



SFC Mireya Cruz presented the Presidents Award from incoming NGAT President COL (Ret) Paul Cerniauskas



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ON THE COVER

COL (RET) PAUL CERNIAUSKAS, INCOMING NGAT PRESIDENT, presents **SFC Mireya Cruz** with the NGAT Presidents Award at the NGAT Conference Awards Banquet for her support, dedication and determination as the outgoing NGAT President during her tenure. (Photo by SFC (Ret) Chris Evans)

Follow us on





FROM THE PRESIDENT



HELLO TO ALL THE MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL GUARD ASSOCIATION OF TEXAS, and to all the

Guardsmen in Texas—Army, Air, and State. It is my honor to be sworn in as the 58th President of NGAT and I appreciate the faith you have in me in this role.

I began my journey in 2018 on the Board of Directors with resolutions, which was formative for me in understanding the purpose of our Association. I hold it true that our Association's fundamental purpose is to fight for improvements and to preserve benefits for the Texas Guardsman — actively serving and retired — and their families. Everything we do is in service to that aim point.

I continue along the path of past NGAT Presidents during my time where I became involved in NGAT. I am grateful to follow behind Kenn White, Priscilla Leger, Chris McKeag, and Mireya Cruz who met the Association's challenges while moving forward and improving the organization. And that's the great thing — since this Association has established momentum in key areas, my first task as President is to sustain the momentum we've built — and as appropriate — build on that momentum.

Membership. The focus of our organization is our Texas Guardsmen, and the strength of our organization is our membership. It falls to each of us to support the membership effort. For example, where should a new Airman or Soldier learn about NGAT — its mission, its purpose, and what we are doing for Guardsmen? The answer is simple: you. It's you, the currently serving member who informs others about how NGAT fights for all of us. Each of us can lead others with this awareness. Reach out to your unit reps on the Board and let's coordinate a visit to talk to your folks about NGAT.

NGAT Resolutions. Improvements start with good ideas that can become resolutions and are voted in by our members at our Annual Meeting at the conference. It is the starting point function that supports our organization's fundamental purpose. The resolutions process is working again and we are

grateful to those members who offered us all the improvement ideas. See updates on our Resolutions page on <https://ngat.org/resolutions/>.

NGAT Government Affairs. Our legislative presence is active again and that is very good! It is how we advocate for all NGAT members in our Association — through the legislative process. We are only going to get busier in this area as we continue strengthening our partnership with our lobbyist, and work in partnership with the Texas Military Department. We will call attention to issues that can use your political action — i.e. call your congressman — with Calls to Action. (We're going through one now at the time of this writing!)

Information. It's our job to communicate to you what we're doing for you, our members. Here's a great question: "NGAT — what have you done for me lately?!" We should be able to answer that. The great news is that, given the work we've done in our Association, we can now answer that question. We have passed resolutions, there is a recent House bill being sponsored in the Texas Legislature from a passed NGAT resolution, we have given several congressional testimonies on your behalf, Calls to Action, and more to come. Conferences are a key venue for communication and an opportunity to get caught up on where NGAT's focus is and where we are heading.

I ask that you spread the good news of our Association to potential new members. Give us your good ideas which we can form into resolutions. Know that we will advocate for you on issues that affect you legislatively — at the State and National level. Know the reason for the conference and support with your attendance.

As President of NGAT, I look forward to serving you — our members, the Board of Directors, and the Association Full-Time staff. Talk to you soon! ★

PAUL CERNIAUSKAS
COL (Ret)
President

NGAT MAKES A COMMUNITY IMPACT IN HOUSTON

DURING THE NGAT CONFERENCE THIS YEAR we had a goal to leave an impact on the community in which we hosted our Annual Conference. This year the recipient was the Houston Food Bank. We asked attendees and our members to bring nonperishable items to the conference or to donate online to support our drive. In the end, NGAT donated over 9 boxes of food weighing over 240 pounds. We received over \$500 in cash donations and received a \$250 donation of food from Gordon Food Service Store in Houston, Texas. NGAT President-Elect Angela Matthews pictured far left dropped off the food donation at the Houston Food Bank at the end of the Conference. Thank you to all who donated. Watch the NGAT website and Facebook page for more community projects.



NGAT HONORS OCS GRADUATES

THE TEXAS ARMY NATIONAL GUARD WELCOMED ITS NEWEST LEADERS as

OCS Class 67

graduated April 6, 2025, at the Texas Capital. Each Soldier received a diploma of completion, and a select few were awarded distinguished honors amongst their class. NGAT recognized the Distinguished Honor Graduate and Honor Graduate with a Life Membership in the Association.

Former NGAT President and Deputy Adjutant General—Army, **BG Monie R. Ullis** (left) presents **2LT Carlos G. Rodriguez** (center left) Honor Graduate; and **2LT Dominique M. Anderson** (center right) Distinguished Honor Graduate; with a NGAT Life Membership with **SFC Mireya Cruz** (right) outgoing NGAT President at the OCS graduation.





2025-26 NGAT EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE



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SGM Amanda Roberts
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COL (Ret) Andrew Wenzel
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Thank you!



WELCOME TO OUR NGAT INCOMING BOARD OF DIRECTORS



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CONFERENCE OVERVIEW

At the NGAT Awards Banquet, Maj Gen (Ret) Ondra Berry delivered an electrifying keynote that left the room inspired, energized, and deeply moved. His dynamic message celebrated service, leadership, and unity. General Berry also debuted an original poem he wrote titled, "The Heart of Texas Stands," honoring the legacy and heart of the Texas National Guard.



"The Heart of Texas Stands" for the Texas National Guard and NGAT

*Beneath wide skies and Lone Star light,
Where freedom dawns and dreams take flight,
There stands a force, both bold and true—
The Guard of Texas, red, white, and blue.*

*From dusty roads to storm-swept seas,
They answer every call with ease.
In times of peace, in times of fight,
They guard the day, they guard the night.*

*With boots worn thin from selfless miles,
With steadfast hearts and quiet smiles,
They do not boast, they do not rest—
They give their all, they give their best.*

*The National Guard Association of Texas
stands near,
A voice, a shield, year after year.
They lift the Guard, they hold the line,
Ensuring stars of service shine.*

*From veterans proud to youth who rise,
Their stories echo Texas skies.
With honor deep and purpose strong,
They've kept us safe for ages long.*

*So, here's to those who've donned the name,
Who serve with grit, not seeking fame.
To every soul who raised their hand—
The heart of Texas still shall stand.*

SPEED MENTORING DEBUTS AT THE NGAT CONFERENCE

DURING THE 66TH ANNUAL NGAT CONFERENCE, attendees took the opportunity to unmask the networking possibilities by participating in our first annual NGAT Speed Mentoring event. The new event embraced the many new changes the NGAT team is bringing to the membership.

The Speed Mentoring event was a huge success! There were 36 mentors and mentees from all over Texas participating in the mentorship version of speed dating. Each mentor was given two to three mentees to talk with for 10-15 minutes. During the breakouts, the mentors introduced themselves and then mentees had the opportunity to ask questions and seek guidance from senior enlisted and officers from the Texas Military Department. At the end of each round, the mentors would switch groups and begin the next round with new mentees. The event encouraged networking opportunities and one-on-one time that was invaluable.

