

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

October 14, 2026

The Honorable Pete Hegseth
Secretary of War
Department of War
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301

Dear Secretary Hegseth:

We write to respectfully urge you to conduct a review of the Florida National Guard's authorized force structure and to approve an increase in its total allocation. The Florida National Guard carries one of the heaviest operational burdens in the nation with one of the smallest per-capita allocations.¹

Under 10 U.S.C. § 10503, the Secretary of War—in consultation with the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Secretaries of the Army and the Air Force—sets the end strength allocation for the National Guard Bureau. Governor DeSantis, the Florida Legislature, and the Florida National Guard have made clear that the Florida National Guard stands ready to grow.²

The Florida National Guard has roughly 12,000 authorized personnel in total. Although the state population is approximately 23.5 million, there are roughly 53 Guardsmen per 10,000 citizens, which is smaller than states such as Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana. Measured per capita, Florida ranks 53rd out of 54 total states and territories that possess a National Guard component.³ Reporting has noted that Florida's total allocation has held at roughly 12,000 for decades even as the state's population has multiplied several times over.⁴ As Major General John Haas, The Adjutant General of Florida, testified before the State Senate in 2025, Florida is so under-resourced relative to its population that matching the national median ratio of service members to citizens would more than double the Guard's current force structure.⁵

Florida's strategic value to the Department of War is unmatched. It plays a critical role in allowing the Joint Force to achieve the administration's goals set forth in the National Defense Strategy. This is especially true when it comes to homeland defense and ensuring American dominance across the Western Hemisphere. As such, Florida's impact on executing the objectives of the administration's priorities is both real and tangible.

The Florida National Guard has one of the highest operational tempos in the country. Earlier this year, state leaders documented that the Florida Guard expended as many workdays in eighteen

¹ <https://www.tallahassee.com/story/news/politics/2021/11/26/covid-pandemic-spotlights-overworked-understaffed-florida-national-guard/6178851001>

² [Florida Senate passes request for federal government to increase state National Guard size](#)

³ flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2026/1186/BillText/Filed/HTML

⁴ [DVIDS - News - Florida National Guard eyes force expansion to meet future challenges](#)

⁵ [Florida National Guard Can't Retain Enough Troops Or Recruit New Ones](#)

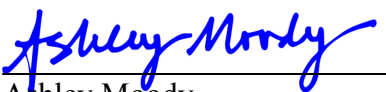
months as it had in the preceding twenty years.⁶ This was largely driven through the COVID-19 response, hurricane and disaster relief, and overseas deployments. As such, the Florida National Guard has struggled with retention due to high deployment demands, especially since they are currently called out 106 days a year compared to the statutory required 39 duty days.⁷ A force structure frozen in place while both population and mission demand climb steadily forces the repeated redeployment of the same soldiers and airmen, driving fatigue and placing strain on retention.

Florida also offers the Department something that cannot be found in many other states: a deep, willing recruiting base and a demonstrated propensity to serve. State military leadership has publicly stated that Florida draws from a recruitable population larger than that of twenty-eight states and can fill the ranks if given the authorization.⁸ This is backed by sustained performance. The Florida National Guard has maintained an average of 103% assigned strength for the past five years. In short, the demand signal, the strategic rationale, and the manpower supply all point the same direction.

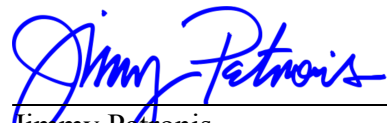
In 2025, the Florida Legislature formally adopted Senate Memorial 314, a memorial to the Congress of the United States urging that the National Guard Bureau examine the present allocations of the Florida National Guard and allow an increase in its force structure.⁹ It cited the National Guard Bureau's own April 2021 report to Congress, "Impact of U.S. Population Trends on National Guard Force Structure," which acknowledged that the Guard "may need to evaluate re-allocating mission sets to other geographic areas to keep pace with changing demographics across the country." Florida's population trend is precisely the kind of demographic shift the Bureau anticipated.

We are grateful for your service and for your leadership of the Department of War. We kindly ask that the Department give Florida the force structure that is needed to adequately respond to the missions assigned to them. We welcome the opportunity to discuss this further with you at your earliest convenience

Sincerely,



Ashley Moody
United States Senator



Jimmy Patronis
Member of Congress

⁶ [flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2026/1186/BillText/Filed/HTML](https://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2026/1186/BillText/Filed/HTML)

⁷ [Florida National Guard faces shortages despite state's population boom](#)

⁸ [DVIDS - News - Florida National Guard eyes force expansion to meet future challenges](#)

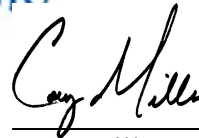
⁹ [Senate Bill 314 \(2025\) - The Florida Senate](#)

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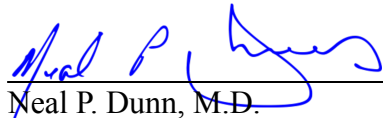
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Member of Congress



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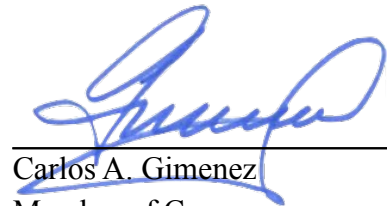
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