



Commissioned Officers Association of the U.S. Public Health Service

July 30, 2014

The Hon. James B. Lewis, Treasurer
State of New Mexico
Box 608
Santa Fe, NM 87504-0608

Dear Treasurer Lewis:

I hope you are doing well. It has been several years since I left NAST and took up other employment, but I still look quite fondly on the work we did together on behalf of the State Treasurers. As you can see from the letterhead, I am now in a position where I represent the Surgeon General of the United States and the 6800 commissioned officers who serve under him. These officers comprise one of the seven “uniformed” services of the United States, but they are not a “military” service. You all in New Mexico are probably most familiar with them because they provide healthcare to many of your citizens through the Indian Health Service. Indeed, just last Friday I was at the graduation ceremony of the latest Officer Basic Course, and I noted that many of its graduates were departing for Gallup, NM, that very day.

I am writing to you because it has been brought to my attention that active duty military officers are afforded certain tax benefits by the State of New Mexico that are not given to active duty members of the commissioned corps of the U.S. Public Health Service. These PHS officers may have served in Iraq or Afghanistan, may have deployed in the wake of Katrina or Sandy, or may have deployed to our Southwest border in support of our engagement with the refugee children there. They serve careers that are very much akin to that of members of the military, only without weapons. These officers serve under the direction of the Surgeon General of the United States and wear a uniform that is indistinguishable from that worn by military personnel. They wear military rank and receive military pay and benefits. They are “veterans” under federal law and qualify for both TRICARE and VA benefits. I submit to you that these officers are deserving of the same tax benefits that are afforded members of the military and I hope that you can help the State of New Mexico address this inequity. Please do not hesitate to contact me on this issue.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Jim

Col. James T. Currie, USA (ret.)

Commissioned Officers Association
of the U.S. Public Health Service

Executive Director