



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 31, 2011

CONTACT: Beth Sherman
703-696-1171, ext. 539
ESGR-PA@osd.mil



Principal Financial Group to Receive 2011 Secretary of Defense Employer Support Freedom Award

Iowa Employer Selected to Receive Honor for Support of Guard and Reserve Employees

ARLINGTON, Va. – Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR), a Department of Defense agency, announced Principal Financial Group of Des Moines, Iowa is one of 15 recipients of the 2011 Secretary of Defense Employer Support Freedom Award. The Freedom Award is the DoD's highest recognition given to employers for exceptional support of their employees serving in the Guard and Reserve. Principal Financial Group stood out among a field of 4,049 nominations submitted by Guard and Reserve service members or their families.

Freedom Award recipients distinguish themselves by going to extraordinary lengths to support their military employees. Principal Financial Group was nominated by an employee serving in the Army Reserve. The Army Reservist said his supervisor and supervisor's wife became additional parent figures in his absence, accompanying his wife and children to school and sporting events. Principal Financial Group also adopted the unit of their deployed service member, purchasing 300 sets of PT uniforms and 600 t-shirts, and mailing countless care packages. The company's efforts not only contributed to the increased morale of the Service member's family but also the unit members under his command.

"To stand out among the many thousands of employers who firmly support our Citizen Warriors is a testament to the remarkable efforts of these 15 recipients," said Dennis McCarthy, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs. "On behalf of the Department of Defense, I congratulate the 2011 honorees and thank them for serving as outstanding partners in our nation's defense."

On behalf of Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, a selection board comprised of senior DoD officials, business leaders and prior awardees selected the 15 recipients. The 2011 honorees will be recognized in Washington, D.C. at the 16th annual Secretary of Defense Employer Support Freedom Award Ceremony on September 22, 2011. Since 1996, only 145 employers have been presented with the Freedom Award. Last year's recipients met privately with Vice President Joe Biden and Secretary of Defense Robert Gates prior to the ceremony.

About ESGR and the Freedom Award:

The Freedom Award was instituted in 1996 under the auspices of ESGR. ESGR was established in 1972 to develop and maintain employer support for Guard and Reserve service. ESGR advocates relevant initiatives, recognizes outstanding support, increases awareness of applicable laws, and resolves conflict between service members and employers. Paramount to ESGR's mission is encouraging employment of Guardsmen and Reservists who bring integrity, global perspective and proven leadership to the civilian workforce.

For questions or interviews regarding the Freedom Award, please visit www.FreedomAward.mil or contact Beth Sherman, ESGR Public Affairs, at 703-696-1171, ext. 539 or by email at ESGR-PA@osd.mil.

###