

ENLISTED ASSOCIATION NATIONAL GUARD OF ARIZONA STATE CONFERENCE MINUTES

April 20, 2024

Meeting Conducted at the Casino Del Sol, Tucson, AZ

CALL TO ORDER – President Thompson called the 20 April 2024 meeting to order at 1235

ROLL CALL

President Thompson welcomed and recognized the State's Senior Leaders, VIPs, and Past Presidents, and Executive Council members

- Arizona's Senior Leaders
 - The Adjutant General, Major General Kerry Muehlenbeck
 - Command Sergeant Major Aaron Bulow, Senior Enlisted Leader, Arizona National Guard
 - State Command Chief Master Sergeant Rachel Carson, Arizona Air National Guard
 - State Command Sergeant Major Graydon Griffin, State Command Sergeant Major, Arizona Army National Guard
- Arizona Enlisted Association Executive Council
 - Vice President Air – MSgt (Ret) Ashley Outland
 - Vice President Army - CSM Shane Arnold
 - VP Junior Enlisted – SFC Adrian Borunda
 - Secretary - MSgt Laryssa Morales
 - Treasurer – CMSgt Raul Verdugo
 - Army Director – SFC Christopher Callahan
 - Air Director – SMSgt Candy Steptore
 - Retiree Director – CSM (Ret) Dave Austin
 - Not present – At large Director - CMSgt Celia Alosi

GUEST SPEAKERS

State Command Senior Enlisted Adviosr, CSM Aaron Buelow

CSM Buelow focused on finding other strategies to increase membership. A recent 5K event in March, suggested by CSM Griffin, attracted around 60 participants and resulted in 15 new memberships. Despite being a last-minute event, it received strong support from officers and state leaders, leading to discussions about holding quarterly events to promote the enlisted association rather than relying solely on the annual conference.

CSM Buelow also shared a personal update. Having served in his position for over two years, he was recently contacted by NGB with an opportunity he chose to accept. Starting in July, he will be on Title 10 orders in Germany, focusing on building partner capacity in Europe, including working with 32 NATO countries and 27 state partnership programs as part of his new role.

State Command CMSgt Rachael Carson

CCMSgt Carson stressed the importance of refocusing efforts to better support service members. While she supports quarterly engagements to raise awareness and strengthen the force, she emphasized two key priorities: increasing awareness and engagement was one of them. Many benefits, such as education assistance, have been secured through legislation but are underutilized. Promoting these through word-of-mouth can help service members understand the value of EANGUS and take full advantage of what's available. The second item was addressing current challenges. She suggested that the association focus on the immediate issues service members face—such as manpower cuts, new deployments, and resource constraints—rather than only on long-term legislative benefits. She recommended working with state senators to advocate for timely, impactful solutions.

She acknowledged that the exact solutions are unclear but encouraged the association to listen to its members and explore new ways to provide support. She stressed the importance of communicating EANGUS' past accomplishments so that members understand its role and future potential. Ultimately, she called for a shift in strategy, balancing legislative efforts with more immediate, practical support that aligns with the evolving needs of today's service members.

State CSM Graydon Griffin

CSM Griffin, now a year into his role, emphasized the need for action and meaningful engagement within organizations. He supports the quarterly meeting format and is eager to contribute to modernization efforts. His two main focus areas are talent management. This includes prioritizing career development, MOS alignment, and training management in all professional development settings. The second focus area is people development. This entails preparing future leaders and ensuring ready replacements, recognizing that leadership transitions can happen unexpectedly. He highlighted the importance of comprehensive training and education, stressing that well-trained, cohesive units are more critical than simply acquiring new technology. Using a pre-WWII analogy, he noted that properly trained teams can easily adapt to advanced tools, reinforcing his philosophy of building strong teams first and technology comes second.

REPORTS

President's Report

President Mary Thompson provided an overview of the organization's progress over the past year, emphasizing the importance of membership growth and its impact on influence at the national level. Membership numbers have steadily increased from the 300s to 492, nearing the goal of 500 members, which would secure an additional delegate vote at the National Conference. Efforts to boost membership include organizing a 5K, website engagement, face-to-face outreach, briefings, and membership drives. Some of the events that we've supported include Guard Recruiters Brief, Guard Your Future, Battle Hand-Offs, Newcomer's Briefs, The Muster, TAG Match, end of year membership drives, First Sergeant's Council, Top 3, and E-9 Summit. If any unit would like to have a special brief, please let them know we're happy to do it. She highlighted the organization's legislative efforts and achievements, including advocating for policies like DD 214-1 for reserve retirees, parental leave improvements, and other military benefits. President Thompson stressed the need for stronger advocacy at both state and national

levels and encouraged members to actively engage in legislative processes and take part in calls to action to help influence legislation that impacts the Guard. If any Guardsman has an idea for change, President Thompson reminded everyone that we use the Resolution process to advance those ideas. She emphasized that legislation is the foundation of our association and to remember the national office is available if we need any assistance.