NGAT spoke to SrA April Ruiz, who is an NGAT member that serves in the Texas Air National Guard's 147th Operations Support Squadron and recently became a member of the NGAT Board of Directors. SrA Ruiz said, "As a child growing up, one is often told, we can make a difference in this world. The names like Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr., and Amelia Earhart come to mind. We often think we must do something significant to come close. But that is not the case and couldn't be further from the truth after learning about the National Guard Association of Texas. I will always support a group who gives a voice to the voiceless. They advocate for the guard units and most important the guardsmen of Texas from the state capital to capitol hill. With the short time of being a member, I have been blessed with many

opportunities such as being involved in the Speed Mentoring."

When asked how she would explain speed mentoring SrA Ruiz said, "Think of it like speed dating, one person sits while the others rotate. Meeting and having a date in a limited amount of time resulting in multiple dates in one night. It's the same idea here, but rather finding the love of your life, you are exchanging ideas about leadership, experiences, and laughter among senior and junior ranks. This exercise drops the invisible veil of seriousness and intimidation that comes with the higher positions to have a normal relaxed conversation. It was one of the best networking settings, because you are compelled to consult with leaders you have never met or would have normally not cross paths with. Coincidentally, not only do you learn about how to resolve your concerns, but you meet the person who is directly responsible for that task."

Not only did Soldiers and Airmen talk on topics in the military, they also dove into subjects relevant to an individual's civilian lives, because at the end of the day our civilian life intertwines with our military life.

SGM Amanda Roberts, the coordinator for the conference Speed Mentoring event, said, "The Speed Mentoring event was a wonderful opportunity for our members to interact with each other and we will continue this event next year at the conference. With the positive feedback we received after the event, we will continue to grow this opportunity. Next year, we welcome vendors to participate as mentors to share their entrepreneur experiences and encourage high school students and family members to participate in this mentorship opportunity." ★



Lieutenant Colonel Christopher McKeag Receives NGAT Minuteman Award

LIEUTENANT COLONEL CHRISTOPHER MCKEAG received the National Guard Association of Texas (NGAT) Minuteman Award in recognition of his outstanding service to the National Guard Association of Texas and the National Guard Association of the United States (NGAUS) and the Texas National Guard.

LTC McKeag began his military career in the Texas Army National Guard as an enlisted Soldier in March 2002. He was commissioned from the Texas OCS program as a 2LT on September 11, 2004, and branched Armor. He deployed to the Multinational Force and Observers (MFO) as a Platoon Leader with Co B 1-124th Cavalry in 2006. Upon his return, he was a founding member of 3-124th Cavalry as it converted from 1-112th Armor. He joined the AGR program in April 2008, and deployed to Iraq as the XO for Co B 3-124th CAV, assigned to the 56th IBCT.

Throughout his career he has served in various positions of increased responsibility as Deputy Director of the Government Affairs Office, Executive Officer and OIC for 1-124th CAV, Texas Military Department J5 Director and Commander of 1-112th Cavalry. His current assignment is as Deputy G3 for the 36th Infantry Division.

LTC McKeag earned a Bachelor of Science (Psychology) from Texas A&M University in 1999. He has completed both the U.S. Army Command & General Staff College and the U.S. Army War College. He also has a Master of Science (Technology Commercialization) and is a graduate of the Texas McCombs School of Business.

Over the past 10 years, LTC McKeag has been a dedicated supporter of the National Guard Association of Texas in multiple ways. His initial involvement in NGAT was with the legislative processes. He was instrumental in setting up legislative liaison's receptions during the NGAUS Conference to give Texas members more interaction with their legislative counterparts and emphasizing the need to be involved with the legislative process.

He served on the NGAT Board of Directors from 2016 to 2018 and served on multiple committees. He then served as NGAT President Elect from 2019-2020 and was the NGAT President from 2021 through 2023.

LTC McKeag began his term as President after 2 years of dealing with COVID and its aftermath. He was instrumental in getting NGAT back on track to recover from the damage COVID had done in disrupting operations at NGAT. He pushed to get our members back involved with the association and ensured they understood the importance NGAT can have on the legislative front. LTC McKeag is an absolute professional—able to work from the strategic to the tactical level. He is humble, conscientious, and completely dedicated; he genuinely cares for those who work for and with him.

He has long been a vocal advocate for membership in both NGAT and NGAUS. He has encouraged many Soldiers and Airmen to join NGAT and NGAUS after explaining to them the importance their membership plays in securing their current benefits and benefits for the future.

LTC McKeag's support of NGAT at the national level has been outstanding. LTC McKeag has served as an NGAT delegate at the NGAUS Conference over the past 11 years. For many years he represented NGAT at the NGAUS resolutions committee meetings for Army issues to ensure the interests of the Texas Army National Guard were being considered at the national level.

LTC McKeag's distinguished service to the Texas Military Forces and the National Guard Association of Texas uniquely qualifies him for the NGAT Minuteman Award. ★



The Spirit of Texas Award



ISG (RET) PAUL TATE received the NGAT Spirit of Texas Award in recognition of his outstanding public service and unwavering support to the National Guard Association of Texas.

Born and raised in Oklahoma, Paul grew up immersed in his Native American traditions and beliefs while listening to the stories of World War II and Vietnam veterans. His deep-rooted patriotism

was shaped by the military service of his father and uncles, who served in Special Forces, Airborne units, the Air Force, and the Marines. Inspired by their dedication, Paul enlisted in the U.S. Army in August 1991. While he initially requested an infantry assignment, a drawdown at the time placed him in supply.

Paul dedicated over 31 years to service in the Active Army and Army National Guard, culminating in his retirement in 2023, from the Oklahoma Army National Guard. He has served in multiple positions within the National Guard Association of Oklahoma culminating his commitment by serving as Association President. He

has also served as the Area IV Director (Army) of the Enlisted Association of the National Guard of the United States (EANGUS), demonstrating his leadership and commitment to the enlisted force. Back some 10 years ago Paul was also involved with Texas when Texas and Oklahoma for many years hosted a joint hospitality room at the National Guard Association of the United States (NGAUS) Annual Conference.

A longtime friend of NGAT, Paul has been a steadfast supporter of the association, attending the Annual NGAT Conference for years. He is a passionate golfer, he not only participated in the conference's golf tournament but took on a leadership role, assisting with its operations starting in 2022. For the past two years, Paul has been the tournament's lead planner, dedicating his time and personal resources to ensure its success. He personally conducts site visits, coordinates with outside vendors to enhance the event, and works closely with the golf course's general manager and associated businesses to guarantee a seamless experience for participants.

Even while serving in the Oklahoma Army National Guard, Paul consistently championed NGAT from afar, exemplifying the spirit of service and camaraderie that defines the National Guard community. His unwavering dedication and selfless contributions make him highly deserving of the NGAT Spirit of Texas Award. ★



RESOLUTIONS COMMITTEE Report



COL (Ret) Paul Cerniauskas
Resolutions Committee Chair

THE RESOLUTIONS COMMITTEE HAS BEEN WORKING ON RESOLUTIONS. We started the year with a backlog of resolutions — not a bad thing — and have been trying to determine where there is opportunity to move forward with those ideas.

