



Summer 2021

VIKANG NEWS

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143rd General Conference
& Exhibition, Las Vegas
August 27 - 30



Military Appreciation
Day at the State Fair
August 31



President's Report

LTC IN Jay Hackett

My VFW membership fees were due again. "Hadn't I just paid them a couple of months ago? - I should really just bite the bullet and buy a lifetime membership", I thought to myself. So that's what I did. "Doing-the-math" wasn't as important to me as never having to worry about paying the yearly fee again!

Now, let me tell you why I became a lifetime member of NGAUS and NGAMN. It wasn't a math issue. It wasn't an issue of never having to worrying about paying the yearly fee. It wasn't even being pestered by the board of directors or group representatives (although I know that can be highly annoying). It was because I wanted to beat Wisconsin and South Dakota and all the other states that were at or close to 100 percent (plus) in membership. I learned that the pathway to this benchmark was through lifetime membership strength.

I attended the National Guard Executive Director Association's annual meeting in Boston in 2020. One of my goals in attending this meeting was to poll the states with high membership percentages to learn of their keys to success. Lifetime memberships were the common denominator in every case. Why? Because lifetime members, as the label suggests, count as valid members of our organization long after you hang up your uniform. So what? Well, as an annual member, the power of your presence on our rolls is gone once you retire or separate. Much like taking an early distribution out of a 401k, we lose the compound value of your membership if you only remain an annual member. Lifetime membership gives us the lasting, compound, sustained strength. That strength gives us the power to "be heard." Being heard on The Hill is what this is all about.

As a State with two Air Guard Wings and an Army Division Headquarters and some of the best training and operating infrastructure in the Nation, we simply ought to be better than the 23% membership rating we are staring at right now. Is there a correlation between certain States with high membership percentages and the success of lobbying efforts they seem to enjoy? It seems to be obviously so. How does No Cost Tricare sound right about now? This

is a primary initiative of NGAUS. Congress must look to NGAUS as a strong organization that is truly speaking by and through its members. When it comes time to look at Minnesota, that 23% does matter, compared to 104% in neighboring states.

In order for us to overcome our membership deficit, we recognize the need to narrow our focus to three areas.

- 1. Increasing Lifetime Membership:** Through incentives, competition and subsidization of lifetime memberships, we aim to increase our lifetime numbers by a plus 40 number by this time next year. Thanks to COL Buddy Winn, we are 39 away from our goal!
- 2. Increasing the number of Corporate Sponsors:** By encouraging each of you to look not only at your employers, partners and community businesses, but also to encourage those businesses that might simply benefit from our audience as patrons. We aim to capitalize on those businesses that may have directly or indirectly benefited from your highly visible civil service over the last 18 months. We cannot let that iron get cold. Reach out to these businesses and put them in touch with our Executive Director, Mark Shutta. You, and the business you bring to us, will be recognized for your efforts.
- 3. Increased facilitation of the State Serviceman's Life Insurance program:** Both Officer and Enlisted Associations benefit greatly from dividends based on sales of SSLI. We expect each MN unit to be afforded the time and opportunity to genuinely facilitate the SSLI briefing team that sells this fantastic life insurance benefit. The power we gain from your efforts to ensure SSLI opportunities are made available to all NG Service Members is critical in our efforts to achieving our number one priority.



Vice President - AIR

Col Mike Piontek



Hello Minnesota, my name is Mike Piontek and I'm honored to take on the role of Vice President – Air for NGAMN. Many thanks to Lyle Shidla for his service as our previous VP-Air. My personal thanks to Lyle for asking me to follow in his footsteps. By way of a brief introduction, I began my career as an enlisted Civil Engineer at the 133rd Airlift Wing, commissioned and flew as a C-130 navigator with the 109th Airlift Squadron, back to the 133rd Civil Engineers as the commander, and now serving the state at JFHQ. In all, just over 33 years in uniform with the MNANG.

