



News for Immediate Release

Oct. 4, 2013

Governor Corbett Writes Defense Secretary, PA Adjutant General Addresses Troops Regarding Federal Government Shutdown, Furloughs

Harrisburg – Governor Tom Corbett has written to the U.S. Secretary of Defense expressing his concern on the impacts of the federal budget impasse on Pennsylvania National Guard forces, urging him to put furloughed soldiers and airmen back to work.

More than 1,000 of the Pennsylvania National Guard's military technicians were furloughed because of the federal shutdown, Corbett noted in a letter to Secretary Chuck Hagel on Thursday.

"The work our technicians perform is essential for military readiness to execute the Guard's state and federal missions," Corbett wrote. "I am urging you to take immediate action to put these soldiers and airmen back to work providing vital full-time support for our National Guard."

Maj. Gen. Wesley E. Craig, the adjutant general of Pennsylvania, also sent a memo to Pennsylvania Guard members and federal civilian employees on Thursday, describing what is being done by his office to alleviate mounting hardships caused by Congress' failure to pass a federal budget.

"I am deeply concerned for all of you and your families," Craig wrote in the memo. "The National Guard Associations, the Pennsylvania National Guard Associations, and all 54 Adjutants General are working hard with our elected leaders to mitigate the impact of this shutdown."

Craig wrote that his office will continue to "do everything possible to take care of our own."

Part of Craig's frustration, he wrote, comes from the U.S. Dept. of Justice officials' interpretation of military technicians, which places them in the same category as non-essential civilian personnel rather than members of the military.

When mandatory furloughs began on Tuesday, nearly 1,200 Pennsylvania National Guard members and federal civilian technicians were sent home without word of when they would return.

"Over time, these furloughs will degrade our ability to accomplish our dual mission of national defense and local emergency response, and lives may be placed at risk,"

Craig wrote. "The fiscal impact on our furloughed troops is highly disturbing."

Media contact: Maj. Ed Shank, 717-861-8468

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The text of Corbett's letter is as follows:

The Honorable Chuck Hagel
Secretary of Defense

Dear Secretary Hagel:

As Governor of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, I serve as commander-in-chief of the Pennsylvania National Guard. I am concerned about the impacts of the federal budget impasse on our National Guard forces. Yesterday, more than 1,000 of the Pennsylvania National Guard's military technicians were furloughed; nationwide, about 48,400 dual-status military technicians have been furloughed. I am urging you to take immediate action to put these Soldiers and Airmen back to work providing vital full-time support for our National Guard.

National Guard military technicians are a unique class of DoD employees. They are required to be members in good standing of the National Guard in compatible military positions. They wear their military uniforms every day. When President Obama addressed our troops about the "Pay Our Military Act," he said that "those of you in uniform will remain on your normal duty status." How bewildering that the very next day, uniformed military technicians were being taken off duty here in Pennsylvania and across America.

National Guard technicians are "employed and administered" by the Adjutant General, a state official, under provisions of 32 USC § 709. The work our technicians perform is essential for military readiness to execute the Guard's state and federal missions.

The "Pay Our Military Act" (HR 3210), which President Obama signed into law on September 30, provides that you can keep DoD employees on the job when you determine they are providing support to members of the Armed Forces. National Guard technicians provide direct support to members of the Armed Forces. In fact, they work alongside their military counterparts on a daily basis, and their duties including training of military personnel, maintenance of military equipment, and administering the force. It's difficult to imagine any federal employees who provide as direct and continuous support for members of the Armed Forces as National Guard military technicians.

Please take action now to return to duty the Soldiers and Airmen who serve as National Guard military technicians. Thank you for considering my views on this matter.

Sincerely,

Tom Corbett

Governor

The text of Craig's memo reads as follows:

TAGPA

3 October 2013

MEMORANDUM FOR: All members of the Pennsylvania National Guard
SUBJECT: Federal Government Shutdown

1. The Federal government shutdown has adversely impacted all of us in the Pennsylvania National Guard (PNG).
2. Due to the gridlock in Washington, D.C., between the legislative and executive branches of government, there are currently no funds appropriated for any government activity. We have had to postpone drill weekends and furlough 80% of our military technicians and Active Duty Operational Support (ADOS) personnel.
3. Over time, these furloughs will degrade our ability to accomplish our dual mission of national defense and local emergency response, and lives may be placed at risk. The fiscal impact on our furloughed troops is highly disturbing.
4. I am deeply concerned for all of you and your families and truly saddened by this senseless political grandstanding. The National Guard Associations, the Pennsylvania National Guard Associations, and all 54 Adjutants General are working hard with our elected leaders to mitigate the impact of this shutdown. We are concentrating on ensuring the "Pay Our Military" Act, that was passed unanimously by both Houses of Congress and signed by the President on September 30, 2013, is implemented as written. This law ensures that all branches of the military INCLUDING THE RESERVE COMPONENTS will continue to work and receive pay during this shutdown. There are lawyers and bureaucrats in the U.S. Department of Justice in Washington, D.C., who are stopping this from being applied to our military technicians. Their restrictive interpretation of the law is clearly not what Congress intended. All of us are working hard to correct this at once. It is my position that ALL Soldiers and Airmen of the PNG are MISSION CRITICAL for our commonwealth and country. The National Guard is the most cost effective part of our national defense and the entire U.S. government.
5. I am in continuing dialogue with all members of the Pennsylvania Congressional Delegation and all 54 Adjutants General. I urge you to express your personal concerns and feelings to your local elected representatives.
6. I know this continued budget uncertainty is stressful and frustrating. Please reach out to your Guard leadership for support. We are all battle buddies. The Pennsylvania National Guard will do everything possible to take care of our own.

7. Thank you for your dedicated service. We will get through this together. The Pennsylvania National Guard will remain always ready and always there! God bless all of you.

WESLEY E. CRAIG
MG, PAARNG
The Adjutant General