



## T H E M I L I T A R Y C O A L I T I O N

201 North Washington Street  
Alexandria, Virginia 22314  
(703) 838-8113

February 24, 2005

The Honorable Daniel K. Akaka  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Akaka:

The Military Coalition (TMC), a consortium of nationally prominent military and veterans organizations, representing more than 5.5 million members plus their families and survivors, is writing to express our strongest support for S.337, a bi-partisan bill introduced by Senator Lindsey Graham (R-SC). We believe this bill is essential to recruit and retain members, along with their families, in the National Guard and Reserve forces.

TMC is very grateful to Congress for enacting legislation that permits reservists mobilized for 90 days or more and meet other criteria to purchase one-year of TRICARE for each 90 days served. But with rising pressures on Guard and Reserve recruiting, more is needed.

Since 9/11, our nation has activated over 470,000 Guard and Reserve members. Additionally, more than 40 percent of military members deployed to Afghanistan and Iraq are Guard and Reserve servicemembers. It is clear that our reserve components continue to play a crucial role in providing for the national defense and homeland security.

It is urgent that we maintain a strong, well-equipped, and fully manned Reserve component. In this context, providing continuous health insurance for Reserve component members and their families will help sustain military and medical readiness. Extending TRICARE on a cost-share basis to all National Guard and Reserve members, regardless of mobilization status, will provide an excellent retention incentive as well. With health care costs spiraling out of control throughout the nation, access to TRICARE as an option also will give an incentive to employers of Reserve component members, possibly lowering the overall cost of premiums employers would otherwise bear.

S.337 also would lower the age at which eligible National Guard and Reserve members receive reserve retired pay. Our members have expressed this as a necessity in the effort to recruit and retain those the nation has called on. Call-ups are depriving Reservists from contributing to civilian retirement plans each time they are called to active duty, resulting in lower civilian retirement incomes. The bill would authorize earlier reserve retirement using an age and years-of-service formula.

Please cosponsor S.337 and do all you can to see that it is enacted. We urge you to consider this bill as a priority for the 1<sup>st</sup> Session of the 109<sup>th</sup> Congress. The Military Coalition thanks you again for all you do for our Guard and Reserve members.

Sincerely,

The Military Coalition  
(Signatures enclosed)