

Written Testimony Submission

To: Veterans' and Military Affairs Committee, Connecticut Legislature

Regarding: House Bill 6440

Date: January 28th 2025

Honorable Members of the Veterans' and Military Affairs Committee,

I am writing to you today to express our opposition to House Bill 6440, which proposes the removal of the Connecticut Governors Guards from the Connecticut Military Department and their reclassification as a private military entity. Such a measure would not only undermine the rich history and invaluable contributions of this organization but also dismantle a vital force that has saved the State of Connecticut millions of dollars through its volunteer service and mission readiness. Furthermore, it would eliminate an essential resource that has played a critical role in saving the lives of the people of Connecticut during emergencies and disasters such as during The Covid-19 Pandemic.

For centuries, the Connecticut Governors Guards have stood as a pillar of community service, disaster preparedness, and military support. Their soldiers, all volunteers, have tirelessly fulfilled critical mission roles, providing an unmatched return on investment for the state.

ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE CONNECTICUT GOVERNORS GUARDS

The Connecticut Governors Guards have continually proven their value through the following key contributions:

1. Honoring Veterans and Preserving Heritage

- Hosting Memorial Day ceremonies to commemorate U.S. military veterans who made the ultimate sacrifice for our nation.
- Serving as Honor Guards for fallen Army National Guard, Air National Guard, and U.S. military veterans, ensuring their service is remembered with dignity and respect.

2. Training for Emergency Preparedness

- Collaborating with The National Guard and the Division of Emergency Management and Homeland Security to train for potential catastrophes at the Millstone Nuclear Power Plant, ensuring a skilled force is ready to respond to any worst-case scenario.
- Providing extensive first aid training, including CPR, AED use, and bleeding control, to ensure soldiers are prepared to respond effectively to any coming statewide emergencies or natural disasters.

3. Serving During the COVID-19 Pandemic

- Setting up mobile field hospitals across Connecticut, expanding the capacity of overwhelmed healthcare systems.
- Providing medical personnel to assist and augment hospital staff and treat initial COVID-19 cases.
- Augmenting The Military Department Public Affairs Office to ensure timely and accurate information regarding the virus was disseminated to the public.
- Their contributions during the Pandemic were so instrumental that The United States Army took notice and published a article detailing their efforts with the headline reading highlighting them as 'the unsung heroes of the COVID-19 pandemic'.

4. Force Multiplier

- They have hundreds of troops trained and ready to deploy at a moments notice to augment the National Guard in the event of any statewide emergency of natural disaster.
- Have troops that are physically fit, routinely undergo endurance exercises, to ensure they have capable troops that can be called upon by The National Guard, State or local agency to act as a force multiplier.
- Have troops certified in a wealth of skills and trades to be able to repair critical infrastructure, such as generators or air conditioning units, which can be crucial during health crises or natural disasters.
- As global tensions escalate and the likelihood of National Guard units being deployed overseas increases, maintaining a reserve force capable of augmenting deployed troops becomes not only valuable but essential in ensuring the state's ability to respond effectively to emergencies.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

The Connecticut Governors Guards perform these missions with minimal fiscal impact. Their small budget is dwarfed by the millions they saved over the years through their unpaid volunteer work. From disaster preparedness to augmenting National Guard capabilities, their contributions are a cost-effective solution to the state's growing needs.

A VISION FOR THE FUTURE

Rather than removing the Governors Guards, we should focus on better utilizing their capabilities to support the National Guard and state agencies. State Defense Forces across the nation have become essential in performing critical roles, including:

- Establishing Points of Distribution (PODs) for food, water, and medical supplies during disasters.
- Setting up a emergency communications network when cell & internet service goes offline during a natural disaster.
- Augmenting The National Guard Cyber Defense Units to ensure state infrastructure like water facilities, power facilities, etc. are protected from internet attack from foreign nation states and rogue actors.
- Providing Search & Rescue teams to rescue stranded citizens during natural disasters
- Providing medical personnel to augment understrength National Guard Medical units like in the case of The Tennessee National Guard where State Guard Doctors, Nurses and EMTs provide deployment & yearly health assessments to National Guard soldiers due to The Tennessee national Guard being short on such medical personnel.
- Providing troops to The States Emergency Operations Center to augment positions within the operations center they maybe short on staff.
- Utilizing The Governors Guards to respond to Floods as The New York Guard does annually, working side by side with their National Guard filling sandbags in upstate New York communities to ensure they are protected from flooding.

CONCLUSION

As the threats to Connecticut and our nation grow-ranging from natural disasters to cyberattacks-now is the time to expand our State Defense Forces, not remove them. The Connecticut Governors Guards have demonstrated unparalleled commitment, capability, and

value to the state. House Bill 6440 would not only erode this legacy but leave Connecticut less prepared to face future challenges.

I urge the committee to reject House Bill 6440 and instead explore opportunities to further integrate the Governors Guards into our state's emergency response and military support frameworks. Let us build upon their legacy of service to ensure the safety and well being of Connecticut's residents for generations to come.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

Jean Marciniak
Director, State Guard & Defense Force Council
StateDefenseForce.com