



December 16, 2019

The Honorable Matthew P. Donovan
Performing the Duties of
Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness
4000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-4000

Dear Secretary Donovan:

On behalf of the members of the Enlisted Association of the National Guard of the U.S., the Reserve Organization of America, and the National Guard Association of the United States, which solely represent the members the National Guard and Reserve, their families, and veterans of the Reserve Component, we respectfully urge you to direct policy pertaining to when a DD Form 214 is issued to National Guard and Reserve servicemembers. Ensuring they receive a DD Form 214 at milestones throughout their career and upon discharge/ release from active service will enable access for Reserve Component members to crucial programs within the VA and state sponsored programs.

Before introduction of the DD Form 214 in 1950, each branch of the uniformed services had their own document to provide proof of service. These documents had existed since 1941 but proved to be inefficient. A single form was established to ensure veterans received their benefits, but the RC was left out. Today members of the RC still do not receive the same form as their active duty counterparts, which makes access to VA and other state sponsored programs more difficult. A simple solution is to legislate when a Reserve Component servicemember receives a DD Form 214 (see enclosure Proposed Legislation DD Form 214).

It is critical that RC servicemembers receive a DD Form 214 *or the same form as active duty* as a record of service. We have outlined legislation and include an example (please see enclosed documentation) that we believe will ensure our RC servicemembers in distress have the lifesaving access they need to VA and other state sponsored programs.

Although we are happy to see this issue is being considered in the NDAA FY20, we cannot support current language within SEC. 570. RECORDS OF SERVICE FOR RESERVES.

5 (a) ESTABLISHMENT, Not later than September 30, 2020, the Secretary of Defense shall establish and implement a standard record of service for members of the reserve components of the Armed Forces, similar to DD Form 214, that summarizes the record of service of each such member, including dates of active duty service. (b) COORDINATION.—In carrying out this section, the Secretary of Defense shall coordinate with the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to ensure that the record established under this section is acceptable as proof of service for former members of the reserve components of the Armed Forces who are eligible for benefits under laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to receive such benefits.

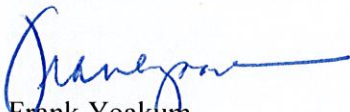
We are specifically concerned that Section 570 does not provide for the DD Form 214 to be issued on a predictable basis which inhibits RC servicemembers from claiming earned benefits and documenting the full scope of their military service. Additionally, when an RC member does receive a DD Form 214 after 90 days of consecutive active service, or any deployment order, it often lacks the entire spectrum of service. This makes it difficult for RC members to show that they have earned various federal and state benefits.

Due to the differing nature of Active and Reserve Component orders, RC servicemembers often do not meet the minimum requirement of 90 consecutive days of active duty to receive a DD Form 214. Complicating the process, National Guard members can transfer between States during their career, but the records don't always follow. Critical service-related documentation often remains in the issuing State. Human error and convoluted personnel systems can cause orders to be incorrectly documented or not documented at all. The current disaggregated personnel system results in many servicemembers receiving only a portion of their benefits.

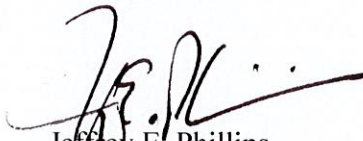
Requiring that a DD Form 214 be issued at discharge/release, re-enlistment/extension, and after professional education will be a good first step toward solving these serious problems.

Thank you in advance for your support on this issue, for further information please contact ROA (202) 479-2200, Susan Lukas slukas@roa.org or Kevin Hollinger khollinger@roa.org; EANGUS (703) 519-3846, Donald Franklin donald@eangus.org or Scott Bousum scott.bousum@eangus.org; NGAUS (202) 682-9358, JC Cardinale JC.Cardinale@ngaus.org or Priya Ghosh Priya.Ghosh@ngaus.org.

Sincerely,



Frank Yoakum
Sergeant Major, U.S. Army (Ret.)
Executive Director, EANGUS



Jeffrey E. Phillips
Maj. Gen., U.S. Army (Ret.)
Executive Director, ROA



J. Roy Robinson
Brig. Gen., U.S. Army (Ret.)
President, NGAUS

ENCLOSURES:

Proposed Legislation DD Form 214
Example of a Revised DD Form 214