



**For Immediate Release**

**Date: January 30, 2014**  
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**Maryland Fire Chiefs Association Signs  
Statement of Support  
for the Guard and Reserve**

Annapolis, MD – Maryland Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR), a Department of Defense office, announced that Chief Richard C. Blair, President of the Maryland Fire Chiefs Association, signed a Statement of Support for the Guard and Reserve on Thursday, January 30, 2014. The signing ceremony occurred during the association’s second annual Legislative Reception held at the Miller Office Conference Center in Annapolis. Comprised of over 300 member companies, the Maryland Fire Chiefs Association brings together the Chief Fire Officer Corps of Maryland and others who are interested in saving lives, protecting property, and preventing and extinguishing fires in direct support of Maryland citizens.

The Statement of Support confirms the Maryland Fire Chiefs Association joins other employers and organizations in pledging:

- We fully recognize, honor and enforce the Uniformed Services Employment and Re-Employment Rights Act (USERRA).
- Our managers and supervisors will have the tools they need to effectively manage those employees who serve in the Guard and Reserve.
- We appreciate the values, leadership and unique skills service members bring to the workforce and will encourage opportunities to hire Guardsmen, Reservists and Veterans.
- We will continually recognize and support our country’s service members and their families in peace, in crises and in war.

“Today, supportive employers are critical to maintaining the strength and readiness of the nation’s Guard and Reserve units. I am asking all Maryland employers to take a look at their current human resources policies to incorporate policies supportive of Guard and Reserve employees,” said Jean Hulet, Maryland ESGR State Chair. “Many Maryland employers provide ‘Above and Beyond’ support with pay differential to offset the loss of wages, and extension of health care benefits, which complement coverage provided by the military, when their employees are mobilized.”

When asked about the criteria, Ms. Hulet said “By meeting the Statement of Support criteria, the Maryland Fire Chiefs Association pledges to stand proudly with its Guard and Reserve members, who continue to answer their nation’s call to defend our way of life. Their personal sacrifices are essential to the strength of our nation”.

“Over 200 volunteer firefighters and emergency medical service providers throughout Maryland serve in the Guard and Reserve. They leave a void in our public safety assets while deployed. This requires fellow firefighters to cover their fire duties until their return from military duty”, said Ms. Hulet.

“The Maryland Fire Chiefs Association joins a cadre of Fortune 500 companies, state and federal agencies and thousands of America’s employers and organizations in demonstrating support for our armed forces,” added Ms. Hulet. “By signing the Statement of Support, Chief Blair is sending a clear message to these volunteer firefighters and emergency medical service providers of our great state that while they are serving their country they do not have to worry about things at home, we got their back.”

ESGR, a Department of Defense office, seeks to foster a culture in which all employers support and value the employment and military service of members of the National Guard and Reserve in the United States. ESGR facilitates and promotes a cooperative culture of employer support for National Guard and Reserve service by developing and advocating mutually beneficial initiatives, recognizing outstanding employer support, increasing awareness of applicable laws and policies, resolving potential conflicts between employers and their service members, and acting as the employers’ principal advocate within DoD.

For more information about ESGR Outreach Programs, or ESGR volunteer opportunities, please call 1-800-336-4590 or visit [www.ESGR.mil](http://www.ESGR.mil).

*Photo left to right: Terry Thompson, Maryland Fire Chiefs Association First Vice President; Maryland State Delegate John L. Bohanan, Jr., Saint Mary's County; Jean M. Hulet, State Chair; Richard C. Blair, Maryland Fire Chiefs Association President; and Richard L. Alcorta, MD, FACEP, State Emergency Medical Services Medical Director and Maryland Institute for Emergency Medical Services Systems Acting Co-Executive Director*