



STATE OF VERMONT
OFFICE OF THE ADJUTANT GENERAL
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TO: Senator Jane Kitchel
Chair, Senate Appropriations Committee
State of Vermont

Date: 3 April 2017

Subject: Request for Reconsideration of Governor Scott's Military Education Budget Proposal

In reviewing the Draft House Budget Bill (H.518), I've notice that the additional \$500,000 of Next Generation Funds to enhance the National Guard Education Assistance Program (NGEAP) that was proposed by Governor Scott is not part of the recommended budget. Request favorable consideration by the Senate to include the \$500,000 in Next Generation funds for the Military Department.

Background:

- Governor Scott, during his budget address recommended that \$500,000 in Next Generation funds be added to the \$250,000 already established for the NGEAP. The current program receives \$100,000 in grant funds and \$150,00 in Next Generation funds.
- House Bill H.72 was introduced during this legislative session that recommended that NGEAP be modified to provide 100% tuition waiver to state universities and colleges as an entitlement for being a member of the Vermont National Guard. The bill didn't gain a favorable recommendation by the House General, Housing and Military Affairs Committee, primarily based on concern around limiting the tuition waivers to state universities and colleges only.
- Without Tuition Waivers, the Vermont National Guard is at a distinct disadvantage in regards to Recruiting and Retention since all the surrounding states offer 100% tuition waiver to their state institutions. Therefore, Vermont High School aged students are compelled to join the National Guard in those states and subsequently receive full tuition waiver to attend college.
- The current level of funding (\$250,000) for NGEAP only affords the Vermont National Guard to award \$4000-\$6000 per academic year to each eligible applicant and the amount varies each year based on the level of funding and the number of applicants.

Request:

Please reconsider adding back the \$500,000 increase to NGEAP for the FY2108 budget. Even though 100% tuition waiver wasn't adopted as an entitlement during this legislative session, the increased funding would enhance the current program to provide significantly more scholarship funds to Vermont National Guard members.

- H.518 currently reads: "Sec. E.215 Military – Administration (a) The amount of \$250,000 shall be disbursed to the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation for the

National Guard Educational Assistance Program established in 16 V.S.A. 2856. Of this amount, \$100,000 shall be general funds from this appropriation, and \$150,000 shall be Next Generation special funds, as appropriated in Sec. B.1100(a)(3)(B) of this act.”

- H.518 changed to read: “Sec. E.215 Military – Administration (a) The amount of \$750,000 shall be disbursed to the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation for the National Guard Educational Assistance Program established in 16 V.S.A. 2856. Of this amount, \$100,000 shall be general funds from this appropriation, and \$650,000 shall be Next Generation special funds, as appropriated in Sec. B.1100(a)(3)(B) of this act.”

Justification:

This program is critical to the education, development and sustainment of Vermont National Guard Soldiers and Airmen. For the last five academic school years, there have been 60+ Soldiers and Airmen participating in the National Guard Educational Assistance Program with a high of 78 participants for the 2016-2017 academic year. The need outpaces the available resources with the program only being able to award scholarships of \$4000-\$6000 per applicant for the 2016-2017 academic year. Additionally, the Vermont National Guard continues to be challenged with recruiting high school graduating seniors as well as retaining our young soldiers and airmen who are looking to better themselves through advance education, when they can join one of our neighboring states and receive more assistance.

The combination of General Funds and Next Generation Funds spent educating our soldiers and airmen fulfills the intent of the Next Generation legislative language. The participating soldiers and airmen are staying in Vermont, gaining more economic opportunities and giving back to their Communities, State and Nation. Absent a State University and Colleges Tuition Waiver option for Vermont National Guard Soldiers and Airmen, this program is a critical recruiting and retention tool.

Respectfully Submitted,


Steven A. Cray, Major General
The Adjutant General