

Dental Care for Our Troops Act

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*Endorsed by: Reserve Organization of America, Military Officers Association of America,
National Guard Association of the United States*

The National Guard and reserve components are required to maintain a talented and trained reserve force available for deployment at home or abroad at a moment's notice but are not provided with the same level of benefits to maintain their readiness as their active-duty counterparts. Guard members and reservists are provided no assistance in affording dental insurance or expensive dental procedures despite having the responsibility to maintain deployability. The **Dental Care for Our Troops Act** would provide reserve component service members with consistent, year-round access to no-premium dental care to ensure they are ready to deploy and serve our country when called upon.

The Issue:

Dental health is a key component of readiness. During the post-9/11 period, more than 20 percent of guard and reserve members were non-deployable, and another 15 percent were removed from duty during deployment, due to dental issues.¹ Despite making up almost half of our armed forces, servicemembers in the reserve components still do not have access to the continuous preventative dental care needed to maintain dental readiness for little- to no-notice deployments.

Servicemembers in the reserve components are held to the same deployment and readiness standards as active-duty personnel, with a dental exam required annually. The Reserve Health Readiness Program provides free vouchers for the exam, but reservists are responsible for paying for any treatment needed to deploy. While there are cases where the Army will pay to treat the most critical dental issues, this level of care is not consistent across the various armed forces.²

Premium-free TRICARE Dental Program:

This legislation would waive premiums and co-pays in the TRICARE Dental Program, a voluntary dental plan already offered to all military family members and to members of the National Guard and reserves, for all members of the Selected Reserve. Increasing access to preventative dental care will reduce costly emergency dental treatment and improve troop readiness.

¹ [Incidence of Dental Disease Nonbattle Injuries in Deployed U.S. Army Personnel | Military Medicine | Oxford Academic \(oup.com\).
https://www.health.mil/Military-Health-Topics/Combat-Support/Public-Health/Health-Readiness-Support/Reserve-Health-Readiness-Program/Our-Services](https://www.health.mil/Military-Health-Topics/Combat-Support/Public-Health/Health-Readiness-Support/Reserve-Health-Readiness-Program/Our-Services)