Full transparency, I wasn't a member of NGAMN or NGAUS for most of my years as an officer. Why not? Mostly because I was unaware of the work that the National Guard Association did on behalf of the National Guard. Many of the pay, medical & education benefits we have gained over the years are due in part to NGAUS engagement with Congress.

If you're reading this, it's highly likely that you are an NGAMN/NGAUS member which means you already know what I just pointed out. My ask is that you have the discussions with your fellow officers to encourage them to consider membership. Over the course of my career I've had the opportunity to sit on many boards and review many bios. Typically I would see life members of the VFW & Legion, members of their associated professional organizations, and local community groups. NGAUS membership didn't often appear until the individuals were further along in their careers. Perhaps we need to start having the conversations sooner. As a young captain I joined the VFW following overseas deployment, NGAUS didn't come along for quite a while later. I thought having the VFW card was pretty special. However, why didn't I support an organization that was advocating specifically for me as a member of the Guard the same way? It was basic lack of awareness.

If you're reading this and not a member, please check out the April 2021 issue of the National Guard magazine at - www.ngaus.org/magazine/volume/april-2021. It outlines a history of what NGAUS has done on behalf of the Guard for over 140 years. Our support for them ultimately pays dividends for us.



MEMBERSHIP MATTERS!



Vice President - ARMY

LTC Kristen Auge

Greetings, NGAMN members! I am Kristen Augé, and I look forward to serving as your Vice President for the Army. I have served more than 31 years in the Guard, with the vast majority of my service spent with the Minnesota National Guard. In that time, I have witnessed many changes to the organization and the increased demands placed on our Soldiers and Airmen. The time away from family, friends, and civilian employment is very different from the pre 9/11 days when drills and annual training were one weekend a month and two weeks in the summer. When queried, some service members want to protect the time they have for their lives outside of the military, which is entirely understandable and may account for the declining NGAMN membership numbers. Together, we need to change this trajectory.

We need everyone's help to increase association membership. Why is this important? Membership gives us a voice. A voice to have the same equipment, resources, and benefits as our active duty brethren. We conduct the same missions abroad with the added responsibilities of protecting our homeland. Now, more than ever, we need modernization parity to ensure our national security.

Additionally, membership provides an opportunity to meet and network with officers outside of your branch or unit. My first exposure to the association was in 2000 when the Division Separates met to bottle beer for the officer conference. This event provided an excellent opportunity to develop life-long friendships with officers I may not have met as early in my career, if ever.

I challenge every member to share the importance of NGAMN and NGAUS life membership with at least three officers or warrant officers in the next three months. We need a strong voice, and we will only gain this through increased membership. Thank you in advance for your support in improving our national security!



Vice President - Alumni

BG (Ret.) Tim Kennedy

It feels good to see that we are returning to normal after the many restrictions required of us by the pandemic. I am pleased to report that we will be holding our annual Holiday Dinner on Friday, December 3rd at the Embassy Suites Bloomington, 2800 American Boulevard West, Bloomington, MN (34th Ave exit off of 494). The event will start with social hour at 6:00 pm, followed by dinner at 7:00 pm and our guest speaker at 8:25 pm. Our guest speaker is our Adjutant General, MG Shawn Manke. Details for signing up for the dinner will be available on the NGAMN website. The cost will be \$50 per person which will cover all costs, including 2 drink tickets. I hope that you will plan to attend. I look forward to seeing many of you at the dinner.

It was recently announced that the Minnesota State Fair will be returning with full participation. Mark your





calendar for August 31 which has been designated Military Appreciation Day at the Fair. That day includes a reduced entry fee for the military, special exhibits, along with a parade and performances by military members. If you plan on going to the fair, this would be a good day to go.

This year, the State Conference was again held virtually on June 12. Key speakers were Maj Gen (Ret) Michael McGuire Chairman of the Board of the National Guard Association of the U.S. and MG Shawn Manke, our TAG. MG Manke highlighted the extremely high number of mobilizations in the past year because of COVID testing, COVID vaccinations, callouts for civil unrest in Minnesota and Washington, D.C. and overseas deployments to Syria, Guantanamo Bay, Horn of Africa and other locations. The Minnesota National Guard is as busy as ever been so continue to show your support.

