

# THE VNGA DIGEST SPRING 2009

## ***PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE:***

I hope this past year has treated you well. It has been a year of growth for the Association. We've undergone a lot of change and we're not done yet. But more importantly, we are headed in a positive direction and have some momentum.

This year's annual conference is still fresh in my memory and I'd like to again thank the Stonewall Brigade for hosting. They did a wonderful job and I couldn't have asked for a more professional and enjoyable event. I certainly hope everyone else who was able to attend had the same experience. Most people will never know all the hard work that went into putting on such a first class event and I want them to know I appreciate it. As always, if you have any feedback on how we can make it better in the future please let us know.

I'd also like to thank the Executive Council and all the Chairpersons and members of the various committees. Without their dedication and sacrifice the business of the association wouldn't get done.

Among the new things we're trying is the use of the social networking tools. I would again like to encourage everyone to join our 'Virginia National Guard Association (VNGA)' groups on both FaceBook and LinkedIn. I'm sure once you start using these tools you will come to realize the power of leveraging our VNGA network and connecting with your fellow Guardsmen. We have also appointed a new Executive Director and have re-written the rules of the process for choosing one in the

future to be more democratic and ensure we get the best person for the job.

In addition, we have changed the way we do business around our annual conference. This year marked the first time we did registration electronically. We also tried many new things in regards to the format and details of the conference. Lastly, we've contracted with a professional event management firm to help with next year's conference. We'll get the benefit of all their experience in the industry from contract negotiation to logistics expertise at no cost to the association.

As I mentioned when I came into office last year and again at the conference, I think the 'special sauce' of the association is what we can do for our Soldiers and Airmen by way of our legislative efforts. Throughout the course of the past year I have sent out various emails urging you to take action by contacting your elected officials. We have had great success at the state level by securing the funding necessary to continue to make our State Tuition Assistance Program viable through 2010. At the national level, I recently sent out an email from NGAUS urging support for a change to the new GI Bill to take into account Title 32 service of Guardsmen. With the great leadership of LTC Goodrich and others, our legislative efforts will continue to pay huge dividends and be of increasing importance to what we can do for our Soldiers and Airmen.

As your President-elect, Danny has been integrally involved in many aspects of the association over the past year and is well positioned to take over the helm of the organization. I feel confident he will do a great

job and take the association to new heights. It has been my honor and privilege to serve as your President and I look forward to the great things yet to come. Together we can make a difference.

**Capt Mark Widener  
President**

### ***Executive Director's Message:***

I am pleased to be able to serve the Association as the Executive Director. I look forward to continuous improvement in how we conduct our business driven by you the members.

One of the most important responsibilities of the Executive Director is to ensure membership data is accurate for both NGAUS and VNGA. Please see note on address change later in this Newsletter. In order to keep you as a member informed, I must be able to contact you. Your Executive Council Representative is your voice, know who they are and talk with them.

What direction should the Association go as we move to the future? I think that is a very important issue and would like to hear for all of you. How can that be done? One of the accomplishments of Capt Mark Widener, President, was to set up a group on the social network LinkedIn.com. I have posted that question to create some discussion. Please register, it costs nothing but your time, and join in the discussion or even better start your own discussion.

I am also looking at ways to take advantage of technology to keep our membership informed. If you would like to receive future Newsletters via email as opposed to a mailed copy. Please provide the following information to the Association email address, [VNGA@VERIZON.NET](mailto:VNGA@VERIZON.NET)

Name, Rank, Unit  
Home Address  
Email address

Would you like to be added to Legislative Contacts? Yes or No

Again I appreciate the vote of confidence your Executive Council has shown toward me. I am available by phone or email, as shown below, any time to provide the support to you as a member.

**Mike Coleman  
Executive Director  
(804) 328-0037  
[VNGA@Verizon.Net](mailto:VNGA@Verizon.Net)**

### ***Legislative Committee Report:***

The Legislative committee has gotten a new life thanks to increased interest from our members. Over a dozen people stepped up at the Conference in April and offered to get more involved. This enthusiasm is a great start to one of our most important functions as an organization: making our needs know and influencing legislation at the State and National level. The challenge now is to cultivate that interest and keep the momentum going. We are competing for a small piece of a shrinking budget, and it will only become more difficult secure funding for our programs. The committee is working with the Adjutant General's office and the Enlisted Association to coordinate our efforts, but it will take a concerted effort from our entire organization if we expect be successful.

We are using conference calls on Defense Connect Online to formulate our agenda and plan of attack. We are in the process of finalizing and prioritizing our legislative agenda, which we will present to the Executive Council at the July meeting for their approval. This year's agenda will be very similar to last year's. The State Tuition Assistance Program (STAP) will be at or near the top of the list. The success we had last year with STAP was a short-term fix; we are still under funded for the out years. We need your help if we want to continue this program that is a unique benefit to the VA Guard soldiers and airmen. Before we ask for more, we should thank

our State Delegates and Senators for their past support. Anyone who has benefited from the STAP should write their Delegate and Senator thanking them for their support. A few minutes of your time and a stamp is not much to ask for the benefits we have received.

