

Sunday's Our View: Showing support

Our Position: Take the time this week to learn about Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve

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The Iowa Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve's purpose is to gain and maintain employer support for National Guard and Reserve forces by recognizing outstanding support, increasing awareness of the law and resolving conflict through mediation.

Because of the importance of this role, it is fitting that the City of Council Bluffs and Pottawattamie County are observing ESGR Week today through Sept. 19.

ESGR was established in 1972 to promote cooperation and understanding between Reserve component members and their civilian employers and to assist in the resolution of conflicts arising from an employee's military commitment.

Today, ESGR operates through a network of more than 4,500 volunteers serving on 56 committees located in each state, the District of Columbia, Guam, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands and Europe.

The nation's Ready Reserve components comprise 46 percent of our total available military manpower, excluding retirees. The current National Defense Strategy indicates that the National Guard and Reserve, while decreasing in size, will be full partners in the fully integrated Total Force. Our Reserve forces will spend more time away from the workplace defending the nation, supporting a demanding operations tempo and training to maintain their mission readiness.

The Department of Defense tasks ESGR to "... promote both public and private understanding of the National Guard and Reserve in order to gain U.S. employer and community support through programs and personnel policies and practices that shall encourage employee and citizen participation in National Guard and Reserve programs."

The National Guard and Reserve are an integral part of our military. Almost half of the men and women serving in our armed forces are members of the National Guard and Reserve.

Employers are vital in enabling employees who are members of the National Guard and Reserve to serve our country. Moreover, employers' active support and encouragement is critical to the Guard and Reserve's success.

ESGR provides some suggestions on how employers can help:

- * Learn more about the role of the National Guard and Reserve. Attend open houses and public functions at local military units. Talk about the National Guard and Reserve with military and civilian leaders in your community. Ask your employees what they do and how they fit into the "big picture" of national defense.
- * Get to know your employees' military commanders and supervisors. Ask them to provide you with advance notice of your employee's annual military duty schedule.
- * Put your support in writing by signing a Statement of Support for the National Guard and Reserve. Display it prominently for all your employees and visitors to see. Request your Statement of Support online.
- * Examine your personnel policies to see how they accommodate and support participation in the National Guard or Reserve. Do they include provisions for military leaves of absence? Do they ensure job opportunities and benefits equivalent to those of other employees? Your local ESGR Field Committee is available to answer questions or offer suggestions.
- * Encourage employee participation in the National Guard and Reserve. Recognize and publicize their dedication and commitment to your business and the nation. Your employees' service in the National Guard and Reserve enhances their job performance and value to your organization.
- * Seek assistance from ESGR. Call 1 (800) 336-4590 to speak with an ombudsman. Ombudsmen serve as confidential, neutral liaisons for employers and employees who seek assistance or clarification regarding their rights and responsibilities.

This week, take the time to become more informed about the ESGR and the good it does not only for our city and county, but nationwide as well.