



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

201 North Washington Street  
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(703) 838-8113

October 4, 2005

The Honorable Jim DeMint  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator DeMint:

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 thank you for the opportunity for TMC representatives to meet with you to discuss your views on health savings accounts (HSAs) for the National Guard and Reserve and our priority goal of enacting permanent authority for all citizen-servicemembers to participate in TRICARE.

TMC is very grateful to Congress for enacting legislation last year that permits reservists mobilized for 90 days or more to purchase one-year of TRICARE for each 90 days served in a contingency operation. We believe that there is broad bi-partisan support in Congress to take the next step and authorize TRICARE participation for all members of the Reserve forces. A fundamental change in our nation's total force policy mandates no less.

Since 9/11, our nation has activated nearly 500,000 Guard and Reserve members. Forty percent of military members deployed to Afghanistan and Iraq are Guard and Reserve servicemembers and approximately one out of every three wounded servicemembers is a member of the Guard or Reserve. The total force today is no longer a slogan but an operational reality. Yet, some senior officials continue to dismiss benefit upgrades for Guard and Reserve families while touting their essential role in the national defense. But Guard and Reserve servicemembers are not just low-cost replacement parts in a military machine. Their greater sacrifice and service must be matched with equitable improvements in their benefits. If not, the recent sharp downturn in recruiting might be followed by the collapse of the all-volunteer force as we know it. At the end of the day, TMC believes that TRICARE for the Guard and Reserve will help underwrite recruitment, retention, family morale and overall readiness in the Guard and Reserve.

It is with this sense of urgency that TMC strongly recommends your endorsement of TRICARE for the Guard and Reserve. TMC appreciates your observation that HSAs should be considered as an additional benefit to anything Congress might enact with respect to TRICARE in the Reserve forces. TMC would respectfully recommend and request a future opportunity to discuss the merits of HSAs as an added benefit above and beyond TRICARE. We are, however, deeply concerned that discussion at this time about HSAs in the Guard and Reserve is likely to lead to confusion and uncertainty.

The Military Coalition thanks you again for meeting with its representatives and urges your full support for TRICARE for the National Guard and Reserve.

Sincerely,

The Military Coalition  
(Signatures enclosed)

cc: Senators Frist, Reid, Warner, Levin, Stevens, Inouye, Graham