President Thompson highlighted the ongoing challenge of retaining members beyond the free one-year membership. She emphasized the need to demonstrate the value of the association through initiatives like scholarships and professional development. Two scholarships were recently awarded, one funded by USAA and the other by private donations. To strengthen membership, efforts must focus not only on recruiting new members but also on re-engaging those with lapsed or soon-to-expire memberships. She encouraged all members to become advocates for change, stressing that active participation leads to stronger representation. The goal is for every member to understand the association's mission and help communicate it throughout all levels of the organization

President Thompson's final message was to encourage everyone to get stay engaged and get involved. If members aren't actively participating in shaping policies for the Guard, then it will be done for us, and it may not be favorable or what we want. Another area we need to concentrate on is changing perceptions and increasing awareness of the association's impact. She said don't be afraid to ask co-workers if they know about the association and what it has done for them. She also encouraged idea-sharing for policy changes and working toward legislative success. Every member has a role in strengthening the association's impact.

The report was submitted as informational and requested to be filed without objection.

The Adjutant General, MG Kerry Muehlenbeck

MG Muehlenbeck shared a personal story about initially resisting professional associations, both in Active Duty and later in the Guard. Feeling disconnected, she realized she needed to be part of the conversation and joined a professional association to grow both personally and professionally. Her message: everyone contributes differently—some lead, some participate, and some support financially. While she can't advocate like NGAUS, her membership helps empower those who do. She emphasized the power of numbers, noting at the last national convention how membership size influenced our voice—and that more participation is still needed.

MG Muehlenbeck emphasized that spreading the word matters and reminded us that it's not just about service; it's self-serving too. She stressed that some of the best parts of being part of an association is that it builds your resume, connects you with leadership, and opens opportunities like getting to meet and hear from the senior leaders in your organization.

MG Muehlenbeck addressed the challenges faced with ADOT's rule changes regarding license plates. While frustrated with the changes, she assured us that there is progress. There was discussion from the audience regarding the lack of Guard representation in state legislative efforts with a comment made that they rarely see Guard officials at veteran legislative meetings. MG Muehlenbeck acknowledged the gap and asked for event schedules to improve coordination

and highlighted that while individual citizens and citizen soldiers can voice their opinions on legislative matters, sometimes it can get more attention if the concern comes from a collective, like the association.

Approval of 2024 Minutes

- Secretary Morales: began reading the minutes of the 20 May 2023 conference. VP Air Ashley Outland made a motion to dispense the reading of the minutes and approve them as written. Treasurer Verdugo seconded and the minutes were approved as written.

Treasurer's Report

Copies of the Treasurer's report were provided to all attendees. Treasurer Verdugo reported on the current account balances. If anybody needs detailed information about the treasurer's report, please contact either Treasurer Verdugo or President Thomspen. Treasurer Verdugo moved for acceptance of the report. The report has been accepted as presented.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

There is no unfinished business that carried over from 2023 Conference.

NEW BUSINESS

EANGUS Scholarships: President Thomspen emphasized that scholarships are just one of many ways they support soldiers, airmen, their families, and retirees. She highlighted the positive impact of these scholarships and expressed pride in assisting at both state and national levels. She congratulated the scholarship recipients Ms. Hannah Hudgins and Ms. Karla Soto-Perez and thanked USAA for their continued support.

EANGUS UPDATE:

Karen Craig provided updates on key national and legislative matters. She highlighted preparations for the upcoming National Conference in Detroit and encouraged participation, emphasizing the valuable professional development opportunities available, especially for E-6 and below.

On the legislative front, she discussed efforts to expedite TRICARE Reserve Select eligibility for technicians, currently set to take effect in 2030, with active bills in both the House and Senate. She urged members to support the call to action. Additionally, she spoke about the push for no-cost TRICARE for all service members, a high-priority initiative despite its significant cost. Other legislative efforts include the GI Bill Parity Act, which seeks to count all uniformed service days toward benefits, and the development of a National Guard-specific Transition Assistance Program. She also mentioned initiatives to expand voting rights for service members, modify VA loan and veterans' hiring requirements, and address funding concerns regarding credentialing and tuition assistance programs.

Karen Craig also discussed the National Guard Relief Foundation (also known as We Care for America), which provides emergency financial assistance to National Guard members including officers, retirees, and currently serving members of any rank. You don't have to be a member of

EANGA to receive that help or put in the application for grants and loans. She stressed the importance of this resource and its goal to be there for the National Guard members in their time of need. She also noted the Arizona Reserve Component Emergency Relief Fund as a separate entity which provides assistance to both reservists and National Guard members in Arizona. She encouraged members to do a Google search for We Care for America, visit the EANGUS website, spread awareness of these resources, and to utilize them when needed.

