



Craig A. Wilhelm
Civilian Aide to the Secretary of the Army
Oregon



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To Whom it May Concern:

My name is Craig Wilhelm and I serve as Oregon's Civilian Aide to the Secretary of the Army.

I am honored to share with you the important State military programs that continue to provide essential and needed support to our communities as a result of State funding.

This past year, our Oregon Military Department responded to our State's horrific wildfires, deploying soldiers on the front lines with MEDEVAC support, traffic control, and on-call, quick response aviation operations; deployed to Germany and Poland to support the War in Ukraine; responded to State search and rescue missions, including several high-altitude recovery operations; and, assisted our Nation's ongoing strategic missions with Oregon soldiers deployed to Africa, Southwest and Southeast Asia, and the Far East.

Our citizen soldiers deserve our thanks and praise for their selfless service as they provide for the health and well-being of ALL Oregonians, assist with the safety and security of our Nation's borders, and help our world allies respond to regional and Global threats. We also need to embrace their families who endure while their loved ones are away and give a nod of gratitude to the employers, especially our Oregon small businesses, who continue to shoulder the duty during their required absence.

Of most significance, our State's Military Department is not immune to the largest, national security concern in modern times resulting from our military's dire recruiting challenges in onboarding a talented, competent, and diverse Service Member workforce. Now, more than ever, we need State Leadership support to help attract the next generation of leaders to serve in our ranks. Together, we must find ways to ensure that we have the necessary resources available (especially access to our public schools) to inspire, incentivize, and retain the best citizen soldiers, who will be ready and capable to respond to our future threats.

Still, amidst our manpower challenges, Oregon National Guard recruiters continue to think outside-the box to find young leaders with the propensity to serve. ORNG Recruiters are taking advantage of a Federal program called "Parole-in-Place" that offers an opportunity for a young recruit to provide a legal path to citizenship for members of his or her family through enlistment in the Army. Parole-in-place options added 35 additional enlistments in 2022 from many of our under-represented areas of the State. I urge our State leaders to advocate for and provide additional resources for this important and successful initiative and others like it. I also urge expanding the Oregon National Guard Student Tuition Assistance Program to include our military dependents, which is proposed in SB 1032.

I would also like to put a spotlight on another Oregon Military Department success story. The Oregon Youth ChalleNGe Program -- 25% funded by the State government -- and is the only alternative high



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school in the State certified by the Oregon Department of Education. OYCP has graduated close to 7,000 cadets in its 28-year history. Earning National praise, it provides at-risk youth the opportunity to earn a high school diploma, a GED, or 8 Oregon certified high school credits to re-enroll with their hometown high school. OYCP serves students from all socio-economic levels and ethnicities across Oregon, steering these students away from crime, poverty, public assistance, and toward productive and positive futures. I have had the opportunity to witness the program first-hand... and it is changing lives. There is an increased need for State support due to a recent federal decision that Average Daily Membership funds and National School Lunch Program funds are no longer authorized to be used as a State match.

In closing, I am humbled and honored to share the many critical impacts our Oregon Military Department continues to have on the safety, security, and well-being of our State. I urge State leaders to continue to reach out to our National Guard and to learn about the incredible and vital efforts of our uniformed men and women in responding to our Nation's call and protecting our State against natural disasters as well as threats both foreign and domestic. The Department's contributions to our State are immeasurable. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you.

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "CA Wilhelm", with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

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