



EANGUS TriCare for all Reservists

EANGUS urges the 118th Congress to legislate health care for all Reserve and National Guard Servicemembers. This would bridge the readiness and retention issues the branches currently have.

EANGUS has supported extending TRICARE Reserve Select to military technicians as a recruiting tool for the military. Still, healthcare coverage is one of the top issues with readiness and deployability. We realize the biggest hurdle is the offset of appropriations because DoD has not funded this option, but we believe that the benefit far exceeds the expense. EANGUS supported H.R. 3512 and S. 5142, "Healthcare for Our Troops," during the 117th Congress. These bills would have provided the necessary healthcare our servicemembers need.

TRS came about to increase R.C. servicemembers' readiness during the early years of the 9/11 activations and give an affordable healthcare option for servicemembers. Any changes to health care should be approached as a readiness issue for the service member and benefit the family. We also have several other concerns about health care for the R.C.:

- Military health care records are scattered over several locations (duty station, TDY locations, civilian providers), making it impossible to monitor deployable standards.
- Difficulty getting annual physicals during drill weekends due to insufficient manning or personnel.
- Loss of health care coverage when an individual's duty status and orders change, triggering a different TRICARE program.
- Length of time to complete medical evaluation boards.
- Difficulty processing LODs due to the complexity of the process and review levels required and proving when the injury occurred.
- The inability to provide immediate care to injuries due to processing time causes more extended periods of non-deployability.
- Servicemembers' inability to receive care through the V.A. This process is prolonged due to a lack of attention during injuries.

We believe a more permanent fix would be to cover every participating R.C. member under a TRICARE Prime Remote Like coverage for the readiness aspect. This would consolidate the health care records into one program and increase the ability to monitor deployable standards. Any annual physicals, shots, etc., would not have to be crammed into a drill weekend. This would free up valuable training time.



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For the benefit side of health care, the R.C. member would pay for family members when off-orders. For example, when the R.C. is on orders, they would be given a health care allowance to pay for family member coverage. Covering the health care fees ensures the family member's status would not change regardless of the R.C. members' duty status; thus, they would not be dropped or encounter delays from TRS to TRICARE Prime.

If we agree that maintaining deployable status requires a commitment to healthcare coverage and promoting wellness, we must agree that this is the way forward. We already know that the eligible recruiting pool is getting smaller, so it only makes sense to increase the eligible population's desire to serve in the military, supporting the training investment and experience of currently serving members by providing a single healthcare option similar to TRICARE Prime for the R.C. servicemember. This is the only way to ensure readiness and eliminate a multitiered healthcare program's complications.

Concerning the proportion of youth ineligible to serve, we should not lose sight that, although the overall youth population is large, only a relatively small balance of American youth is qualified to enlist. Over one-third of youth (35 percent) have a medical disqualification, with obesity a significant contributing factor. Drug or alcohol abuse removes 18 percent. Another 23 percent do not meet our standards for criminal misbehavior, low aptitude scores, or having more dependents than can be accommodated in the early career. This leaves only 25 percent that is eligible to serve. If we subtract the estimated 10 percent who are qualified but attending college, we are left with only 15 percent of the youth population suitable and available to serve.

For more information regarding TriCare for Reserve Component or any other National Guard issues, please do not hesitate to contact Kevin Hollinger at kevin@eangus.org or contact him direct at (202) 670-1826