When a resolution is submitted, our objective is to confirm understanding of the submitted idea/improvement, research to determine whether it's already a regulation, law, or policy; and determine what would need to make this idea become a reality. At the NGAT conference, we present to membership those ideas that are clear in their objectives for voting as resolutions by our membership.

This year, we hope to have two: one national-level resolution regarding C-130J capability (fuel capacity improvement), and one state-level resolution regarding property tax relief for actively serving Guardsmen. If the C-130J capability idea passes as a resolution, we will send to the national level, to National Guard Association of the U.S. (NGAUS).

National level resolution Ideas that benefit individual Guard members and pass as resolutions would be submitted to the national level to the Enlisted Association of the National Guard of the U.S. (EANGUS). This year, we do not anticipate sending any resolutions to EANGUS.

This is our second year of a fully-functioning resolutions process in NGAT. We have come a long way from a few years ago and I'm excited at our progress! I'm very grateful to the good people who submitted ideas — THANK YOU! (Progress starts with you; If you haven't submitted your improvement ideas,

please get on it and let us hear from you — submit your ideas to resolutions@ngat.org.) I'm also very grateful to the folks on the Resolutions Committee who put in the work to research these ideas after they're submitted. **(Help wanted!)** If you want to be one of those good folks on the NGAT Resolutions Committee OR if you want to help research an individual idea, please let us know at resolutions@ngat.org.)

Resolutions (good ideas) and Government Affairs (legislative action) are why we have NGAT.

Please see the NGAT Government Affairs updates regarding actions on the two state-level resolutions we passed at our recent March conference. Those three resolutions are now considered Standing Resolutions and can be viewed here: https://ngat.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/NGAT-Standing-Resolution-Status_9-2-2024-1.pdf.

You can see the resolutions backlog for NGAT at this link: <https://ngat.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/Resolution-Backlog-03-Mar-2025.pdf>. These are improvement ideas we are researching that could be NGAT resolutions in the future.

Your input matters! As I transition to my new position as President of NGAT, I leave you in the capable hand of MAJ Jonathan Ireland who will now serve as the Resolutions Committee chair. Thank you for your continued support. ★

ATTENTION NGAT MEMBERS

WANT TO JOIN THE NGAT BOARD OF DIRECTORS?



We're looking for two outstanding individuals to fill vacant Regional Director positions on the NGAT Board of Directors!

Who can apply?

Retired or former members of the Texas National Guard (TXNG) or Texas State Guard.

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Sundays: Noon to end of the day (UTC), Mondays: 8:00 a.m.- Noon
- Upcoming meeting dates: April 27-28 and August 17-18
- Attend special meetings and our Annual Conference (March 26-30, 2026 in Waco)
- Travel expenses reimbursed

If you're passionate about staying involved and supporting the Texas National Guard through advocacy, professional development, and community engagement, WE NEED YOU!

Contact Executive Director Marvin Harris if you're interested at mharris@ngat.org or 512-454-7300. **Help us make a difference. Join the board and represent your fellow Guardsmen! ★**

NGAT SILENT AUCTION

THE 21ST ANNUAL NGAT SILENT AUCTION was again a tremendous success.

This year we raised an impressive \$6,010 for the Texas National Guard Foundation. Our thanks goes out to all those who donated and to all those who made a purchase. We would especially like to thank Debi Steinhauer for all her help over the years in making this event a success. ★





2025 NGAT Conference Winners

GOLF TOURNAMENT

1st Place:

SSG Craig Roll
Col (Ret) Larry Werbiski
Brad Stewart

2nd Place:

CW2 Trevor Cole Gray
SSG Dereck Youngblood
CW3 (Ret) Elbert Yun
SFC Marcus Jolivet

3rd Place:

Frank Snyder
Richard Orona
Lt Col (Ret) Gary Kerr
COL (Ret) Matt Allison



Longest Drive: SFC Marcus Jolivet
Closest to the Pin: Col (Ret) Larry Werbiski
The golf tournament raised \$356 onsite.

FUN RUN

Men's Category Winners:

1st Place: CPT Travis Babcock
2nd Place: COL Gene Cummins

Women's Category Winners:

1st Place: SFC Shawn Cruz
2nd Place: MSG Melissa Bright
3rd Place: Heather Babcock



HOSPITALITY NIGHT

NGAT Hospitality Rooms returned in 2025!

1st Place:

Warrant Officers

2nd Place:

71st EMIB

3rd Place:

36th Infantry Division



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Waldorf University

CONFERENCE



Col Benjamin J. Schroll, Deputy Commander, 149th Fighter Wing discusses Texas Air National Guard Operations with Airmen at the Air Guard Breakout Session during the NGAT Conference.



Each year at the NGAT Conference NGAT recognize the member in attendance at the conference with the lowest membership number. This year NGAT recognized COL (Ret) Harold L. Brent, NGAT Life Membership #5681. COL Brent joined NGAT on October 14, 1974. NGAT President Mireya Cruz (right) presented COL Brent with a NGAT coin.



Even after a break of not having Hospitality Rooms it seems that the Warrant Officers still got it. Their speakeasy theme was a huge hit and yet again they were selected as the Best NGAT Hospitality Room 2025.

WELCOME PARTY



Members at the NGAT Conference Welcome Party enjoyed music from DJ Robflex and danced the night away.



MG John "Brad" Bowlin, Commander 36th Infantry Division fields questions during the Army Breakout Session at the NGAT Conference.

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HIGHLIGHTS



NGAT members enjoy the always popular Wine Tasting hosted by the Royal Sonesta.



The NGAT Conference Welcome Party brought out some hidden talents in our membership like SFC Michael Morancie a member of the Recruiting & Retention.



The NGAT Board of Directors gather prior to the start of the NGAT Conference to go over last-minute conference preparations.



Attendees at the NGAT Awards Banquet were entertained by members of the Houston Contemporary Dance Company to help us celebrate the masquerade theme.



MAJ (CH) Milton Gutierrez of the 176th Engineer Brigade conducts chapel services at the conclusion of the NGAT Conference.



Attendees at the NGAT Spouses Luncheon were entertained by Magician and Mentalist Jose Reyes. Guest are still trying to figure out "How Did He Do That!"



LEGAL UPDATE with DOUG O'CONNELL

COLLATERAL CONSEQUENCES WHEN CHARGED IN CIVILIAN COURT



MILITARY SERVICE MEMBERS FACING CIVILIAN COURT CRIMINAL CHARGES should approach deferred adjudication with caution, as it can have significant implications for their careers, security clearances, and future opportunities. While deferred adjudication may seem appealing—offering a chance to avoid a formal conviction—it often carries hidden risks that can disproportionately affect those in the military.

