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Memorandum

To: Vermont Joint Fiscal Committee
From: Ken Gragg, Deputy Adjutant General
Re: CRF Request for National Guard Tuition Due to Delayed Basic Military Training
Date: August 19, 2020

Total Amount Requested: \$72,450. The Military Department is seeking funding to support ten (10) National Guard Members' that are enrolled to start the fall semester at Norwich University.

The Military Department proposes allowing National Guard members who have recently enlisted but have been unable to attend basic training due to COVID-19 to be eligible for the Vermont National Guard Tuition Benefit Program (VTNGTBP). The Vermont National Guard (VTNG) is authorized to execute the VTNGTBP, which provides 100% tuition to Vermont State Colleges, UVM, and up to Northern Vermont University (NVU) rate to private colleges/universities, trade schools and certificates for all VTNG members once they've completed basic military training. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there have been several members that were scheduled to go to basic military training in the spring of 2020 but have been delayed for up to one year for reasons including Department of Defense travel restrictions, smaller class sizes, and fewer classes because of a required two-week quarantine once the member arrives at the basic military training course. This will be a long-term rolling delay until such time there is significant relief from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Specific to this request is ten (10) guard members If they had been able to attend basic military training as scheduled this past spring, they would be entitled to tuition support up to the NVU rate. For the fall semester that is \$7,245 per member or \$72,450 total.

Response to the Pandemic: To help meet the expectation that our members would stay on-track with their education timeline, the VTNG has engaged the Vermont State Legislature to support an amendment to the current VTNGTBP language that allows guard members awaiting basic military training due to delays from COVID-19 pandemic to receive the tuition benefit. There are several controls in-place as with the baseline program. The members sign a service commitment contract as well as a promissory note, which turns the tuition award into a loan/debt if the member doesn't fulfill their obligations.

Urgency of Request: Access to tuition reimbursement for these 10 guard members cannot wait until an appropriation through other means because eligible members have already started school this fall. Norwich University has agreed to temporarily delay billing and to waive late fees.

