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**EANGWV
President's Report
2022 State Conference**

April 30, 2022

Good morning Enlisted Soldiers and Airmen of the West Virginia National Guard and welcome to the 50th Anniversary state conference. EANGWV was officially established on December 7, 1973, and was one of the first Enlisted Associations established in the United States. EANGWV concluded 2021 with 320 members, a net gain of 5 from 2020 as we continue to push for membership via digital means with COVID-19 continuing to impact our ability to meet with units. Since then, I am proud to report that the executive council approved a motion to sponsor up to 160 free memberships to all E6 and below in the WVNG. This has led to 47 sign ups this month alone, of those 3 are new lifetime members, 27 new members utilizing our free membership and 17 renewing their annual memberships. We ask for your help, get our name out to your Soldiers and Airmen, let them know what we do, let them know what we do for them and their families, get them active in the association.

We continue to work with State leadership and units to post membership information and are trying to “think outside the box” in pursuit of membership and Soldier awareness, if you are interested in helping boost our membership, please let us know. Our membership director is always looking at options to improve our website and encourage Soldiers and Airmen to be more engaged in their association. This past year has continued to be a trying one not only for our Soldiers but our entire state. The Enlisted Soldiers of the WVARNG continue to answer the call in support of COVID-19 response. In the coming months we are hopeful that some of this past year's restrictions will be relaxed to allow our Executive Council to start sponsoring units' family day activities as a way to give back to our Soldiers and their families.

EANGWV participated in the first annual Retiree Appreciation Day (RAD), sponsored by the West Virginia Retired Military Council on 2 April 2022 at the Eleanor Joint Forces Reserve Center. This council is a Department of Army recognized and chartered council, the nation's first of its kind under a state National Guard Command. The council itself has representatives from all services and it is our intent to provide this function for all retirees regardless of branch of service. Our EANGUS national conference, nicknamed the “Big Dam Conference” will be held 7-10 August 2022 in Little Rock, AR, we invite and encourage all members of EANGWV to join your executive council at the national conference.

On the legislative front, there was a bill in the House to waive the hunting and fishing license fee for anyone with a service-connected disability. The current law only waives the fee if the disability is 100%. The proposed change would remove that percentage requirement completely. Our hope is to use this progression to work towards free hunting and fishing licenses for all active and reserve component military members as well. There is also SB49 which would

give a monthly allotment of \$150 to all veterans who have been honorably discharged, over 65 years of age and served on active duty during a time of war. Perhaps most important there is HB4606 to amend the Code of West Virginia providing legislative funding's and purpose to authorize programs to assist at risk veterans through partnerships with service organizations to combat suicide and its contributing factors. We are proud to announce that SB 598 a sister bill to HB 4606 and has already passed. It will go into effect in 33 days.

Approximately 1/4 of our Guard force is currently either forward deployed or scheduled for deployment within the next 12 months, and another 136 are still currently supporting COVID response missions throughout West Virginia. These, as well as our states other domestic missions, have kept OPTEMPO within the state at a very high level. As always, EANGWV will be there to support our troops and their families through anything they may need.

Sincerely,


James R. Lowry III
President, EANGWV