First, deferred adjudication is not equivalent to a dismissal or acquittal. It typically requires an admission of guilt or a plea, which will be treated as a conviction in military contexts. Military law and service regulations prioritize good order and discipline, meaning commanders will view such pleas as evidence of misconduct, even without a formal conviction. A deferred adjudication can also lead to administrative actions, such as non-judicial punishment, separation proceedings, or unfavorable evaluations, which can derail a service member's career.

Second, security clearances are a cornerstone of many military roles. Deferred adjudication often appears on background checks, as it involves court supervision, probation, or other conditions. Clearance adjudicators may interpret this as evidence of untrustworthiness or poor judgment, especially for charges involving violence, drugs, or moral turpitude. A suspended or revoked clearance can limit job assignments, halt promotions, or force early separation, as many billets require clearance eligibility.

Third, military culture emphasizes accountability and integrity. Accepting deferred adjudication may be seen as sidestepping responsibility, which

can erode trust among peers and leadership. Service members are held to a higher standard, and actions that might seem minor in civilian life—such as a deferred plea for a misdemeanor—can trigger disproportionate consequences in the military, including damage to reputation and credibility.

Finally, the long-term impact extends beyond active duty. Veterans seeking civilian jobs, especially in law enforcement or government, may face scrutiny over deferred adjudication records. These records, while not always convictions, can complicate background checks and licensing processes, limiting post-service opportunities.

An attorney experienced in military law can help you fight the charges outright or negotiate a dismissal. The stakes—career progression, clearance eligibility, and personal reputation—are too high to gamble on a plea that promises leniency but delivers lasting consequences. Consulting a military defense attorney early can help navigate these complexities and protect both present duties and future prospects. ★

Retired Colonel Doug O'Connell is an NGAT Life Member and partner at the O'Connell West, PLLC law firm. If you need legal help O'Connell West, PLLC law firm can help. Call 512-547-7265. OC-West offers discounted rates to NGAT members. Serving military service members and Veterans statewide.



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Attorney & Colonel (Ret)

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MEMBERSHIP DRIVE Update



MSgt Angela Matthews
Membership Committee Chair



NGAT PRESIDENT, SFC MIREYA CRUZ (left), and Membership Committee Chair, **MSgt Angela Matthews** (right), present **COL Gene Cummins** with a check for \$500 for the 71st Troop Commands 1st Place win in the NGAT Membership Drive Contest.



NGAT PRESIDENT, SFC MIREYA CRUZ (left), and Membership Committee Chair, **MSgt Angela Matthews** (right), present **CPT Collin Moffett** with a check for \$300 for the 72nd IBCT's 2nd Place win in the NGAT Membership Drive Contest.

(Photos by SFC (Ret) Chris Evans)

YOUR ASSOCIATION HAS BEEN HARD AT WORK LOOKING FOR WAYS TO INCREASE OUR MEMBERSHIP NUMBERS not only at the state level but also at the national level. Texas teamed up with the National Guard Association of Oklahoma (NGAOK) for an epic membership push with the Red River Rivalry Membership Drive. Texas and Oklahoma have always helped each other out at the National level, and given the football connection, it just seemed like a good fit. This drive ran from Oct 1st through December 31st. The goal was for the state that produced the most national growth in NGAUS & EANGUS received a traveling trophy, bragging rights, and as a side effect, a massive increase in membership numbers.

During the competition NGAT did see increased growth on the NGAUS side, but sadly we did not have the same increase on the enlisted side with EANGUS. So, OKLAHOMA was deemed with winner of the 1st Red River Rivalry Membership Drive.

Another membership drive that NGAT conducted was a unit membership drive that encouraged commands to increase their membership in NGAT. The competition ran from October 1, 2024, through February 28, 2025. Winners were announced at the NGAT Conference Awards banquet where they were presented checks for their accomplishments. Winners were as follows:

- 1st Place – 71st Troop Command**
- 2nd Place – 72nd IBCT**
- 3rd Place – 136th MEB**

- Increased NGAT Membership by 87**
- Increased NGAT Membership by 42**
- Increased NGAT Membership by 38**

Overall, the membership drives increased NGAT Membership by 257.



New competitions are coming your way. Watch the website and our Facebook page for additional information. More importantly, tell your friends to join NGAT if they are not a member. With our increase in legislative activities, it is even more important to be a part of an organization that is willing to stand up for your rights and benefits.

Thank you to everyone who helped with the membership drive. ★

NGAT PRESIDENT, SFC MIREYA CRUZ (left), and Membership Committee Chair, **MSgt Angela Matthews** (right), present **LTC TJ Clifton** with a check for \$150 for the 136th MEB's 3rd Place win in the NGAT Membership Drive Contest.



Cherry Stovall

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by **Eric Knustrom**
Principal, Texas Star Alliance



Ask the Lobbyist, Vol 1, Issue 3

Forgive the sports metaphors, but if the legislative session were a football game we'd be entering the start of the third quarter. If it were a baseball game, we'd be at the beginning of the 7th inning stretch. No matter how you describe it, what began as a very routine and relatively predictable session, has picked up the pace and intensity in the last couple of weeks.

This article is being written the morning after the budget, Senate Bill (SB) 1, was considered in the House of Representatives. Only a day after Rep. Brian Harrison (R) of Waxahachie filed a motion to “vacate the chair,” alleging that Speaker Duston Burrows had “betrayed the voters of Texas.” The motion was tabled (the normal procedure to defeat a motion without forcing a “yes or no” vote) on a vote of 141 to 2.

With the House overwhelming affirming his Speakership, Dustin Burrows laid out the budget for consideration early in the legislative day on Thursday, April 10th. It was not over until the House gavelled out at 3:14 a.m. When all of the dust settled, the House approved a \$337 billion dollar budget for the coming biennium. Which is only \$1 billion dollars more than the Senate's version of SB 1 which was passed by that chamber on March 25th. But don't let the similarities fool you. For service members, there are BIG differences.

The Senate's version of SB 1 zeroed out “Strategy C.1.2 State Tuition Assistance (STA)” under “Goal C ‘Community Support.’” In plain language, that means that the Senate's version of the budget would defund the State Tuition Assistance Program. In response to the Senate's actions, your NGAT Executive Team mobilized the effort and called upon you as members to reach out to your elected officials in both chambers to stress the importance of this program to service members and their families. In addition, we worked with the Texas Military Department (TMD) to support their efforts to understand the reasoning of those on the Senate Finance Committee who recommended the program funding be eliminated.

The result was that, through the efforts of the NGAT Executive Team and your efforts showing support for this Texas Guard benefit, on a motion by Rep. Terry Wilson (R) of Georgetown, the House version of SB 1 increased the funding from the previous budget's \$6 million to \$14 million over two years. This is only \$1 million shy of the request by TMD for STA of \$15 million. This was a HUGE win in the fight to not only preserve the STA program, but to improve the resources and benefits provided to

Texas service members. But it's not over yet: Senate Bill 1 will next go to a conference committee made up of House and Senate members, and NGAT will continue to advocate with everyone involved to advance the interests of its members and all service members in the Texas Military Department.

But that is only one aspect of NGAT's legislative efforts this session. In addition to work on the budget, NGAT has sent representatives to visit with legislators to provide input on proposals, both the good and bad. And where called for, NGAT's immediate past president and current Government Affairs Committee chair, Mireya Cruz, has testified before legislative committees about those measures.