As officers, we are leaders in the Guard. We must be leaders in other areas also, to include legislative efforts. Stay informed of what is going on in Washington and Richmond. The NGAUS website has many excellent tools to keep you informed and take action when needed. We are working on some ideas to do similar things at the State level. Contact your elected officials and let them know what is important to you and our organization. Encourage your soldiers and airmen to get involved also. In a democracy, a Private and a Colonel both get one vote.

The Legislative committee is the staff to plan the operation, but it is “boots on the ground” that get the job done. Our success depends on you. Get involved!

**LTC Garland H. (Henry) Goodrich**  
**Legislative Chairman**

## ***By-Laws & SOP Committee***

As the lead on the By-Laws & SOP Committee, I am responsible for accepting and processing proposed changes to the Association’s By-Laws & SOPs from its members.

After meeting the requisite notification, a draft By-Laws change, outlining new guidelines for the hiring of the Association’s Executive Director, was prepared and presented to the Executive Council for review on Friday 24APR09 and for a vote to Business Session on Saturday 25APR09.

The following changes to the Finance Committee were recommended, approved and incorporated into the SOPs: the requirement to incorporate strategy into the Finance Committee

responsibilities; task the President Elect to identify the incoming Finance Committee, prior to the Annual Conference, in which he/she assumes the Presidency; and set the limits for the movement of funds from the respective accounts.

The following proposals for SOP changes have been suggested and are being reviewed and drafted, in order to be presented to the Executive Council: The DPU/IOSC has formed its own officer’s association, separate from 91TC, and would like to have separate representation on the Executive Council; guidelines for remote attendance and voting for Executive Council Meetings; and draft a Conflict of Interest and Privacy Policy, to be included in the Association’s SOPs.

Please contact me if you feel that you would like to provide some input or propose changes that would improve the Association’s By-Laws & SOPs.

My POC information is 703-786-5828 and [stephen.hilley@us.army.mil](mailto:stephen.hilley@us.army.mil).

**MAJ Steve Hilley**  
**Chairman**

## ***Scholarship Committee Report:***

Greetings from the Scholarship Committee. The 2008-2009 school year is at a close and we’re happy to have been able to support five qualified applicants with scholarships during this academic year:

Ms. Elizabeth Hundley, daughter of retired Army Colonel Hundley, received the Singletary Award at the April Conference and a scholarship award of \$1100. Additional awards included Ms. Tracy Schlagel, spouse of Maj Schlagel, who received \$850; Ms. Kathy Griffin, spouse of COL Griffin, received \$750; Mr. Michael Barnes, son of CW4 Barnes, received \$700; and Major Mariah Branch

received \$600. Two applicants were not considered due to eligibility issues. The Committee offers special thanks to our newest committee members, Capt Emily Huffman (Air), and Maj Elizabeth Kirby (Army). Both of these officers jumped in on extremely short notice and helped us move the process forward – we really appreciate their efforts.

The Scholarship Committee is always open to recommendations concerning our program and awards. A recommendation was made at the January meeting to permit high school students to apply for scholarship, but the committee has elected not to accept this recommendation at this time. Given our typical budget of \$4000 per year, we prefer to offer fewer awards of a higher amount than to increase the number of awards offered but with lower awarded amounts.

Another recommendation was made to offer members the opportunity to make donations to the scholarship awards – you will likely see just such an offer in the near future, as we are always looking for ways to increase the scholarship awards provided.

We're heading into summer now, but it's not too early to think about next year. Applications for the 2009-2010 academic year must be submitted by 30 September 2009. Please check out the VNGA website and the "scholarship" link on the left side to find application forms and complete rules on the process, and contact me with any questions (new number is 804-350-0175).

The Scholarship Committee hopes you all have a great summer and recharge your batteries for next semester!

**Maj Tony Schlagel**  
**Chairman**

## ***Virginia National Guard Ventures, Inc.***

Virginia National Guard Ventures, Inc. is proud to provide the State Sponsored Life Insurance (SSLI) program for members and families of the Virginia National Guard. This benefit program is one of the most successful in the country. The State Sponsored Life Insurance program provides group term life insurance exclusively for National Guard members and their dependents. In addition, as an active member of the Virginia National Guard you are provided a \$1,000 death benefit at no cost to the member.

Earlier this year, Ventures provided a briefing to our Adjutant General on the operation, status, and the benefits provided under our insurance program as well as the significant revenue we provide to both the Officer and Enlisted Associations. It is important for the continued success of the insurance program that we provide the benefits briefings on a regular basis to the members of the Virginia National Guard. Please support these briefings.

