

THE VOICE

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE NATIONAL GUARD ASSOCIATION OF WASHINGTON
JUNE 2026

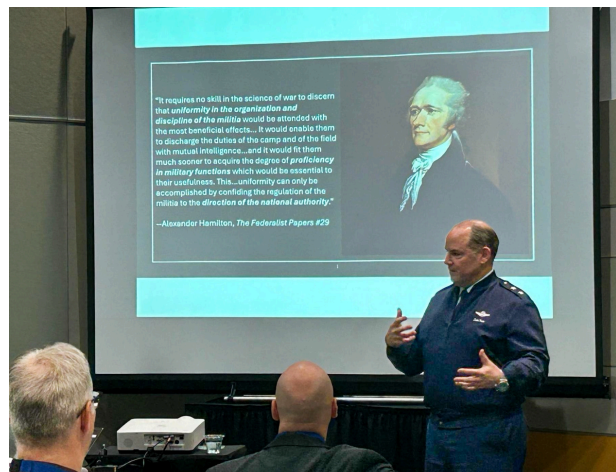
STATE CONFERENCE RECAP



The 2026 NGAW State Conference on May 16 may have been shorter than in years past, but we packed a lot of punch into that session! The conference featured fantastic presentations by several senior leaders from the Washington National Guard, including Major General Gent Welsh, the Adjutant General, Washington, BG Kenneth Borchers, and BG Paul Sellars. Each spoke to the volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) reality of our times, emphasizing the importance of readiness and our dedication to the state of Washington.

Our keynote speaker was Major General Duke “Juice” Pirak, Acting Director, Air National Guard, who spoke about serving in the Guard in a time of consequence. Our Guard members are not just training right now; they’re deploying and facing very real threats. That is our reality now, and will continue to be for the foreseeable future.

Maj Gen Pirak charged us all to be **Courageous Leaders of Character**, saying “when it’s our time, will we know it? Will we be ready?” Being a courageous leader of character means not just knowing what is right, but doing what is right. We owe that to all of our Soldiers and Airmen.



After updates from our reps from the national associations EANGUS and NGAUS, we had a wonderful presentation from NGAW Legislative Director Sophia Wahto. She provided great insight on our current legislative approach and priorities. The attendees then discussed and voted on 2 resolutions. The majority supported the Scalable Personal Fitness Resolution and passed the motion to present it to NGAUS. The Joint Duty Assignment Credit resolution generated a great deal of discussion, and the majority agreed it needed to be retooled and declined to present it as currently written.



2026 Legislative Overview

Mission and Purpose

- Advocate for Washington National Guard members, veterans, and families
- Promote readiness, resilience, and member support
- Serve as the legislative voice for NGAW members
- Strengthen State and Federal legislative efforts

2026 Organizational Goals

- Expand legislative engagement statewide
- Strengthen partnerships with legislators, veteran organizations, and community organizers
- Enhance communication and outreach
- Ensure legislative priorities are met or have a plan of action and timeline for following years

2026 Legislative Focus

- Support for Guard readiness and modernization
- Recruiting and retention initiatives
- Healthcare access and improvement
- Childcare access and cost improvement

2026 Priority Bills

- National Guard Retention Program (HB1073)
- Military Families and Education (HB2534)
- Washington Code of Military Justice Update (HB2417)
- Childhood Education and Assistance Program (SB5907)
- cUAS Capability to Washington State (HB2462)

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2026 INDUSTRY DAY

Thank you to everyone who attended our 2026 NGAW Industry Day on March 17. While we typically hold this in November, we chose to shift gears during the government shutdown last fall. Each year, this fantastic vendor exhibition allows us to showcase several of our Corporate Partners. The event is an opportunity for our Soldiers, Airmen, and state decision makers to meet with the organizations that work with and support the Washington National Guard.



As in years past, the highlight of this year's event was the awesome Gunfighter Gym simulator from Conflict Kinetics. Thanks for setting that up CK!

Follow our social media for details on our upcoming Industry Day event next fall.



