



Montana National Guard Association  
PO Box 6683  
Great Falls, MT 59406-6683

<http://www.mtnga.org>  
406.868.4917

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## 2009 State Legislative Session Initiatives (Not Listed in Priority Order)

Help MTNGA help you! We will be sending legislative alert emails during the session to highlight when initiatives/bills come up for key hearings. When you receive these alerts, please respond by letting your representative / senator know that you want them to support these measures.

MTNGA will make it easy for you by providing the links to the state legislature right on the MTNGA web site at [www.mtnga.org](http://www.mtnga.org). Check it out today and get familiar with the web tools we've provided.

There are times that constituent input makes the difference. Help MTNGA to help you and all our Montana guard members earn the benefits you need and deserve.

*We invite you to join the MTNGA at the Montana Legislative Reception, January 15 2009, at Jorgenson's in Helena. Meet and greet your legislators and add your voice in support for the Montana National Guard. For details on this event call or email [mtnga@mtnga.org](mailto:mtnga@mtnga.org).*

- 1. Vehicle Registration:** 61-3-456 (Registration of motor vehicle operated by Montana resident on active military duty stationed outside Montana), MCA: As incentive for military service in the Montana Militia, this statute would be amended to extend the waiver of taxes and fees on motor vehicles owned by members of the Montana National Guard (MTNG) who reside in the state. This would provide a benefit to Montana Guardsmen, who serve the state and their local communities, on par with their active duty counterparts who serve the federal government.
- 2. Guard Plates:** 61-3-460 (Motor vehicle registration fee waiver), MCA: Amendment of this statute would provide one set of National Guard license plates to each active member of the MTNG without any cost (i.e., no fees, taxes, or levies). This legislation would assist in expediting identification of Soldiers and Airmen reporting to their duty stations in response to an emergency operation while at the same time providing additional incentive to join Montana's 911 Emergency Response Team, the Montana National Guard. This would be an alternative to the proposed legislation described in "Vehicle Registration".
- 3. Exempt State Taxes:** 15-30-116 (Veteran's bonus or military salary), MCA: This statute would be amended to exempt from state taxation, all income derived by members of the MTNG, while performing military duty during periods of State Active Duty ("SAD") in response to emergency operations or pursuant to orders under Title 32 of the United States Code. This would provide a benefit to the Men and Women of the Montana National Guard who daily serve their Community and State, which would then be equal to

their federal (Title 10) active duty counterparts who serve the federal government and currently are exempt from state taxation.

**4. Deduction on Individual Tax Return:** 15-30-116 (Veteran's bonus or military salary), MCA: This statute would be amended to allow Montana National Guardsmen to claim a \$2,000.00 personal deduction on their individual state tax return. This would provide a benefit to the Men and Women of the Montana National Guard who daily serve their Community and State, it would also provide a more proper balance to their federal (Title 10) active duty counterparts who serve the federal government and currently are exempt from state taxation. This would be an alternative to the proposed legislation described in "Exempt State Taxes".

**5. State Income Tax Exemptions:** Enact legislation that would provide state income tax exemptions of all income sources for a Montana National Guardsman killed in the line of duty (Title 32, Title 10, State Active Duty) for the year during the year prior to the Guardsman's death.

**6. Full Tuition Waiver:** 20-25-421 (Charges for tuition – waiver), MCA: Amend the statute to provide for a full waiver of tuition for all qualified members of the MTNG. Currently, the law provides that the regents may waive tuition for up to 5,000 credits, each academic year, in conjunction with the MTNG education benefit program.

**7. SGLI Reimbursement:** 10-1-Part 11 (National Guard Life Insurance Reimbursement), MCA: Amend the statute to provide for full reimbursement of service members' group life insurance program for all active drilling members of the MTNG. Currently, MTNG members receive no benefits (other than wages while on SAD) or insurance benefits from the State of Montana while on State Active Duty or in Title 32 status.

