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**Appropriations Committee**  
**Regulation and Protection Sub-Committee**

**Connecticut Military Department Budget Presentation**

**Major General Francis J. Evon, Jr.**  
**The Adjutant General**

**February 17, 2023**

Co-chairpersons, Senator Marx and Representative Nolan, ranking members Senator Berthel and Representative Rutigliano, and members of the Appropriations Committee's Regulation and Protection Subcommittee. I am Major General Francis J. Evon, Jr., the Adjutant General of the Connecticut Military Department. I thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today to discuss the Governor's proposed budget and associated federal funding.

Your Connecticut National Guard recently closed the chapter on an unprecedented period of domestic support operations and overseas deployments. With COVID-19 response efforts and the safe return of thousands of Soldiers and Airmen behind us, it is time for the Military Department and National Guard to refocus on the challenges in front us. Those challenges include a return to prioritizing individual and unit training so that our members are fully prepared to respond effectively to emergencies in the state and the possibility of large-scale combat with near-peer nations. This training also requires a concerted effort on the state and federal level to ensure the National Guard has the training and maintenance facilities, and equipment, to safely and successfully accomplish their assigned missions. However, in order to train Soldiers and Airmen we must first recruit qualified civilians into our force – our most immediate and pressing challenge.

Like many other employers, the Connecticut National Guard is struggling to meet its annual recruiting goals. In 2022, we missed our recruiting goal by nearly 50%. There are multiple contributing factors to this negative trend amongst the primary recruiting age (17-24) including obesity, prior criminal convictions, injuries or illnesses, and a general lack of predilection for military service. In response to these recruiting challenges, the Army and Air National Guard have had their total authorized strength decreased by tens of thousands of Soldiers and Airmen nationwide via recent federal National Defense Authorization Acts. Connecticut's ability to fill its authorized force structure with recruits is vital to maintaining the federal equipment and funding associated therewith which may be used by the state in times of emergencies. The Governor recognized the urgent need to support recruiting in the Connecticut National Guard and included state funding specifically for Connecticut National Guard recruiting programs in his proposed budget. The Department is appreciative of this proposed funding and urges the legislature's support so that the Connecticut National Guard can continue to live up to its motto, "Always Ready, Always There."

The Military Department's relatively small state budget brings substantial federal investment to the state. The department employs over 5,000 people across multiple different funding statuses. Limited personnel services funding has the department executing only 36.75 of 41 authorized Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) positions. However, we effectively leverage our significantly larger federal budget to employ 118 total state employees. The department accomplishes its mission with a combined federal and state personnel payroll of around \$185 million dollars. The state's share is just \$3.3 million dollars. The 118 state employees are the minimum needed to administer our nearly \$300 million dollar federal budget and maintain our 35 facilities across the state.

However, after years of increases in federal military spending for the National Guard, the Connecticut National Guard's federal operating budget has recently experienced net decreases. We expect this trend to continue as the Department of Defense prioritizes capital modernization efforts to counter the pacing challenge presented by China. This federal budget strain will require the Department to ensure each dollar of state funding is maximized in support of the Connecticut National Guard for the foreseeable future.

In regard to military construction, the Connecticut Air National Guard's 2030 Installation Development Plan is underway. This plan will ensure our Bradley Air National Guard Base is one of the most modern Air National Guard installations in the nation. Currently, the Air Guard is in the process of selecting a contractor to construct a federally funded \$17 million dollar Aerospace Support Equipment and Vehicle Maintenance Repair Composite Facility at the Bradley Air National Guard base. Construction will begin in the spring of 2023. Years of advocacy on behalf of our federal congressional delegation and execution of federal construction dollars by the Air Guard have positioned the 103<sup>rd</sup> Air Wing to compete for the basing of newly procured C-130J aircraft to replace its aging C-130H fleet. Connecticut National Guard leadership has been working closely with our federal congressional delegation to ensure that our base is fairly considered as part of the Air Force's strategic basing process.

The Connecticut Army National Guard also continues its progress in updating legacy facilities and pursuing energy security and sustainability. I am pleased to report that the Connecticut Army National Guard will begin construction on a new \$23.5 million dollar Readiness Center in Putnam in the spring of 2023 as well. Construction of this new Readiness Center will ensure the National Guard maintains a viable presence in the northeast corner of the state for the first time in over ten years. In addition, the department is in the process of designing a \$6 million dollar federally funded aircraft hangar at the Army Aviation Support Facility in Windsor Locks. This facility will house two medevac helicopters assigned to the Connecticut Army National Guard. Construction for this project will be awarded in fiscal year 2024. Neither of these important projects could be accomplished without the support of the legislature and the appropriation of required matching state funds or state bonding.

Please refer to our annual Armory Construction Purchase Program Report for a more detailed report on our progress to ensure our military personnel serve in modern facilities. This report was sent directly to your offices in the Legislative Office Building and is provided as an enclosure to this document.

Using both federal and state funding, the Department supports military funeral honors for more than 3,500 deceased veterans annually. The proposed budget for 2024-2025 fully funds the program across the biennium. The federal funeral honors entitlement continues to receive full funding from the federal government. Please know, we remain committed to providing honors to every deserving veteran and will do so in accordance with all state and federal statutes.

Since its authorization in 2005, the Military Department has made over 7,700 payments totaling just over \$3.7 million dollars to eligible Guardsmen through the Wartime Service Bonus program. Our projections for payouts in 2024 and 2025 will significantly decrease based on forecasted deployments of the men and women of our National Guard. The current budget adequately funds these anticipated requirements through fiscal year 2025.

Since the legislature created the Military Family Relief Fund in 2005, then expanded eligibility in 2013, 199 grants totaling just over \$510,000, have been awarded. Additionally, the citizens of the state have donated almost \$1,000,000 dollars through State income tax refunds to the program.

Despite these successes, the fiscal challenges expected at the Department of Defense in future years must be mitigated to ensure Connecticut's Home Team remains ready. As mentioned previously, additional support from the state, such as the proposed budget expansion to support recruiting and retention, may become necessary to ensure our ability to perform any mission we are assigned. We remain resolute in our commitment to provide the best for our Connecticut National Guard so they can continue to effectively respond to any state or federally tasked mission.

Francis J. Evon, Jr.  
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The Adjutant General