

ARNG Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR)

What is it? ESGR is a Department of Defense agency that seeks to promote a culture in which all U.S. employer's support and value the military service of their employees, with ESGR as the principal advocate within DoD. ESGR develops and promotes employer support for Guard and Reserve service by advocating relevant initiatives, recognizing outstanding support, increasing awareness of applicable laws and resolving conflicts between employers and service members.

Since September 11, 2001 through the end of FY11, the ARNG completed 482,096 Soldier mobilizations in support of domestic and overseas missions to Iraq, Afghanistan, the Balkans, Guantanamo Bay, Djibouti (Horn of Africa), and the Sinai. Soldiers are being mobilized more frequently than in previous decades, making it necessary to educate Army National Guard and Army Reserve Soldiers on the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA), especially during pre-mobilization and demobilization periods.

The current National Defense Strategy indicates that Soldiers will continue to be full partners in the operational force. Our Soldiers will spend more time away from the workplace defending the nation, supporting a demanding operations tempo and training to maintain their mission-readiness. In this environment, civilian employers play a critical role in the defense of the nation by complying with existing employment laws protecting the rights of workers who serve in the RC.

USERRA, established in 1994, outlines rights and responsibilities for Soldier employees and their employers. USERRA covers employment, reemployment and retention, when employees serve or have served in the uniformed services. The DoD and ESGR are keenly aware of the importance of supportive employers and seek to recognize employers who provide support to Soldiers. When a conflict arises between a Soldier and employer, ESGR provides free and neutral mediation to resolve any issues pertaining to the USERRA law.

Across the nation, more than 4,800 volunteers in all 50 states, the three territories of Guam, Puerto Rico, and the US Virgin Islands, and the District of Columbia, work with employers to help foster employer support. ESGR volunteers also reach out to RC Soldiers to ensure they understand their rights and responsibilities under the law.

For Soldiers who experience difficulty with their employers, ESGR ombudsmen are available to provide information, counseling and mediation support for issues related to USERRA. ESGR ombudsmen can be reached at 1-800-336-4590 or by e-mail at USERRA@osd.mil. In addition, the ESGR website provides detailed information about USERRA and helpful tools for military members. More information about ESGR can be found at www.esgr.mil.

What has the Army Done? ESGR continues an outreach campaign entitled, “We All Serve.” Advertisements and articles in the GX and Foundations magazines, as well as in numerous other military and civilian publications increase awareness of ESGR and the services provided to Soldiers.

By acknowledging employer support of Guard and Reserve service members, the Department of Defense takes a proactive stance in promoting support of the Armed Forces. This public acknowledgement strengthens community relationships and national security. ESGR’s recognition program consists of a series of awards honoring employers for varying levels of support, and includes an award that recognizes spouse’s employer support as well. Detailed information about the awards and the nomination process is available at www.esgr.mil.

Headquarters ESGR’s National Customer Service Center (CSC) and local ESGR volunteers receive requests for assistance via phone, email, ESGR.mil website submissions, fax, and US mail. Many requests are general inquiries from an employer, service member, or others desiring information about the law. Other requests involve service members desiring ESGR to “open a case”, initiating informal neutral mediation and facilitating conflict resolution through contact with their employer. In FY 11, the ESGR handled over 25,000 inquiries and mediated 2979 cases, with 84% resolution.

What continued efforts does the ESGR have planned?

ESGR continually seeks opportunities to support the Soldier. This is evident from the Employment Initiative Program (EIP). This initiative facilitates employment opportunities by assisting service members with being competitive in the job market. It integrates the programs, Yellow Ribbon Reintegration, Family Readiness and Hero2Hired to form a coordinated and synchronized main effort to collaborate with emerging federal, state, and local programs and initiatives to connect unemployed and underemployed Guard and Reserve Service members and family members, with vocational assistance and employment opportunities. Hero2Hired information is available at www.h2h.jobs.

Why is this important to the Army?

ESGR encourages RC Soldiers to develop positive relationships with their employers and assists Soldiers in resolving disputes with employers, which creates a positive work environment. ESGR also links Soldiers up with the proper resources and tools to assist in finding employment. ESGR is available to assist and support Soldiers at any time. A key ESGR theme is: “You are valued for your service to our nation.”

Related sites: www.employerpartnership.org; www.esgr.mil;
www.facebook.com/GOESGR; www.twitter.com/ESGR