



ENLISTED ASSOCIATION OF THE NATIONAL GUARD OF KANSAS 125

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My name is Troy Abel. I am a Chief Master Sergeant in the Kansas National Guard, and I currently serve as the President Elect of the Enlisted Association of the National Guard of Kansas (EANGKS). Our association is made up of, and advocates for, the current and retired enlisted members of the Kansas National Guard. We provide a resource for legislators informing them about issues affecting Kansas Guardsmen, and their families. Our association strives to provide the best possible working environment and benefits for Kansas Guardsmen, to help ensure that we maintain the highest level of mission readiness possible. I am here today to tell you why House Bill 2559 is so important to the Kansas National Guard and its members.

The language drafted into K. S. A. 79-5107 excludes approximately 85% of Kansas National Guardsmen from receiving the two vehicle tax exemption. The statute currently provides the benefit to all Active Duty Military members stationed in Kansas, and Active Guard and Reservists. I would like to explain the three statuses of non-deployed guardsmen in order to explain how the majority of our guardsmen were excluded from receiving the benefit:

1. *Drill Status Guardsmen (DSG)* make up the largest percentage of the National Guard. They are required to serve one weekend a month, and two weeks of Annual Training a year. The rest of the year they are either civilian employees, business owners, homemakers, or often times students.
2. *Federal Technicians* have the same requirements as DSGs. They are also full time Federal Government Employees or “Technicians” much like a postal employee. They are responsible for preparing training of DSGs along with maintaining facilities and equipment for the National Guard during the month. This ensures the guard is in a constant state of mission readiness.
3. *Active Guard and Reservists (AGR)* perform the same function as Federal Technicians. The difference is that they are on a paid status 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and 365 days a year. They receive many of the same benefits as an active duty member such as Housing Allowance, Subsistence Allowance, and paid healthcare. The reason for their different pay status is to increase their flexibility of scheduling, and shorten their time to deploy by reducing status change time constraints. As of January 2018, AGRs made up 12.5% of Kansas National Guard membership.¹

If the intention of this benefit is to reward and strengthen the Kansas National Guard then it falls short on both counts. It creates an inequity of benefits leading to a sense of bewilderment by providing the benefit to only a small percentage of Kansas Guardsmen with no explanation as to why. This has a negative effect on morale, and morale affects retention. Furthermore, this benefit cannot be used as a recruiting incentive due to the fact that nearly all initial recruits into the Kansas National Guard enter as Drill Status Guardsmen and would not qualify for the benefit. The National Guard is suffering from a recruiting and retention crisis nationwide. Within that crisis the Kansas National Guard currently ranks 49th out of the 54 states and territories in end strength. Therefore, benefits like this are crucial as we compete with neighboring states that offer similar benefits to their guardsmen.

¹ Kansas Joint Forces Headquarters Staff, January 2018



The Kansas National Guard is an extension of the United States Army and the United States Air Force. Kansas Guardsmen deploy to the same locations and perform the same missions throughout the world as their Active Duty counterparts, and are a key component of the National Defense Strategy. These same guardsmen also serve the Governor of Kansas which makes them truly unique. They are the soldiers and airmen who respond when the citizens of Kansas are facing times of hardship through natural disasters. They were the people wearing military uniforms at events like the tornado in Greensburg, assisting stranded motorists in last month's snowstorm as part of the Stranded Motorist Assistance Response Teams (SMART), or flying helicopters with Bambi Buckets of water to combat the devastating wildfires here in Kansas over the last few years. As a Kansas taxpayer myself, if I am going to fund a benefit of this nature I want it to go first and foremost to members of the Kansas National Guard.

H.B. 2559 would ensure that ALL Kansas Guardsmen who are currently serving in good standing would receive the two vehicle tax exemption. **Therefore, the Enlisted Association of the National Guard of Kansas fully supports H.B. 2559.**

Thank you very much for the opportunity to address you today. I would also like to thank all of you for your service to our great state, and your support of past and present guardsmen and their families. I will be happy to stand for questions.

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