NGAT is continuing to work with Rep. Cecil Bell, Jr. (R) of Magnolia to advance a proposal that would provide options for retirement benefits to service members deployed 60 days or more, e.g., those who have and are serving as part of Operation Lone Star. Updates on that effort will follow in our next edition. Until then, thank you for responding to our call for support. It made all the difference. ★


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1 <https://www.kvue.com/article/news/politics/texas-legislature/texas-house-rejects-effort-remove-house-speaker-dustin-burrows/269-764b845a-0f95-4d18-a72d-ad369b28bcf4>

2 The two votes opposing the motion to table, which would have allowed the motion to vacate to proceed (in favor of ousting the Speaker) were Rep. Harrison and Rep. David Lowe (R) of Richland Hills. Id.

3 <https://www.texastribune.org/2025/04/11/texas-house-budget-approval/>

4 Page 24, “Workgroup Revisions and Additions” https://www.lbb.texas.gov/Documents/Appropriations_Bills/89/Senate_Adopted/Art%20V%20DD_SFC_031225.pdf

2025 NGAT EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION SCHOLARSHIPS WINNERS

Congratulations to all our winners!



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Recruiting and Training Center
Texas State Guard



NGAT EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION
SCHOLARSHIP — \$4,000
SGT HANNAH GALICIA
D Co, 156th BEB



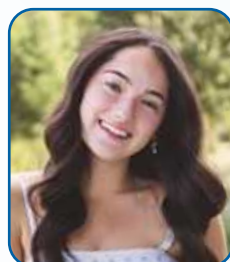
NGAT EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION
SCHOLARSHIP — \$3,000
CAMRYN LESLIE
Daughter of Col (Ret) Kurt Leslie



NGAT EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION
SCHOLARSHIP — \$2,000
JONATHAN PIRI
Son of CW4 Andrew Piri



CW4 (RET) LEN AND JEAN TALLAS
MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP — \$2,000
KALEB LORANCE
Son of SGM (Ret) Gerald Lorange



BG (RET) HUGH J. HALL & FAMILY
LEADERSHIP SCHOLARSHIP
— \$1,500
KEZIAH HANNA
Daughter of LTC Christopher Hanna



MG (RET) PATRICK HAMILTON
LEADERSHIP SCHOLARSHIP
— \$1,500
SAMUEL HILDEBRAND
Son of COL Brian Hildebrand



MG (RET) GLORIA JENELL AND
MARLIN E. MOTE
ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP — \$1,250
GABRIEL LORANCE
Son of SGM (Ret) Gerald Lorange



NGAT EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION
SCHOLARSHIP — \$1,250
ELOUISE NORMAND
Daughter of COL (Ret)
Craig Normand



NGAT PAST PRESIDENT'S
SCHOLARSHIP — \$1,000
ELLA HARMON
Daughter of MAJ James Harmon



TXNG RETIREES ENDOWED
SCHOLARSHIP — \$1,000
AINSLEY PEREZ-GREER
Daughter of SFC Julie Perez



USAA SCHOLARSHIP — \$1,000
CARTER RUTHERFORD
Son of MAJ (Ret) Mark
Rutherford



MG (RET) JAMES K. "RED" BROWN
LEADERSHIP SCHOLARSHIP
— \$1,000
BAILEY PHILLIPS
Daughter of CW5 Douglas Phillips



MG (RET) CHARLES K. ARIS
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SARAH STILLINGER
Daughter of LTC Randall Stillinger



MG (RET) WILLIAM WILSON
HONORARY SCHOLARSHIP
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LEADERSHIP SCHOLARSHIP
— \$1,000
DANIEL LORANCE
Son of SGM (Ret) Gerald Lorange



COL (RET) RICHARD E. HARRISON
MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP
— \$1,000
SARAH KERR
Daughter of Lt Col (Ret) Gary Kerr



136TH MP LEADERSHIP
SCHOLARSHIP — \$500
CHRISTOPHER ABRAHAMS
Son of SGT Jeffery Abrahams

Story by 100th MPAD

Texas Military Department Hosts Annual BEST WARRIOR COMPETITION

Grit, endurance, and determination took center stage as service members from the Texas Army National Guard and Texas Air National Guard, international competitors from the Republic of Chile and the Czech Republic, put their skills to the test in the Texas Military Department Best Warrior Competition February 24-28, 2025, at Camp Swift, near Bastrop, Texas.

The grueling three-day event is more than just a test of skill, it's a physical and mental crucible. From weapons qualifications to tactical combat casualty care, road marches, and an intense 200-meter swim, competitors push through exhaustion, stress, and unpredictable challenges, all while operating on minimal sleep in a rugged field environment.

This year's competition highlights international cooperation through the State Partnership Program, as Chilean and Czech service members compete alongside Texas guardsmen. Foreign participation helps strengthen ties between Texas, the United States, and their home countries, demonstrating how military partnerships can foster lasting relationships.

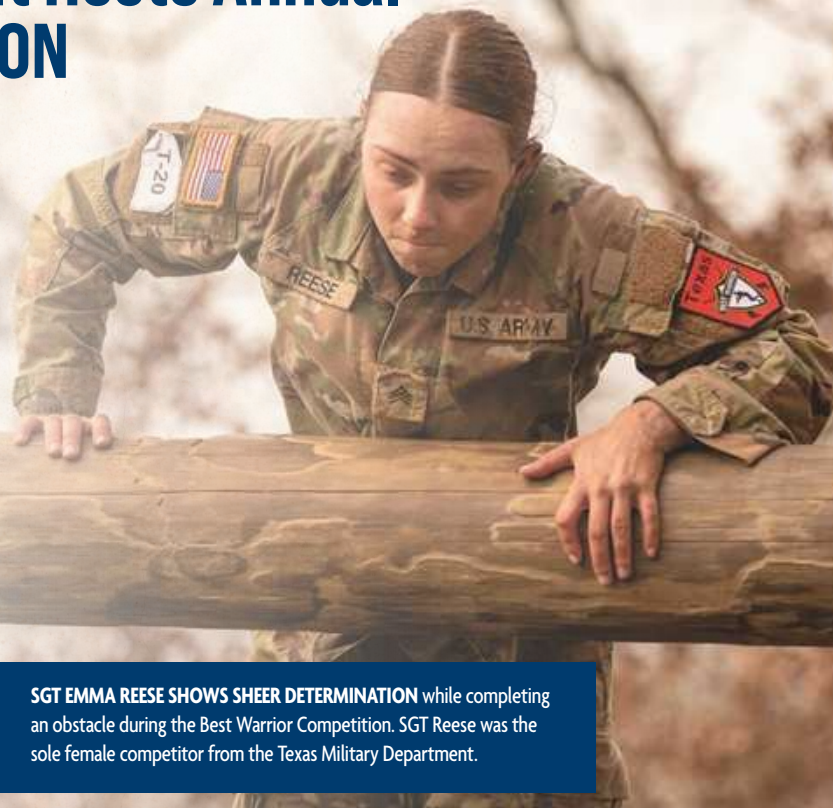
For some, the competition represents more than just another challenge, it's a milestone in their careers. For Texas Army National Guard SGT Emma Reese, the sole female competitor from Texas, stepping up to the challenge is about paving the way for others. "I want to encourage other female soldiers. I know it can be intimidating, but always come out, try, and do your best," Reese said. "It's better to try and fail than never attempt it at all. I've been working with the M4, M17, and 249. I just got back from the Basic Leader Course, so I'm fortunate to have recently refreshed my tactical combat casualty care and land navigation skills."

