

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

General Daniel R. Hokanson
National Guard Bureau
111 S. George Mason Dr.
Arlington, VA 22204

April 30, 2024

Dear General Hokanson,

We write to inquire about the recent report that the National Guard continues to fail to fully pay reenlistment bonuses owed to more than 13,000 servicemembers, and that they are now being forced to cut through bureaucratic red tape to receive what they are owed. To date, nearly 4,000 have left the service, and we strongly believe that it is past time to rectify this situation and make right by our men and women in uniform.

In our previous November 2023 letter, we wrote with deep concern regarding the ineffective system used to track and process payments, as well as a lack of recourse for servicemembers and veterans. While it seems that some of these issues have been rectified, others have not - chief among them is the continued delay in distributing bonus payments. It now appears the Bureau has moved the administrative burden to servicemembers, veterans, and their families.

Recent reporting from [military.com](https://www.military.com) indicates that the Guard is sending out letters to people that its records show may still be owed a bonus. However, these letters do not indicate if or when they can expect to receive their bonus, or even how much they are owed. Instead, letter recipients are required to submit a claim for payment as well as full documentation of service.

We are deeply concerned with the potential issues that may arise given this chosen course of action. For instance, veterans, if the Guard even has the correct mailing address on file, may lack the proper documentation needed to submit a claim. There also continue to be issues for veterans receiving service records and the associated need for casework teams, just like we have in our Congressional offices, to expeditiously troubleshoot potential issues and answer questions that inevitably will arise.

Civilians are not required to navigate through an extensive, months-long claims process just to get the payments they were promised doing their job. It is deeply disappointing that the Guard believes that they can withhold payment when it involves our men and women in uniform. Beyond severely impacting recruitment and retention, it signals a lack of respect for their service, particularly for our enlisted men and women.

Therefore, we request that you answer the following questions regarding the process that has been selected to pay the enlistment bonuses:

1. What led the Guard to choose this method for paying bonuses? Is it the position of the Guard

that this approach is better than an internal audit and notification process with detailed information, and why?

2. Assuming the Guard believes it has an accurate accounting of who is owed a bonus and their current address, what specific details of the Guard's records have you found to be lacking accuracy?

3. When will veterans and servicemembers be told how much they will be receiving, how will those payments be processed, when will they expect those payments, and how will appeals be processed?

4. Will the National Guard complete an audit once claims are adjudicated, to ensure that all bonuses owed were paid?

5. Will the National Guard be providing extra support or assistance to people who may not have the required documentation? Or, is that burden expected to be shouldered by other agencies, Congressional offices, and Veteran Service Organizations? If additional parties are expected to be involved in the casework process, when can we expect additional guidance to be distributed?

6. Have there been any communications within the Guard regarding how the chosen process, with the burden placed on servicemembers and their families, is more likely to lead to underpayments, and, therefore, cost-savings on the part of the Guard, compared to an automatic payment system?

Thank you for your answers to these questions. We must make this right and pay servicemembers what they are owed without further delay.

Sincerely,



Ruben Gallego
MEMBER OF CONGRESS



Trent Kelly
MEMBER OF CONGRESS



Michael Waltz
MEMBER OF CONGRESS