For a full list of attendees, as well as links to their sites for more information, our **2026 Industry Day** page at: <https://ngaw.org/corporate-industry-day/>

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LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

The 2026 Washington State Legislative Session convened on January 10 and adjourned on March 12. During this short session, NGAW supported a number of military-related pieces of legislation. While not everything passed this year, 6 bills made it to the Governor's desk and were signed into law.

SB 2417 Changing the Washington code of military justice so that it includes certain protections for victims of an offense while serving within the organized militia of Washington.

SB 6046 Establishing the Washington division of civil air patrol as part of the Washington military department.

SB 5420 Ensuring access to state benefits and opportunities for veterans, uniformed service members, and military spouses.

SB 5827 Concerning the definition of a "qualifying discharge" for the Washington state veterans' preference program for civil service.

SB 6035 Ensuring access to voting services for military, overseas, Native American, and disabled voters.

HB1541 Update to Veterans Affairs advisory coordination with the State.

NGAW is committed to fighting for the legislation that impacts both you and your family! Please let us know what matters to you and how we can help. You can also submit your suggestions for legislative resolutions at: <https://ngaw.org/legislative-proposal/>. Also, watch your email inbox for Calls to Action regarding national bills affecting the National Guard.

Want to get more involved? Contact our office about joining our Legislative Committee.



UPCOMING NATIONAL CONFERENCES

While this summer's annual EANGUS and NGAUS conferences may seem a long way off, the planning has already begun, and NGAW is already looking forward to these important events. The Enlisted group is headed to

Daytona Beach, FL July 31-Aug. 4, while the Officers will be in **Indianapolis, IN Aug. 28-31**.

Why should you be getting excited about these conferences? They are valuable professional development opportunities and provide the best way to get involved at the national level. These events have an impact not just on your career but also on the future of the National Guard. All current Guardsmen and retirees are invited to attend.

Please contact our office today if you are interested in joining one of the WA delegations.



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CAPITOL SUMMIT 2026

In April, Washington Army National Guard and NGAW member **CPT Alysha Chandra** attended the semi-annual NGAUS Capitol Summit. Capitol Summit provides the opportunity for one company-grade officer from each state association to come to the nation's capital to learn firsthand about the legislative process and how NGAUS advocates on Capitol Hill. This three-day professional development event includes presentations by NGAUS and congressional staff, senior National Guard Bureau leaders, and visits to Capitol Hill. Below is CPT Chandra's recap.

Attending the NGAUS Capitol Summit far exceeded my expectations. I am leaving it with the best memories and experience from my time there.

From the start, NGAUS went above and beyond to create a warm, welcoming, and genuinely enjoyable environment. That tone carried throughout the entire summit and made a noticeable difference in the experience.

The opening ice breaker set everything in motion. A room full of strangers quickly turned into real conversations and connections. That same energy stayed consistent the entire time and made it easy to engage, learn, and enjoy every part of the conference.

The opportunities we were given were incredible. We had the chance to speak with General Officers, connect with members from NGB, and engage with State representatives. Visiting Capitol Hill was a highlight. It is not an experience I've had before, and it was both surreal and impactful to be part of it.

The people made it even better. We went from not knowing each other to building real camaraderie in a short amount of time. That balance of professional development and genuine connection is what made this experience stand out.

Blaise did an outstanding job leading our group and ensured we made the most of every opportunity.

This summit struck the perfect balance between meaningful work and an environment that allowed us to connect and enjoy the experience. I would highly recommend it to other company grade officers and have already been encouraging others to attend.

