

Supporting the Employment Rights of Reserve and National Guard Volunteers

Submitted by Metropolitan Washington Council, AFL-CIO

WHEREAS, American trade union movement members have answered the call to defend the United States from the earliest beginnings of the organized labor movement in the United States more than 200 years ago, volunteering to serve in the armed forces, including the U.S. Army, the U.S. Navy, the U.S. Marine Corps, the U.S. Air Force, the Coast Guard and the reserve components of the armed services, including the National Guard of the various states and of U.S. territories, and the District of Columbia; and

WHEREAS, the American trade union movement's responsibility to represent and protect the interests of its members extends beyond the workplace; and

WHEREAS, the tens of thousands of trade union members who serve their country in the reserve components and the National Guard, have, during the present period of international conflict, been ordered to active duty for extended periods of time, causing disruption of careers and long periods of separation from family and friends; and

WHEREAS, the extended and frequent periods on active duty, including in combat zones, have unintended consequences for the courageous members of the reserves and National Guard, and their families, subjecting them to a variety of problems, including but not limited to potential loss of child custody rights; loss of tuition payments for students enrolled in college or other post-secondary education; and loss of jobs rights and employment benefits because of woefully inadequate laws protecting the employment rights of

workers who are members of the reserves and the National Guard; and

WHEREAS, failure to correct these inequities will result in fewer and fewer union members or other citizens volunteering to serve in the reserves or the National Guard; and

WHEREAS, members of the reserve components of the armed forces, including those enrolled in the Army and Air National Guard, have been the victims of administrative delays receiving pay and benefits, including lower levels of medical care because of their reserve or National Guard status, and victims of other difficulties that impact them incidental to their long federal deployments, including bankruptcy and credit problems;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the officers and delegates of the Metropolitan Washington Council of the AFL-CIO, representing over 185 local unions and allied organizations affiliated to the AFL-CIO, calls on all affiliated and allied unions and organizations to demand congressional hearings on the inequalities faced by our reserve and National Guard personnel serving on extended active duty and to demand Congress pass legislation significantly expanding and strengthening the present inadequate laws covering employment rights—including, but not limited to, continuation of medical coverage, vacation accrual, seniority rights, etc.—of members of the reserve components of the armed forces of the United States, including the members of the Army and the Air National Guard; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this proposed legislation contain language specifically addressing any inequalities in medical care that may exist for sick and wounded reservists and National Guard personnel, irrespective of whether said sickness, wound or injury is the result of combat or noncombat causes. The legislation will also provide relief for reservists and National Guard personnel to prevent, during the period of extended federal service, loss of child custody rights while they are serving on active duty as the result of a federal activation order, and that college students and students enrolled in post-secondary education not be forced to forfeit tuition payments for classes, mandatory academic fees or

have their academic records negatively impacted because of their forced withdrawal from an educational institution resulting from federally activation orders; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the proposed legislation contain language authorizing and obligating additional federal funding, as required, and directing the Department of Defense, and in the case of the National Guard, the various state departments of defense, the Veterans Administration and other applicable governmental and nongovernmental entities, to use these funds to realize the intent and stated purpose of the legislation.