, child and youth programs, Tri-Care Medical/Dental benefits, and Resiliency.

Work for Warriors

The WFW program has shown to be very effective in placing unemployed CNG members. The program is remarkably cost effective compared to federal standards and represents significant savings to the government when factoring in unemployment compensation costs. Successful federal veterans' employment initiatives typically have a total cost of over $10,000 per veteran placed. The Department's WFW program has a total cost of $1,500 per placement.

The following WFW program information incorporates data from the program's inception on March 29, 2012 through the 2012 calendar year:

- Number of Servicemembers Directly Asking for Employment Support: 1,912
- Number of Resumes Completed: 739
- Number of Resumes Submitted for Interviews: 640
- Number of Servicemembers Placed into Jobs: 322
- Number of Companies Providing Jobs to Fill: 84

The WFW program has helped hundreds of California's Guard members find employment so they can support their families and contribute to their communities.

Behavioral Health Outreach Liaison Program

The success of the Behavioral Health Outreach Liaison (BHL) Program can be measured by the number of Servicemembers assisted, outreach event participation, as well as leadership and unit response reported regularly to BHL program staff. As required, the baseline BHL program information is as follows and captures data from the 2011 calendar year:

- Number of Direct Contacts with Servicemembers: 6,210
- Number of Direct Referrals to County Mental Health Departments: 868
- Number and Type of Trainings Provided to County Mental Health Departments:
    - Conducted Outreach Efforts: 53 Counties
    - Total of Attendees at Trainings/Outreach Events: 1,547

How could the state better assist local agencies in serving veterans?

Continued funding for our National Guard employment program would maintain the momentum we've achieved and continue to provide the state with an extremely cost effective way to put veterans back to work.

Additional funding for our Behavioral Health Program would increase the number of Behavioral Health Liaisons, increasing their responsiveness by reducing the size of the service area they cover. We also hope that United Healthcare, the new TRICARE military health insurance administrator, will continue to support the National Guard Embedded Mental Health Professional Program. Under the current TRICARE administrator, TRIWEST, this program provides 22 behavior health professional to the California National Guard. These clinicians are then embedded in a National Guard unit that is preparing to deploy. The embedded clinician does not deploy with the unit, but stays with the unity throughout the deployment and redeployment cycles, getting to know each of the unit members personally. The TRIWEST pilot program, done at no cost to the state or federal government, as proven to be extremely effective. The new provider, United Healthcare has not yet announced whether they will continue to support this important preventive health program.

What ideas do you have for improving coordination among agencies, organizations and levels of government?

The Governor's Interagency Council on Veterans (ICV) is an ideal concept for using inter-governmental coordination to create solutions for veterans. Doing whatever is necessary to make the ICV as effective as possible will pay dividends for California's veterans.

MATTHEW P. BEEVERS
Brigadier General
Deputy Adjutant General

Enclosures:
Behavioral Health Liaison Program Information Paper
Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program Information
Work for Warriors Information Paper
Transferability Initiative Information Paper