



**OREGON MILITARY DEPARTMENT**  
JOINT FORCE HEADQUARTERS, OREGON NATIONAL GUARD  
OFFICE OF THE ADJUTANT GENERAL  
1776 MILITIA WAY SE  
P.O. BOX 14350  
SALEM, OREGON 97309-5047

April 24, 2017

Chair Greenlick and Members of the House Committee on Health Care,

As the Adjutant General of the State of Oregon, the readiness of our service members is my top priority. Resilient Soldiers and Airmen who are physically and mentally fit, trained and equipped, are my most important resource to assist the State and Nation.

Tobacco use degrades the health and resiliency of the Soldiers and Airmen in my organization and, unfortunately, tobacco users in the military is alarmingly high. Studies show that more than 30% of military members use tobacco. The numbers are even higher for those military members that have deployed overseas. According to a 2012 study from Preventing Chronic Disease, nearly 45% of uniformed service members who deployed to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan smoked. Applying those statistics to the more than 8,000 members of the Oregon National Guard, approximately 2,400 Soldiers and Airmen use some form of tobacco product.

The physical fitness of Soldiers and Airmen in the Oregon National Guard is the keystone of a ready and able force, capable of deploying on missions to support the citizens of the State of Oregon and our Nation. The Department of Defense says use of tobacco reduces a service member's fitness and endurance, and can be directly linked to increased rates of absenteeism and an overall decline in productivity. A study by the U.S. Army Public Health Center includes a variety of negative effects associated with tobacco use, to include: increased risk of injury, reduced night vision and mental sharpness, and increased risk of heat and cold injuries. Simply put, using tobacco products decreases our readiness.

In addition to the physical implications of tobacco use there are financial implications as well. A recent Army Times article stated that tobacco use costs the Pentagon \$846 million a year in medical care and lost productivity.

The Oregon Military Department and the Oregon National Guard is in support of Senate Bill 754A and will not seek a military waiver to increase the legal age to purchase tobacco products to age 21. Reducing tobacco use within the Oregon National Guard will have an immediate, positive impact on the resiliency and readiness capabilities of our Soldiers and Airmen, which in turn will allow us to fulfill our motto of "Always Ready! Always There!"

Michael E. Stencil  
Major General  
The Adjutant General