The National Conference date and location needed to be changed due to uncertainty over COVID restrictions in North Carolina. The date is August 27 through 30 with the location now Las Vegas, Nevada. Because of the change of date, I will not be able to attend so Col (Ret) Larry Burda will be the lead representative for the Alumni Group.

The 2021 Court of Honor induction ceremony will be held at Camp Ripley on 3 October 2021 at 1:00 pm. My congratulations to the following individuals who will be inducted into the Court of Honor: LTG (Bvt) (Ret) Richard Nash, BG (Ret) William Lieder, COL (Ret) Laura Ludwig, CH (COL) Ret John Morris, COL (Ret) Gregg Parks, COL (Ret) David Pearson, COL (Ret) Scott St. Sauver, COL (Ret) Greg Thingvold, LTC (Deceased) Don Skrove, LTC (Ret) Christopher Tatarka, CSM (Ret) James Kampson, CSM (Ret) Chris Stoner and MSG (Ret) Robert (Tim) Haugen. If you are able, plan to attend to congratulate these individuals on their selection to the Court of Honor.

The Alumni Group currently has 438 members. The biggest impediment to increasing membership is the lack of good contact information on members who have retired or separated. I would like to enlist your help to increase the Alumni Group membership. If you are willing to help, e-mail be at bgrettim@gmail.com. My ask of you is to look at the list of current members and identify individuals who not current members and provide me with a current e-mail address. I will then invite them to join our group.

Frequently Asked Questions

About your newly sponsored insurance provider under the state sponsored life insurance program

Did the Association recently sponsor a new SSLI group life policy?

Yes, a letter was sent to you in March 2021 advising you that your Association elected to sponsor a new insurance provider to underwrite the State Sponsored Life Insurance (“SSLI”) program. The SSLI program is your Association’s group life insurance program. The new insurance provider under the SSLI program is MetLife and is supported by Military Benefit Association (MBA).

Is my coverage in effect with the new insurer?

Yes, in the letter mailed to you in March 2021, you were notified your monthly premium payroll deduction under the SSLI program was transitioning to the newly sponsored insurance provider, MetLife. As a result of that transition, effective April 1, 2021, MetLife has guaranteed your coverage under the SSLI program with the same or better rates and benefits. The transition was seamless to you and your coverage under the SSLI program remains in place.

continued next page

SSLI continued

Will the former insurer, AFBA/5 Star Life, contact me?

AFBA/5Star Life may contact you informing you that your coverage with them has lapsed. This is correct as your monthly premium has been transitioned under the SSLI program to the newly sponsored insurance provider, MetLife. In the March 2021 letter informing you of the transition, you were notified that you had the option to stay with the AFBA/5Star plan on a direct bill basis. Unless you opted to stay with AFBA/5 Star Life on a direct billed basis, you do not need to pay any premiums to AFBA /5Star Life.

As noted above, your SSLI program monthly premium has transitioned to MetLife and your coverage remains in place with MetLife.

What documentation is there to prove the change?

MBA has mailed you information on your SSLI program coverage with MetLife. A MetLife Certificate of Insurance can be downloaded at militarybenefit.org/NGcertificate.

If you just joined the SSLI program, you will receive a MetLife Schedule of Insurance from MBA in the mail after the first SSLI monthly premium payroll deduction has taken place.

Who do I contact to make any changes to my policy, beneficiary updates or information on my coverage?

You will make changes through the same method that you used previously. The SSLI program is

still through your state association and payroll deductions remain as before. If you have questions, call the SSLI program Administrator at 1-800-633-8333.

How do I enroll in the new SSLI program?

Call the Administrator at 1-800-633-8333 or visit the website at NGSSLI.com

The State Sponsored Life Insurance program is your Association's group life insurance program.