For the first time in the competition's history, the Republic of Chile and the Czech Republic are represented by female competitors.

The Best Warrior Competition's design pushes each participant to their limits multiplying the effects of stress with physically demanding events and little sleep in an unknown environment. As the competition concluded, warriors push through exhaustion and physical strain, fighting for the honor of being named the Best Warrior. For some, it's about winning, but for all, it's about proving their strength, skill, and dedication to service.

At the Awards Banquet, where months of preparation and three days of relentless effort culminated in a celebration of resilience the winners were named. PFC Jacob Carruth was named Best Enlisted Soldier, while SGT Daniel Flores earned the title of Best NCO, solidifying their status as the top warriors in Texas. Additionally, Texas Air National Guard Airmen, SrA Mason Aguilar and SSgt Isaac Johnson were honored as the Texas Air National Guard's highest rated enlisted and NCO, respectively. Their victories were not just personal achievements but reflections of the dedication, endurance, and spirit of every competitor who pushed their limits throughout the competition.

Army winner will advance to the Army National Guard Regional Best Warrior competition try and qualify to advance to the Army Best Warrior Competition. ★



SGT EMMA REESE SHOWS SHEER DETERMINATION while completing an obstacle during the Best Warrior Competition. SGT Reese was the sole female competitor from the Texas Military Department.



SOLDIERS AND AIRMEN receive a safety briefing prior to the start of the day's events in the Texas Military Department's Best Warrior Competition in Bastrop, Texas.



CSM FREDERICK HEARD (Center), Command Senior Enlisted Leader for Texas presents awards to **SGT Daniel Flores** (left) Best Warrior NCO of the Year; and **PFC Jacob Carruth** (right) Best Warrior Soldier of the Year. Both will move forward to the Regional Best Warrior competition.

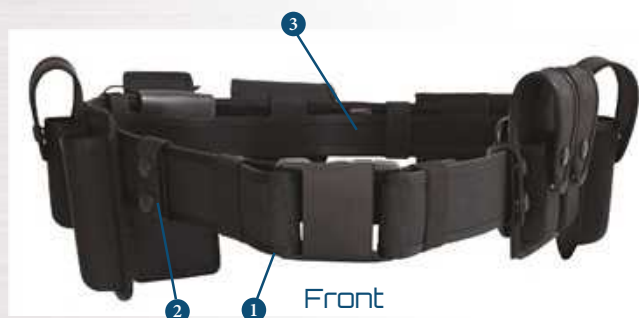
(Photos by SSG Rogelio Medina)



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6. X652-1 - Radio Case
7. X681-4 - Aerosol Case
8. X560-21 - Expandable Baton Pouch
9. X627-3 - Double Magazine Pouch Vertical and Horizontal Carry
10. X672-5 - Flashlight Pouch

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Director of Military Business Development

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EANGUS Appoints CSM (Ret) John Gipe as Executive Director

EANGUS IS PROUD TO ANNOUNCE THE APPOINTMENT OF COMMAND SERGEANT MAJOR (RETIRED) JOHN GIPE as its new Executive Director. With an impressive military career that includes leadership experience at the highest levels, Gipe brings exceptional expertise in strategic operations, personnel management, and national defense policy.

Gipe's distinguished service includes his role as the 9th Senior Enlisted Advisor to the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs. In this capacity, he advised the Assistant Secretary and staff on enlisted affairs concerning 1.1 million military personnel across the Army and Air National Guard, as well as the reserves of the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, and Coast Guard. During his tenure as the Senior Enlisted Advisor, he also held several additional positions: Chairman of the Department of Defense Reserve Component Senior Enlisted Advisory Council, Senior Enlisted member of the Department of Defense Yellow Ribbon Advisory Council, Senior Enlisted representative on the Department of Defense Freedom Award selection board, and a member of the Senior Advisory Board for the 11th Quadrennial Review of Military Compensation.



In addition, he served as the 8th Command Sergeant Major of the Army National Guard, where he was the principal advisor to the Director of the Army National Guard on training, personnel policy, and family programs, overseeing the well-being of 372,800 Soldiers and their families.

His exceptional experience, leadership, and commitment to service make him an invaluable asset as we continue our mission to promote, safeguard, and enhance the status, welfare, and professionalism of enlisted National Guard members, veterans, retirees, and their families through legislation, employment, education, emergency resources, and partnerships.

EANGUS would also like to thank Frank Yoakum for graciously serving as our interim Executive Director. His efforts and expertise are invaluable and greatly appreciated. John will assume the duties of Executive Director on 1 June 2025. ★

EANGUS Legislative Workshops



DURING THE EANGUS LEGISLATIVE WORKSHOP, NGAT members were able to meet with the 14th Command Sergeant Major of the Army National Guard, **CSM James B. Kendrick**. He recognized President Mireya Cruz as he followed her progression within the association. It was a pleasure to discuss with him matters pertaining to Texas. We look forward to a strong relationship with him throughout his tenure. Pictured L-R: **MSgt Angela Matthews**, **SFC Mireya Cruz**, **CSM James B. Kendrick** and **SFC Julie Perez**.



YOUR NGAT TEAM met with Senator Cruz (center) and his Defense Fellow discussing matters benefiting our members and **Texas Military Department** personnel. Our visit during the EANGUS Legislative Workshop was very productive. Pictured L-R: **MSgt Angela Matthews**, Senator Ted Cruz, **SFC Julie Perez** and **SFC Mireya Cruz**. Are you interested in the legislative process? If so, contact the NGAT office and join our government affairs committee.



52nd Annual EANGUS Conference

EANGUS Conference Registration now open at www.ngat.org/eangus-conference/. The 54th Annual EANGUS Conference will be held August 11-14, 2025 in Reno, Nevada at the Grand Sierra Resort. Travel days are Aug 10th & 15th. Visit the website for additional information.



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147th General Conference & Exhibition

August 22 - 25, 2025 Milwaukee

The NGAUS General Conference & Exhibition is the Association's annual business meeting. Army and Air National Guard officers from all 50 states, three territories and the District of Columbia gather to network, set their legislative agenda and hear from America's civilian and military leaders. Family members, industry representatives and local officials also attend. We hope to see you in Milwaukee this year!

America's National Guard: Affordable, Accessible, Lethal



Make plans to attend the NGAUS Conference where professional development and excitement await.

The conference starts off with the **NGAUS Golf Tournament at the Bog Golf Course on Friday, August 22**. The bog is an Arnold Palmer-designed course that has been named in Golf Digest's Best in State ranking.