**BG (VA) Buddy Faulconer (Ret)**  
**President VNG Ventures, Inc.**

### ***Time and Place Committee:***

It was with great pleasure to see we had another successful and enjoyable conference at the Wyndham Oceanfront at Virginia Beach. We are pleased to announce that the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Virginia National Guard Association will have the Annual Conference at the Crown Plaza Hotel, Williamsburg, VA. See dates in the Items of Interest Section.

We recently entered into an agreement with Experient, Inc. to provide conference site selection advice as well as conference management services for our association. To show their support, for the 2009 conference, Experient provided the host command

approximately \$5,000 of “prizes” in the form of weekends, trips, and a sound system. Our thanks to Experient for their generous support and help.

We will continue to update you on the 2010 conference as well as the 2011 in future newsletters. Our scheduled host commands are: 2010 – the Air Guard; 2011 - the 329<sup>th</sup> RSG; and 2012 – JFHQ.

**BG (VA) Buddy Faulconer (Ret)**  
**Chairman**

### ***Nominations Committee Report:***

Thanks to the many candidates that put their name in a hat for consideration to be an officer in the association. The competition was the fiercest I’ve seen in years. When the smoke settled, the President elect was COL Tom Wilkinson. The VP Army winner was LTC Andy Pavord, and the VP Air winner was Capt Cheryl Stacklin. Please join me in congratulating these officers for stepping up and working for your association.

As the nominations Committee Chair, I continually seek out and take requests from members who want to serve the association and place their name in contention for an elected office. If you want to serve or want to talk about serving, please contact me at

[paul.f.griffin@us.army.mil](mailto:paul.f.griffin@us.army.mil).

Have a wonderful summer!

**COL PAUL GRIFFIN**  
**Chairman**

### ***Company Grade Report:***

The Company Grade Officers of the Commonwealth spent much of 2008 either deployed or preparing for deployment. As a result, the activities of the committee focused on VNGA support, potential fundraising projects

for 2010 and the selection of the new representative to the Executive Council, CPT Sonny Louie of 3-116<sup>th</sup> IN.

CPT Louie, a twice deployed combat veteran, brings a focus and determination with him to the duties as Company Grade Representative. With a full complement of personnel having returned home, the Company Grade Committee will most assuredly bring value to the VNGA through its continuing work to raise issues important to the junior officers of the Virginia National Guard.

**CPT Steele McGonegal**  
**Chairman**

### ***Awards Committee Report:***

I have enjoyed serving as the Vice President -Air during the past two years. My replacement in this position is Capt. Cheryl Stacklin; I am confident she will do a stellar job in this position as well. Capt. Stacklin is the full time Medical Administrative Officer for the 192<sup>nd</sup> FW located at Langley AFB. Please welcome Capt. Stacklin aboard as the new VP-Air.

Our Soldiers and Airmen deserve to be acknowledged for the exceptional service they give to the Virginia National Guard and/or the VNGA. There are several awards in accordance with the By Laws, Article III, Section 1, Para 1 that describe a wide variety of service worthy of recognition. Please consider nominating individuals throughout the year. The cut-off is 1 March 2010 which gives all of us ample time to ensure our fellow guardsmen are recognized at the annual awards banquet. Any soldier or Airmen can submit a nomination to the Awards committee. If you have any questions, please contact me at (804) 236-6007 or [antoinette.allen3@us.army.mil](mailto:antoinette.allen3@us.army.mil).

**Captain Antoinette Allen**  
**Chairperson**

## ***Retired and Associates Report:***

This past April 09 we had our annual conference in Virginia Beach. The host command was the 116<sup>th</sup> BCT and they did a great job. The attendance was up from last year and I hope it continues in that direction. I would have liked to have more retirees and associates attend but maybe next year. Speaking of next year's conference it will be held in Williamsburg, VA and it will be the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Association. The leadership of the Association is already looking at plans for that conference.

I do have some good news for retirees and that is that President Obama's budget did not include any TRICARE fee increases. This does not mean that we can sit back and think that there will not be any future calls for fee increases. DOD has already indicated that it would be necessary to increase TRICARE fees. On my report for Retirees & Associates at the conference I noted that the Congressional Budget Office was looking at increases in TRICARE fees, as well as placing out of pocket payments, which do not exist at present, for those retirees who are 65 and older and have TRICARE for Life. We must be vigilant and contact our representatives in Washington whenever there is a push to increase fees or place out of pocket payments for those on TRICARE for Life.