Executive Director

Col (Ret.) Mark Schutta

Greetings to all NGAMN members! I hope all finds each one of you doing well. I want to thank those who were able to login into the State Virtual Conference this past June. While we were disappointed we had to reschedule

from April it was great to hear good messages from the Outgoing President (Lt Col Armstrong) the incoming President (LTC Hackett) our TAG (MG Manke) and the Chairman of the NGAUS Board (MG (ret) McGuire).

As for me, I will reiterate my message...During my tenure I want to focus on four areas: Membership, SSLI, Corporate Sponsors, and ensuring the mission needs of soldiers and airmen are addressed through this association and NGAUS.

First Membership, Membership matters...as a professional organization it is incumbent on us to address the mission and personal needs of our soldiers and airmen. NGAMN and NGAUS advocate for us on Capitol Hill fighting for your benefits. Strength in numbers = greater voice.

Second SSLI, State Service Life Insurance was created for Soldiers and Airmen way before SGLI ever existed. The association and SSLI Board of Trustees have worked to keep premiums low and ensure coverage policies exist for you and your family. The main benefit to SSLI is that you can carry this forward into retirement. Under SGLI, coverage stops the day you retire.

Third Corporate Memberships, we need our Corporate Sponsors, this group assists us in paying for life memberships, youth camp donations, and other events. If you or your businesses you work for want to become a Corporate Sponsor, please send me an e-mail at director@ngamn.org with the details and I can work it from there.

Lastly, if there are any resolutions (areas of mission or personal needs) please identify. Our legislative members are honorary NGAUS members and supported us in many endeavors over the years. This ranges from NGREA funding to health benefits. So if there is a need please identify and I will work with the VP for Air and Army and our Legislative Rep on the resolution.

Finally, I hope to see a few of you at the National conference in Las Vegas. While this publication may get to you late, I've attached the National Conference information.

If have any questions please contact me at: director@ngamn.org.



Membership Dues National Guard Association of Minnesota



PO Box 131766
St. Paul, MN 55113-0020
Phone: 612-790-5414
NGAMN.ORG

Active Annual Member

Grade	O1	O2	O3	O4	O5	O6	O7	O8	WO1	CW2	CW3	CW4	CW5
State	\$20	\$20	\$20	\$35	\$35	\$35	\$45	\$45	\$20	\$20	\$20	\$35	\$35
National	\$40	\$40	\$40	\$80	\$80	\$80	\$130	\$130	\$40	\$40	\$40	\$80	\$80
Total	\$60	\$60	\$60	\$115	\$115	\$115	\$175	\$175	\$60	\$60	\$60	\$115	\$115

Amount Due: _____ (See table above)

- Newly Commissioned Officers and Warrant Officers:** Free membership for a period of one year and any portion of the year in which they are appointed. In addition, new accessions from other services are given the same courtesy of a one year free membership.
- Associate Member:** NGAUS:\$45 – State: \$25
- Active Life NGAUS:** One lump sum payment of \$1,000, in four \$250 installments or ten \$100 installments and an **Active Life State Member:** One lump sum payment of \$250. Call NGAUS at 202-408-5880 if choosing installments.
- Alumni/Retired Officers:** NGAUS Life Member \$125 – State Life Member \$50 (Note, officers who have not “retired” and have elected to renew their service obligation with the guard will revert to annual membership while they are on active status)

To **Pay by Check:** Complete the information below and send the form with a check payable to NGAMN to address above.

Name: _____ Rank: _____

Address: _____ City | State | Zip: _____

Home Phone: _____ Work Phone: _____

Mobile: _____ E-Mail: _____

Unit Assignment: _____

To **Pay by Credit Card:** please go to www.ngaus.org/membership.

– PLEASE NOTE –

MEMBERSHIP IN THE NATIONAL GUARD ASSOCIATION ENCOMPASSES BOTH THE STATE AND NATIONAL DUES AS PER THE STATE ASSOCIATION BY-LAWS. YOU CANNOT BE A MEMBER OF THE STATE ASSOCIATION WITHOUT BEING A MEMBER OF THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION. PLEASE CALCULATE YOUR DUES APPROPRIATELY.