Auxiliary Report:

Auxiliary President Deni Austin introduced herself and gave a brief background of how she became the current Auxiliary President. Through her own experiences of having a spouse in the military, but no real idea of all of the benefits they did or did not have, she became involved with Family Readiness, and it became important to her to educate other spouses about things like Title 10 and Tricare Insurance.

The Auxiliary is in a rebuilding phase, focusing on a fresh start and actively seeking new members. Paper applications are used until an online membership process is developed. EANGUS and EANGA members can join as associate members, while spouses can be annual members, with hopes for expanded eligibility in the future. Serving as a voice for service members and their families, the auxiliary plays a key role in advocacy and support. Looking ahead, the auxiliary remains committed to its mission and continued impact.

GUEST SPEAKER TJ PIERCE: Executive Director for the National Guard Association of Michigan)

TJ stressed the importance of supporting state associations and EANGUS, as legislative advocacy is essential for securing funding and benefits. He outlined details about the upcoming 2024 National Conference in Detroit, Michigan and encouraged maximum attendance. The conference is an opportunity to get the next generation of leaders active, involved, and excited about stepping up and not just becoming members but becoming active with the association.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS AND DELEGATES

President Thompson: President called for elections to fill the open Arizona Executive Board positions and select delegates for the national conference. President Thompson turned the meeting over to Vice President Army - CSM Shane Arnold, who is also serving as the Nominations Committee Chair, to give the report.

CSM Arnold gave the nominations report and provided an overview of the election procedures. He clarified that nominations would be accepted both in advance and from the floor. The positions currently open for election, along with the individual who submitted an advance declaration of candidacy, are as follows:

- Vice President Air
- Vice President Junior listed
- Secretary
- Army Director-Christopher Callahan
- At Large Director

CSM Arnold further explained that two primary delegates and one alternate delegate would be elected to represent Arizona at the national conference. Each nomination must be accompanied by a motion and a second from the floor in order to be considered. It was also noted that only current, dues-paid members of the association are eligible to vote.

President Thompson concluded by stating that this was an informational report and without objection, it would be filed.

ELECTIONS

President Thompson accepted the Nominations Committee report and asked that the record reflect that the gavel is turned over to Vice President Shane Arnold to open the floor for nominations.

Nominations Committee Chair Shaen Arnold briefed the term of office begins immediately upon adjournment of his conference and that officers are elected for a 2-year term unless otherwise noted. Before we move into nominations, just a reminder regarding requirements for the officer positions: some of the positions have a requirement to be a member in good standing and/or to have attended a certain number of EANGA meetings before being nominated. If someone is interested in running but does not meet those time requirements specified in our bylaws, you can still be considered but we'll need a motion to set aside that requirement for those candidates. He asked if there were any questions regarding requirements and responsibilities for the remaining positions that are open for nomination.

CSM Arnold opened the floor for nomination.

- For Vice President Air – Nomination Ashley Outland
- For Vice President Junior listed – Nomination Sgt Adam Kushner
- For Secretary – No nominations
- For Army Director – Self nominated Christopher Callahan
- For At large Director – Nomination Celia Alosi

Chair Arnold moved on to the delegate nominations for the 2024 National Conference in Detroit and briefed what the requirements were to be nominated per Section 10(b) of our bylaws. He then opened the floor for nominations.

- Army Nomination Virgil Macklin
- Air Nomination Candy Steptore
- Army Nomination Christopher Callahan
- Air Nomination Laryssa Morales
- Air Nomination Albert Otero

CSM Arnold asked for a motion to accept the nominations for all officer positions and delegates and to cease nominations. Motion accepted and passed.

VOTING

Ballots were passed out.

CSM Arnold turned the gavel and meeting back over to the President.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF NEW OFFICERS AND DELEGATES:

President Thompson directed that the secretary cast one vote for each of the following offices as follows, since there was only one nominee for each. Each of these candidates is hereby elected by acclamation.

- For Vice President Air – Ashley Outland
- For Vice President Junior listed – Adam Kushner
- For Secretary – No nominations
- For Army Director –Christopher Callahan
- For At Large Director – Nomination Celia Alosi

Elected by ballot vote for the National Conference Delegates was:

- Army Primary: Christopher Callahan
- Army Alternate: Virgil Macklin
- Air Primary: Candy Steptore
- Air Alternate: Laryssa Morales

President Thompson congratulated the newly elected officers and delegates.

CLOSING REMARKS

President Thompson gave her closing remarks and reminded everyone that our monthly meetings are the third Thursday at 1700.

ADJOURNMENT:

President Thompson called for a motion to adjourn. Motion to adjourn made by VP Air Ashley Outland and seconded by VP Army Arnold. The meeting adjourned at 1503.