That same day, the **Harley-Davidson Motorcycle Ride** is scheduled for the surrounding area. Milwaukee hosted the very first NGAUS Motorcycle ride back in 2011. Harley-Davidson is headquartered in Milwaukee and will have bikes available for rent on the day of the ride.

New this year is **Lake Michigan Sport Fishing**. Only 75 spots are available so be sure to sign up as soon as possible. Participants will have the chance to fish for salmon or trout on Lake Michigan. The registration fee covers all equipment and a one-day fishing license.

The popular mixers are set for the evening on August 22. **The company-grade/warrant officer event is scheduled for the MECCA and Beer Garden, while the senior warrant officers will be in the Gather**. Both establishments are downtown in the Deer District, an entertainment complex across the street from Fiserv Forum, the home of the 2021 NBA Champion Milwaukee Bucks. While the Bucks' season will be over in August, the **Milwaukee Brewers MLB franchise will play the San Francisco Giants** during the conference at the American Family Field.

The **5k Fun Run** will be held on Saturday, August 23 from 7:00 am to 8:30 am at Veterans Park with a run along Lake Michigan.

Officer professional development for company-grade officers is scheduled throughout the conference. As always NGAUS will invite key National Guard Leadership as well as lawmakers and defense

leaders to speak during the conference. The tradeshow will include military equipment, training, and benefits for military personnel and their families.

Country-music artist Rockie Lynne will perform at the opening ceremonies followed by the always popular Roll Call of State that exudes state pride with their unique presentations.

The Governor's Reception will be held at Discovery World which is a science museum that features an aquarium, exhibits, and many immersive experiences — including a flight simulator. **Attire for this event will be a Yacht/Boating theme.**

The Retirees Caucus Meeting and Luncheon will be held on Sunday, August 24 at the Harley-Davidson Museum.

Hospitality Night will be held at multiple venues in the downtown area as well as assigned NGAUS hotels. It is sure to be a lot of fun and exciting to see what each state or area do for this fun event.

The States Dinner closes out the social events at the Baird Center ballroom. It's be themed as a traditional supper club environment with "come as you are" dress code. After dinner, comedian **Charlie Brown**, creator of the funny Manitowac Minute video series, will entertain.

Texas delegates will stay at the Doubletree By Hilton in downtown, Wisconsin. Registration is now open.

Visit www.ngat.org/ngaus-conference/ for more information about the NGAUS Conference and to register to attend. ★



