



For Immediate Release

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Contact: Tom Bullock**

Federal Government Praised as ‘Model Employer’ in Supporting its National Guard and Reserve Employees

WASHINGTON – U.S. Labor Secretary Elaine L. Chao praised the federal government as a model employer in announcing the rare occurrence when all 16 cabinet secretaries and the heads of all 80 federal agencies signed Statements of Support pledging to protect the jobs and benefits of their National Guard and Reserve employees.

“America’s service members who sacrifice so much for all of us, deserve the support of employers in returning to civilian life and careers, or in looking for new opportunities,” Chao said. “Supportive employers are critical to maintaining the strength and readiness of the nation’s National Guard and Reserve units, and in tapping the immense potential of our veterans. To this end, I am happy to say the federal government has proven to be a model employer.”

In October, Chao was the first non-defense cabinet secretary to sign the Presidential Cabinet statement of support, which is an initiative of the Defense Department’s National Committee for Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR). ESGR has more than 3,500 volunteers across the country dedicated to encouraging employers support for their National Guard and Reserve employees.

As Labor Secretary, Chao is responsible for enforcing the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act, which ensures the civilian jobs and benefits if National Guard and Reserve service members while they serve on active duty. The law also prohibits employers from discriminating against past and present members of the uniformed services and applicants to the uniformed services.

More

**National Committee for Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve
1555 Wilson Boulevard, Suite 200, Arlington, Virginia 22209
800-336-4590, 703-696-1386, <http://www.esgr.mil>**

The federal government is the largest employer of Reserve Component members. The Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA) specifically states that the “federal government shall be a model employer.” A concerted effort, begun in 2004, by Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR), has resulted in statements of support from all independent federal agencies as well as the entire President’s Cabinet. A special over-sized Presidential Cabinet Statement of Support document, signed by all Cabinet Secretaries, is the first known single document signed by an entire Presidential Cabinet in support of the National Guard and Reserve.

Since 9/11, the nation has had the largest mobilization of citizen-soldiers since World War II, with some 560,000 having been called up and more than 460,000 already transitioned back to civilian life. To ensure the economic security of those ensuring our national security, Chao has directed numerous proactive steps to make employers and employees aware of their rights and obligations under USERRA, including:

- Directing the publication of the first-ever rules for enforcing USERRA;
- Having the department’s Veterans’ Employment and Training Service provide USERRA briefings and technical assistance to some 340,000 employers, employees and others; and
- Disseminating radio and TV public service announcements.

Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR) is a Department of Defense agency established in 1972. The mission of ESGR is to gain and maintain active support from all public and private employers for the men and women of the National Guard and Reserve.

As the 1.2 million members of the National Guard and Reserve continue to perform an increasing number of unique missions that require extraordinary actions on the part of everyday citizens, ESGR will continue to be the informational agency for the employers of America’s new Minutemen. ESGR volunteers provide free education, consultation, and if necessary mediation for employers of Guard and Reserve employees. For more information about ESGR Employer Outreach Programs and volunteer opportunities, please call Tom Bullock (800-336-4590), or visit the ESGR website at www.esgr.mil.

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