**8. Reenlistment/Extension Incentive:** 10-1-801 (National Guard Reenlistment or Extension Incentive), MCA: Proposed Legislation would create an account to fund the MTNG Reenlistment or Extension Incentive Program. Montana National Guardsmen provide an invaluable service to their communities, State and Nation – providing a \$500.00 monetary incentive to re-enlist or extend will assist in the retention of well trained Soldiers and Airmen and ensure Mission Ready Forces are available when response to emergency operations are required. The \$500.00 incentive would be "provided back to the State" as the Soldier or Airmen would continue to receive their monthly Title 32 (federal) paycheck and spend this money in their local community.

**9. Injury/Disability Coverage:** Provide MTNG members serving on SAD with Injury and Disability Benefits Equal to that of Federal Service Benefits: As the Montana National Guard continues to transform from a Strategic Reserve to an Operational Force in response to emergency operations – this action would erase the high level of risk to Montana Guardsmen and their families if they are injured in the service of the State, while performing State Active Duty.

**10. Funding for State Active Duty Training:** 10-3-104 (General Authority of Governor), MCA: This statute would be amended to provide actual funds (\$150K) against the authorization of the Governor to call out all or any portion of the organized militia for the purpose of planning, training, exercising, and all administrative duties related to disaster prevention, that are not of an emergent nature.

**11. State Active Duty Death Compensation:** Create a Line-of-Duty Death Compensation of \$250K (State tax exempt) to be paid to the heirs of a MTNG member who dies while on SAD. Currently, MTNG members, actively engaged in dangerous and high risk missions in response to state emergency operations, who die or are killed, while performing in State Active Duty status, do not receive a death

benefit similar to that paid by the federal government, or the State of Montana to the heirs of state employees.

**12. Employer Benefit:** Provide Civilian/Private Employers of Members of the MTNG with a state tax incentive of \$500.00 per Montana Guardsmen that they employ. This will recognize the critical role that Montana Employers play in the defense of this nation and during emergency response operations. It will also help to defray a small portion of the additional costs that employers have to shoulder while their employees perform their duty to community, State and Nation.

**13. Recruitment Bonus:** Create a MTNG Recruitment Bonus Payment Program. This would create a MTNG recruitment referral bonus program whereby MTNG members would be paid a \$250.00 bonus for referring to MTNG recruiters an interested person who then enlists in the MTNG. The cost of this referral will be quickly made up as Soldiers and Airmen receive their federal Title 32 monthly checks, for serving in the Montana National Guard, and then spending those dollars in their local communities.

**14. Mental Health Professional:** Provide a FTE mental health professional to the Department of Military Affairs to assist Montana National Guard communities, employers, families, Soldiers and Airmen deal with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and serve as the point of contact for the Montana National Guard Crisis Response Team. Although PTSD is primarily caused from federal deployments, as the Montana National Guard is increasingly involved with high risk and dangerous Community and State emergency response operations, the State of Montana should assume responsibility for emergency response/domestic generated PTSD as well as PTSD relapse from Soldiers and Airmen while serving in a State Active Duty status.

**15. State Tuition Paid for Surviving Dependents:** Enact legislation that would provide for the payment of State of Montana Tuition of surviving dependents of a National Guardsman who dies in the line of duty performing services in a Title 10, Title 32 or State Active Duty Status or while classified as Missing In Action or a Prisoner of War.

**16. State Hunting and Fishing Licenses:** Enact legislation that provides an annual complimentary Hunting and Fishing Conservation License for each member of the Montana National Guard.

**17. Uniform Allowance:** Enact legislation that would provide to each officer in the Montana National Guard an annual uniform allowance of \$250.00. Officer's who serve in the State Militia (Title 32) do not receive the uniform allowance afforded to officers on active duty (Title 10), yet every officer in the State Militia is required to procure and provide for a full issue of military uniforms.

**18. Family Relief Fund:** Enact legislation that establishes a check-off on the Montana State Income Tax return form to assist members of the Montana National Guard and their families who are in serious financial stress due to deployments (Title 32, Title 10 or State Active Duty) to help defray the costs of food, housing, utilities, medical services and other like type living expenses. These funds would be administered by the Department of Military Affairs – Montana and would be requested by the Montana National Guard Family Readiness Groups to the Department of Military Affairs on an as needed basis.