



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 5, 2011

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## FINAL WEEKS TO NOMINATE FOR 2011 SECRETARY OF DEFENSE EMPLOYER SUPPORT FREEDOM AWARD

3,425 nominations received by Guard and Reserve members and families to date

ARLINGTON, Va. – The beginning of the new year marks the final two weeks for Guard and Reserve members and their families to nominate supportive employers for the 2011 Secretary of Defense Employer Support Freedom Award. During the 2011 nomination period, Guard and Reserve members have nominated military supportive employers in all 50 states, D.C., Guam, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands.

To date California, Texas, Florida, New York and Ohio are the top five states submitting nominations for the award, indicating strong support by the state's employers for its citizen warriors. The Army National Guard, Army Reserve, and Air National Guard are leading among the seven service branches.

The Secretary of Defense Employer Support Freedom Award is the highest recognition given by the U.S. Government to employers for their outstanding support of their employees who serve in the Guard and Reserve. Nearly one-half of the U.S. military is comprised of the Guard and Reserve, making the role of U.S. employers in support of employees in the military increasingly important.

Guard and Reserve members and their families are eligible and encouraged to nominate employers that have provided exceptional support to Guard and Reserve employees beyond the federal law requirements. Nominations may be submitted at <a href="www.FreedomAward.mil">www.FreedomAward.mil</a> through January 17, 2011. The names of all nominated employers will be announced in the spring and the 15 Freedom Award recipients will be announced in early summer. The 15 recipients for 2011 will be honored in Washington, D.C. at the 16<sup>th</sup> annual Secretary of Defense Employer Support Freedom Award ceremony in September.

The Freedom Award was instituted in 1996 under the auspices of Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR), a Department of Defense agency, to recognize exceptional support of Guard and Reserve members from the employer community. In the past 15 years, 145 employers from across the nation have received this prestigious award. Established in 1972, ESGR's mission is to develop and promote employer support for Guard and Reserve service by advocating relevant initiatives, recognizing outstanding support, increasing awareness of applicable laws, and resolving conflict between employers and service members.

For questions regarding the Freedom Award nomination process, please visit <a href="https://www.FreedomAward.mil">www.FreedomAward.mil</a> or contact Maj. Melissa Phillips, ESGR Public Affairs, at 703-696-1171, ext. 519 or by email at <a href="mailto:ESGR-PA@osd.mil">ESGR-PA@osd.mil</a>.