



ENLISTED ASSOCIATION OF THE NATIONAL GUARD OF THE UNITED STATES

1 Massachusetts Avenue NW, Suite 880 • Washington, D.C. 20001-1401 • 800-234-EANG (3246) • Fax (703) 519-3849

2019 LEGISLATIVE REQUEST

Expand TRICARE Reserve Select Coverage

ISSUE: Federal Employees eligible for TRICARE Reserve Select (TRS) are forced to utilize more expensive healthcare offered on the Federal Employee Health Benefit Plan (FEHBP)

BACKGROUND:

The membership of the Enlisted Association of the National Guard of the U.S. believes that Reserve Component (RC) servicemembers should be able to choose whatever health care provider is best for their military readiness and for the care for their families regardless of who their employer may be. RC members who are Federal employees are not given a choice to provide continuity of care in the TRICARE program during the complete mobilization cycle (before, during and after) due to restrictions in Federal law. This continuity of care can be achieved by removing the restriction.

Federal employees eligible for FEHBP coverage and TRS must accept health care coverage under FEHBP. FEHBP, managed by the Office of Personnel Management, provides a wide-range of health insurance coverage using a robust network of providers. However, TRS is a more affordable option for RC servicemembers compared to options offered by FEHBP. For example, the widely utilized Blue Cross Blue Shield Basic Option rate costs \$159.74 per month for self only and \$384.02 per month for self and family in calendar year 2019. TRS coverage during calendar year 2019 cost \$42.83 per month for self only coverage and \$218.01 per month for member and family coverage.

In January 2019, Senator Daines (R-MT) and Senator Manchin (D-WV) introduced S. 164 and Representative Garamendi (D-CA) and Representative Kelly (R-MS) introduced H.R. 613 to resolve this issue. During the 115th Congress, the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) scored similar legislation; CBO estimated a \$173 million mandatory spending increase, and a savings of \$1.2 billion discretionary. The costs are associated with removing as many as 113,000 RC servicemembers currently utilizing FEHBP and putting those servicemembers into TRS managed by the Department of Defense (DOD). If all 113,000 servicemembers opted into TRS, DOD would realize \$1.2 Billion in discretionary savings during a time when readiness and training are the highest priorities of each of the Services.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Co-Sponsor S. 164 and H.R. 613, to remove the prohibition on eligibility for TRS of members of the reserve components who are eligible to enroll in a health benefits plan under chapter 89 of title 5, U.S.C.
- Support reasonable mandatory spending offsets to cover the \$173 million CBO score

For more information, please contact Mr. Scott Bousum, Legislative Director, The Enlisted Association of the National Guard of the United States, scott.bousum@eangus.org