National Guard Association of Minnesota

PO Box 131766
St Paul, MN
55113-0020

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763-229-3984

director@ngamn.org

www.ngamn.org

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President: LTC Jay Hackett

Vice President (Army): LTC Kristen Auge

Vice President (Air): Col Mike Piontek

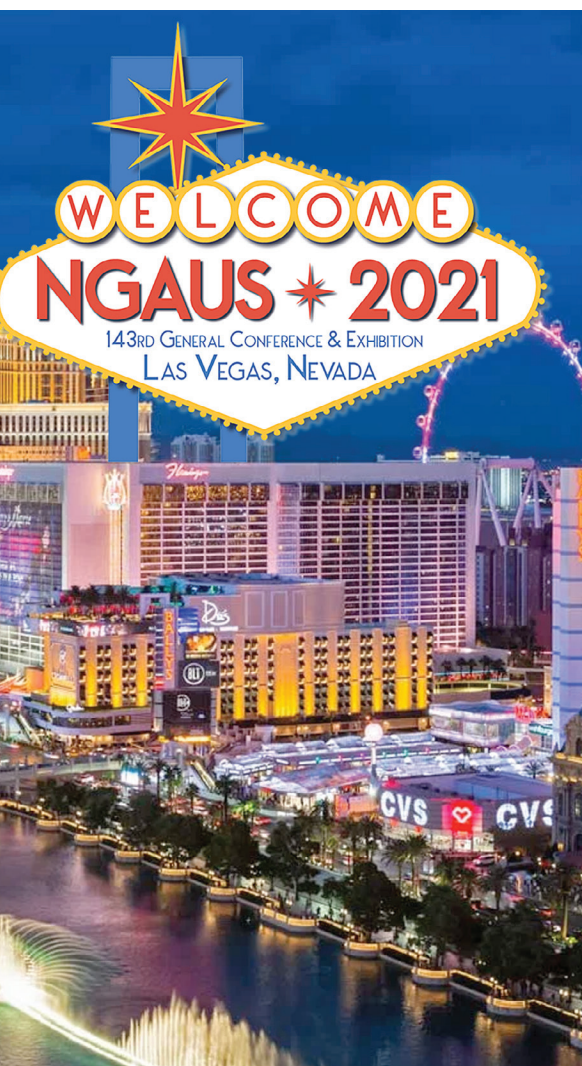
Vice President Alumni: BG (Ret) Tim Kennedy

Vice President Legislative: LTC Jeramy Browning

Treasurer: COL (Ret) Al Timm

Secretary: WO1 Shannon Siroin

Webmaster: MAJ (Ret) Christopher Kline



The upcoming 143rd General Conference & Exhibition and a busy summer on Capitol Hill will dominate the proceedings when the NGAUS board of directors meets this weekend in Washington, D.C.

Board members will review final plans for the conference, set for **Aug. 27-30 in Las Vegas**. They will also review legislative resolutions and bylaws changes proposed by the states and territories that delegates will consider during the association's annual business meeting. They will also consider nominations for 2021 NGAUS individual awards, many of which will be presented at the conference.

Congressional deliberations will also draw the board's attention. In addition to the usual summer work on the annual defense policy and appropriations bills, lawmakers are currently debating how to reimburse the National Guard for the \$521 million in fiscal 2021 funds spent on security at the U.S. Capitol this year.

Guard officials have said schools, annual training, weekend drills and some scheduled equipment maintenance will have to be cancelled in August and September if the funds are not replenished soon.

Board members will also review the association's mid-year budget and receive a membership report.

This will be retired Maj. Gen. Michael McGuire's last board meeting as chairman. His term ends at the conference. His will be one of several board positions on the ballot due to the lack of elections last year. But this may not be McGuire's last official trip to Washington, D.C. He is running to be the Republican candidate for U.S. Senate in Arizona in 2022.

For more conference information please visit: www.ngaus.org