

United States Senate

July 10, 2020

The Honorable Mark T. Esper
Secretary of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301

Dear Secretary Esper:

I write today to ask for financial relief from health care premiums for members of the National Guard who were activated under Title 32 to respond to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19). In this already uncertain and difficult time, these men and women should not be concerned about financial hardships in maintaining their families' access to health care coverage.

In the last four months, nearly 46,500 National Guard members in 45 states have helped their nation respond to COVID-19. On May 28, President Trump extended Title 32 orders for many of these individuals. This allowed servicemembers the opportunity to receive additional benefits for their extended service to their country during this pandemic. Part of these increased benefits included not having to pay TRICARE premiums for health care coverage for themselves and their families. However, when these servicemembers return to reserve status, they have to pay two months of premiums in advance to maintain health care coverage under TRICARE Reserve Select. At a time when access to health care is of utmost importance to Americans and their families, servicemembers should not have to worry about this potentially burdensome expense as they return home following their sacrifices to keep their country healthy. As such, I request that you waive the requirement that these individuals pay for two months of premiums in advance to better assist their transition back to civilian life.

The fight against the coronavirus is not over and National Guard resources will continue to be essential to support state and local communities overwhelmed by the pandemic in the months ahead. For these individuals who so willingly give their time to care for their fellow Americans, we must ensure they and their families have ready access to the care they need without breaking the bank. Our nation will come out of this crisis in no small part because of the work of the men and women who serve our country every day. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Jon Tester