TAPS

As of April 30, 2025

SFC (Ret) Gaylon Barrow, Life Member #3865, Tyler

Lt Col (Ret) Ronald F. Becker, Life Member #5566, San Antonio

SGT Robert L. Billig, Life Member #21945, Taylor

CPT (Ret) Thomas F. Boone, Life Member #15030, Alvin

****SPC Kacia M. Campbell**, HHC 372nd DSSB, New Waverly

SGM (Ret) Leora Carter, Life Member #33225, Bastrop

SSgt Philip N. Courtney, Annual Member, Hillsdale, OK

1SG (Ret) Edward J. Debish, Life Member #13084, Hartford, PA

Lt Col (Ret) Drew Daugherty, Life Member #32415, Wimberley

MSG (Ret) Leonard T. Dumas, Life Member #1673, Marshall

SSG (Ret) Jimmy Harold Fisher, Brownwood

COL (Ret) Robert W. Gruenhagen, Life Member #10270, Kennedale

LTC (Ret) Richard Hutchison, Dripping Springs

CSM (Ret) Paul R. Kirk, Life Member #10415, Spring

Oscar Landez, Life Member #9362, San Antonio

SFC (Ret) Cary V. Lee, Life Member #16802, Amarillo

***SGT Daniel Littleton**, HHC 2-149 Avn Bn, Grand Prairie

LTC (Ret) Erick T. Mattys, Life Member #4482, Austin

COL (Ret) Joe Berry Millhollon, Life Member #1876, Bonham

Anthony Moreno, Hico

SPC Ralph D. Morrison, Life Member 22371, Abilene

SSgt (Ret) James F. Mullinax, Life Member #19163, Baytown

SGT Alan D. Olson, Life Member #29387, Pampa

SFC (Ret) Floyd Pearce, Life Member #25828, Gatesville

****PFC Bryce A. Ramsey**, A Co 156th BEB, Wataugh

SGM (Ret) Joe Anthony Rodriguez, Life Member #22916, San Antonio

CW2 (Ret) Mark A. Rollings, Plano

MSG (Ret) Frederico Salazar Jr., Bastrop

MSG (Ret) Roger W. Sassman, Life Member #5882, Austin

MSG (Ret) Benjamin Saucedo, Life Member #3613, Red Rock

CMSgt (Ret) Elgin Herbert Schulmeier, Life Member #1814, Cibola

***MG (Ret) Lester Simpson**, Life Member #33020, Rowlett,
Former Commander 36th Infantry Division

LTC (Ret) Carl Spillers, Life Member #19289, Round Rock

Lt Col (Ret) Aloysius Stepchinski, Life Member #115, Austin

COL (Ret) Nolan A. Stone, Life Member #34061, Duncanville

SSG T. Ryan Turrell Jr., Post Falls, SD

MSgt (Ret) Kimberly N. Walters, Life Member #28290, Bastrop

CSM (Ret) Joe P. Wheeler, Life Member #6944, Arlington

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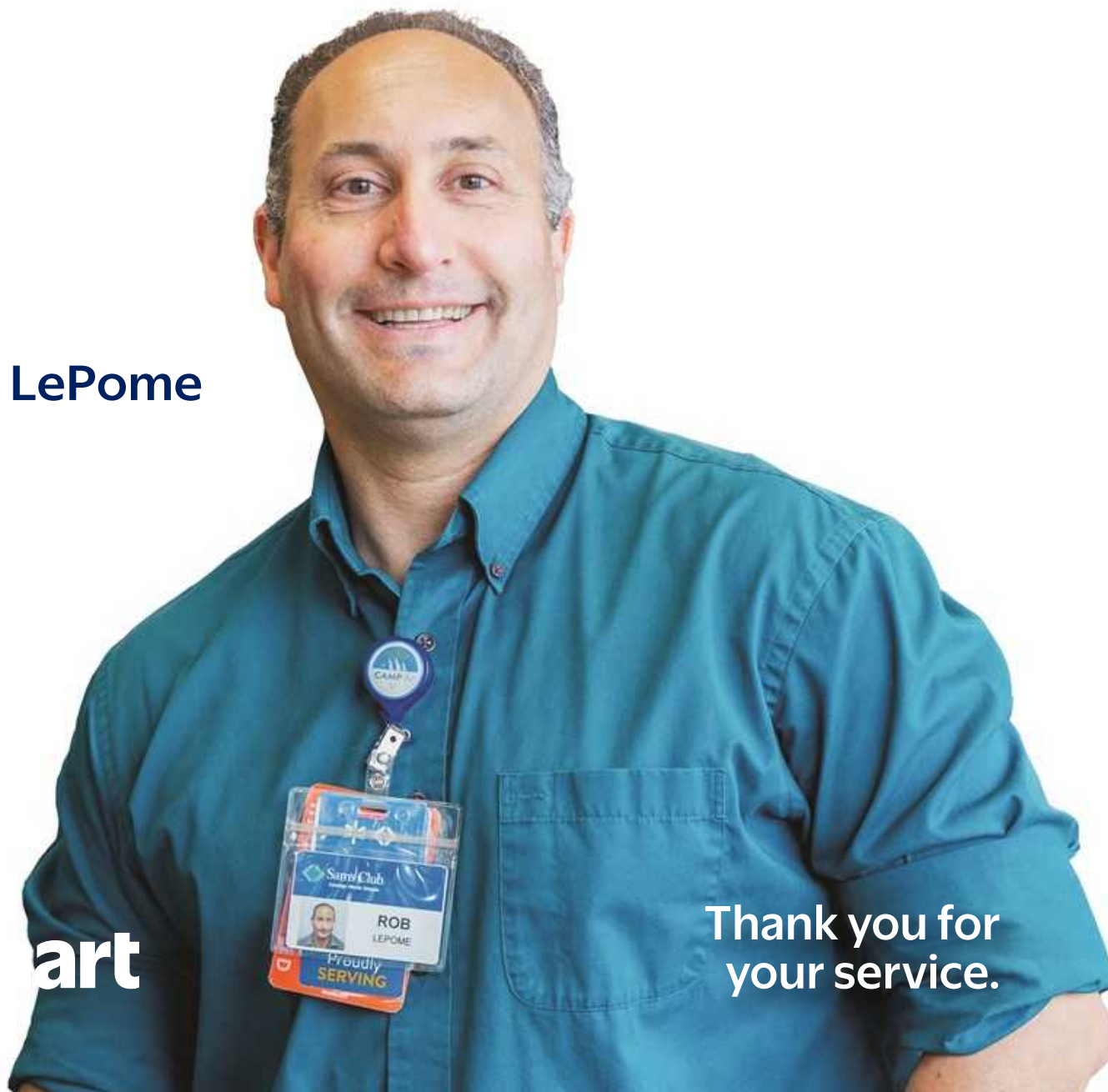
IF YOU ARE AWARE OF THE PASSING OF A CURRENT OR FORMER
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Rob LePome



art

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CONGRATULATIONS to the Texas Army National Guard SGM Distant Learning Class 50-001 on their recent graduation. Pictured L-R: **CSM Luis De Los Santos** and **SGM Cliff Partee** (71st EMIB), **CSM Josh Ray** (Recruiting), **CSM Carlos Diaz**, 36th Infantry Division CSM and **SGM Matt Bragg** (36th DIVARTY). (Photo courtesy 71st EMIB)

THE 111TH WEATHER FLIGHT

in the 147th Attack Wing has officially been redesignated to the 111th Combat Weather Flight. Their mission remains steadfast: providing critical weather and environmental services to Army National Guard combat units. This redesignation highlights the unique skill set.

(Photo courtesy 147th Attack Wing)



NGAT PLANNING CALENDAR

(As of April 30, 2025)

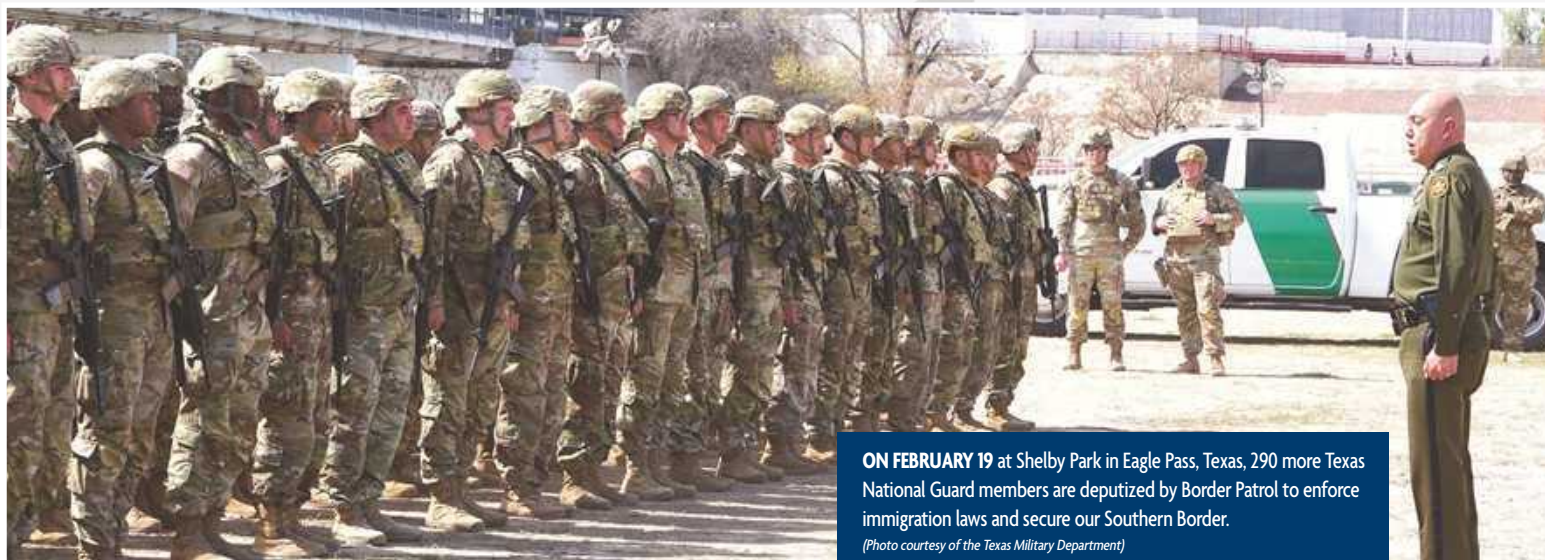
2025

23-26	May	Memorial Day Observed (NGAT Office Closed)
14	Jun	U.S. Army Birthday/Flag Day
19	Jun	Juneteenth (NGAT Office Closed)
3-4	Jul	Independence Day Observed (NGAT Office Closed)
10-14	Aug	EANGUS Annual Conference, Reno, NV
17-18	Aug	NGAT Board of Directors Meeting, Austin, Texas
22-26	Aug	NGAUS Annual Conference, Milwaukee, WI
29 Aug-1 Sep		Labor Day Observed (NGAT Office Closed)
11	Sep	Patriot Day
13	Oct	Columbus Day (NGAT Office Closed)



ON FEBRUARY 22ND, THE GUNSLINGERS and distinguished guests celebrated their Redleg traditions with their Saint Barbara's Ball. They were joined by 56th Infantry Brigade Combat Team Commander, **COL Brent A. Kemp**, and former 3-133 Field Artillery Regiment Commander, **COL (Ret) Miguel A. Torres** in El Paso, Texas.

(Photo courtesy 3-133rd FA)



ON FEBRUARY 19 at Shelby Park in Eagle Pass, Texas, 290 more Texas National Guard members are deputized by Border Patrol to enforce immigration laws and secure our Southern Border.

(Photo courtesy of the Texas Military Department)