

Submitter: Rionna Zeller

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Emergency Management, General Government, and Veterans

Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB808

I joined the OR Army National Guard when I was 18. Went to college and commissioned through the Reserve Officer Training Corps. I have been away from my family for more holidays and birthdays than I care to admit. My Husband is an Army Husband and he is forced to pick up my responsibilities of the household when I am away. My service means the world to me, just as much as any other active duty Soldier. That does not mean that I or my family, or my family who served and sacrificed in the Guard before me, deserve any less benefits than the Active Duty Soldiers just because we work part time for the National Guard. Also, this does not mean that we do not support our country while we are not at Guard Drills. We are doctors, lawyers, paramedics, construction workers, mechanics, social workers, and many other professions that care for our American Society.

I urge you to support Senate Bill 808, which extends hiring and promotion preferences in public employment to current and former members of the Oregon National Guard, aligning their service with that of active-duty military personnel. Due to definitions in federal and state law and the state-centric nature of title-32 service status, National Guard service does not automatically confer veteran status to Oregon National Guard Service Members. This bill recognizes the invaluable contributions of the Oregon National Guard to the State of Oregon during crises such as wildland fires, floods, and the Coronavirus pandemic. By granting these preferences, we can improve recruitment and retention, ensuring a strong and fully-staffed Oregon National Guard ready to serve our communities in times of need. Thank you for considering this important measure.