There are a few congressional bills that I would ask that you go to [www.ngaus.org](http://www.ngaus.org) and click on "Write to Congress" about. S. 491 introduced by Sen Jim Webb, D. VA, and companion bill HR 1203 introduced by Rep Chris Van Hollenz, D. Md would allow military retirees to pay health insurance premiums on a pretax basis and allow a deduction for TRICARE supplement premiums.

Also, HR 952 introduced by Rep. John Hall, D. NY, would lower the burden to support compensable Veterans Administration (VA) disability claims by expanding the definition of "combat with the enemy" to include active

service in combat. This would establish "service in combat" as the presumptive stressor for the occurrence of Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome (PTSD). To obtain compensation for a positive PTSD diagnosis, the veteran would not have to prove the isolated events that caused the combat stress injury as the VA currently requires.

**CW4 John D. Velleca (Ret)**  
**Chairman**

## ***NGAUS Conference:***

**Join us in Nashville, TN for the 131<sup>st</sup> NGAUS Conference**

Your Association is inviting you to become more involved and to stay informed. The 131<sup>st</sup> NGAUS Annual Conference will be 10-14 September in Nashville, TN. The opening ceremony will begin on 11 September and the All States Dinner will conclude official activities on the evening of 13 September. This year again promises to offer excitement, entertainment and professional development. Maj Gen Newman has already selected the following as Company Grade Officers who will be attending in an official duty status. If interested please complete the enclosed registration form, one for each participant, or send an email to [ynga@verizon.net](mailto:ynga@verizon.net) and I will forward a copy to you. Deadline for state input is early August so do not delay.

**Mike Coleman**  
**Executive Director**

**HAVE YOU HEARD OF:  
VIRGINIA ARMY NATIONAL GUARD  
HONOR GUARD PROGRAM**

The rendering of Military Funeral Honors for United States Armed Forces veterans is a tribute that our veterans and their families justly deserve. Section 578 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2000 requires the Department of Defense to provide, upon request, Military Funeral Honors (MFHs) for eligible veterans.

Any person (Active, National Guard, or Reserve) who has completed at least one enlistment or other obligated military service (officer) and received an honorable discharge is eligible for Military Funeral Honors. Military Funeral Honors may not be furnished for any individual convicted of a capital offense under federal or state law for which the person was sentenced to death or life without parole.

Since January 2007, the Virginia Army National Guard has been conducting Military Funerals. They have conducted 1,373 Military Funerals since the inception of the program, of which 777 were in the first six months of 2009. This includes two General Officers and more than 10 Active Duty personnel. The individuals are well trained to conduct all three variations of services: Basic Honors; Ceremonial Rifle Volley and/or Pall Bearers Honors; and Full Honors.

Family members of the deceased veteran should notify the funeral director of their desire to have Military Funeral Honors rendered at the internment of their loved one. The funeral director should contact the Virginia Military Funeral Honors Coordinator to request honors.

**804-862-6116(Desk)  
434-294-0904/0954 (Duty Cell phone)**

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## Electronic Newsletter

**Interested in receiving the newsletter via email? Great lets go GREEN, send a message with the following information to [VNGA@Verizon.net](mailto:VNGA@Verizon.net)**

**Name, Rank, unit and email address.**

**Thanks.**  
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## **IMPORTANT DATES**

### **Executive Council Meeting**

18 July 2009  
Holiday Inn Koger Center  
Midlothian, VA

### **50<sup>th</sup> Virginia National Guard Annual Conference**

23-25 April 2010  
Crowne Plaza Hotel  
Williamsburg, VA

### **131<sup>st</sup> NGAUS General Conference**

10-14 September 2009  
Nashville, TN

### **132d NGAUS General Conference**

21-23 August 2010  
Austin, TX

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## **Address Change**

Please go to the NGAUS website (NGAUS.ORG) to update address and email. On the NGAUS web page left side enter NGAUS LOGIN. User ID is your NGAUS membership number which is shown on the address line of this mailing, password is your last name. After logged in go to

Membership drop down at top of page and click "UPDATE YOUR PROFILE."

***Its official, DD form-214's can be requested NOW Online.***

The National Personnel Records Center (NPRC) has provided the following website for veterans to gain access to their DD-214's online:

<http://vetrecs.archives.gov/>

This may be particularly helpful when a veteran needs a copy of his DD-214 for employment purposes. NPRC is working to make it easier for veterans with computers and Internet access to obtain copies of documents from their military files. Military veterans and the next of kin of deceased former military members may now use a new online military personnel records system to request documents. Other individuals with a need for documents must still complete the Standard Form 180, which can be downloaded from the online web site. Because the requester will be asked to supply all information essential for NPRC to process the request, delays that normally occur when NPRC has to ask veterans for additional information will be minimized. The new web-based application was designed to provide better service on these requests by eliminating the records centers mailroom and processing time.

You will have to Mail or Fax the request signature form, (from the site), within 20 day of making your request online.