

Missouri National Guard Needs Your Support

By Major General Stephen Danner (ret)

In Missouri, the Omnibus State Reorganization Act of 1974 transferred the National Guard under the Department of Public Safety to allow for the creation of another department. At that time, the Guard was a reserve force, training one weekend a month and two weeks a year, and a call-out for a state emergency was a rarity. On September 11, 2001, the world changed and so did the operations of the National Guard. Your Missouri National Guard service members have been deployed somewhere in the world, protecting us, every day since our nation was attacked. At the same time, we coordinate and lead missions to support our Missouri citizens. For these reasons, 48 other states have made this necessary change and made their National Guard a department under the Governor.

The personnel, training and equipment in the National Guard come from its federal missions, and over 90% of its funding comes from the federal government. Information regarding troops deployed should not, and sometimes cannot, be shared with anyone other than Missouri's Commander in Chief, the Governor. As a state and federal military force, the Guard has very different priorities and budget needs than the state's Department of Public Safety. For example, last year 238 service members assisted with the ongoing Covid-19 response, 275 service members responded to Louisiana to assist with Hurricane Ida, 630 service members assisted with Missouri's snow and ice state emergency, and the Guard provided final honors at 7,992 funerals and coordinated honors at 8,933 funerals for Missouri's veterans. While these statistics are impressive, they account for less than 10% of the Guard's activity last year. In addition to supporting these state missions, the Missouri National Guard is in Kuwait and other locations around the world supporting the military requirements of the Department of Defense.

I support Amendment 5 because a direct line of communication between the National Guard and the Governor is critical. Whether working in response to a Missouri State of Emergency, when every second counts, or providing essential information about Missouri's role in national security, the Guard's leaders need direct access to the Governor without non-trained, non-chain of command bureaucratic hurdles. The National Guard's military leaders have the unique qualifications and experience to provide the Governor with the best advice regarding our state's military and those missions we train for. These are the reasons that Democrats and Republicans of the General Assembly, in a show of bipartisan support, voted unanimously in the Senate and overwhelmingly in the House to place this amendment on the November ballot.

Please join me and vote YES on Amendment 5.