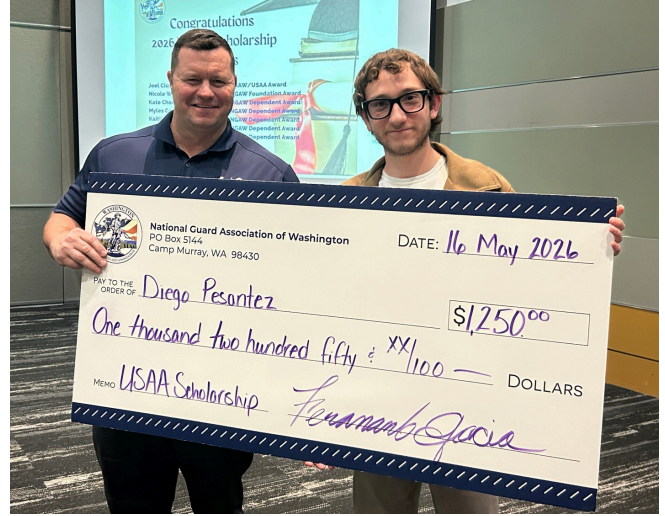


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2026 SCHOLARSHIPS

This year we're excited to award \$11,000 in scholarships to our members and their dependents! Our 2026 scholarship recipients are mainly dependents, which is a great reminder that your NGAW membership benefits extend to your family, as well. Thank you to all the outstanding applicants for the time and effort you put into your applications, and congratulations to those receiving awards!





Congratulations 2026 NGAW Scholarship Recipients

<p>Joel Cisneros-Ramos Nicole Woltman Kate Chong Myles Cooper Kaitlin Elmore Maya Loftin Diego Pesantez</p>	<p>\$1250 NGAW/USAA Award \$2500 NGAW Foundation Award \$2000 NGAW Dependent Award \$1250 NGAW Dependent Award \$1250 NGAW Dependent Award \$1500 NGAW Dependent Award \$1250 NGAW Dependent Award</p>
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UPCOMING 2026 GOLF SCRAMBLE

Registration is now open for the 2026 NGAW Golf Scramble! Join us on the links of **Capitol City Golf Club** in Olympia on **Friday, September 18** for an 8:30am shotgun start. We'll follow a standard scramble format, with teams of 4. Mulligans, string, and Caddy Packs will be available for purchase. Registration costs cover the price of golf, cart, range balls, and lunch.

Proceeds from the tournament fund our charitable NGAW Foundation and allow us to help WA Guard members through educational scholarships, emergency assistance, and financial support. We raised over \$10,000 last year, and the goal this year is \$25,000! Help us help your fellow Guardsmen and their families. **Help us reach that total!**



Date: Friday, Sept. 18

Location: Capitol City Golf Club

5225 Yelm Highway SE, Olympia, WA 98513

Cost: \$100/golfer



Not a golfer? Join us as a volunteer. Or even better, sponsor a hole or donate a raffle item!

For more information and to register, visit: <https://ngaw.org/events/golf/>

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JUNE 2026

DO YOU HAVE A LIFETIME MEMEBRSHIP?

Is remembering to renew your NGAW membership each year a struggle? Do you wish there was a set-it-and-forget-it option? There is! NGAW has affordable lifetime membership options for both Enlisted and Officers.

These memberships are offered to both those currently serving in the WA National Guard, as well as retirees, and installment payment options are available. For more information contact ngaw@ngaw.org or visit: ngaw.org/membership-account/membershiplevels/.

Lifetime Member Benefits Include:

- Dedicated advocates in Olympia and on Capitol Hill fighting for your benefits
- Access to exclusive professional development, networking and educational opportunities
- Eligibility for member and dependent scholarships
- Insurance supplements designed for members of the National Guard
- The opportunity to serve on association committees and task forces that help drive the future of Guard advocacy
- A super cool commemorative NGAW insulated mug!

UPCOMING EVENTS

- Jul 31-4 EANGUS Conference: Daytona
- Aug 28-31 NGAUS Conference: Indy
- Sept 18 NGAW Golf Tournament**
- Nov TBD Industry Day



CONNECT WITH US!



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@NationalGuardAssociationofWashington



@NGAW

WE NEED YOUR CIVILIAN EMAIL ADDRESS!

Please update your membership account with a **civilian email address** so that you can better view our messages.

THANK YOU CORPORATE PARTNERS

