

VIKANG NEWS

Fall 2025



His Royal Highness Crown Prince Haakon of Norway and members of the Norwegian delegation visit with Minnesota National Guard leaders on October 7, 2025



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Executive Director's Letter

Lyle Rock



Register now for the
Holiday Party in
December!
I look forward to seeing
everyone there!

Association Members -It is an incredible honor to introduce myself as the new Executive Director of the National Guard Association of Minnesota. I am both humbled and excited to take on this role and to serve the Soldiers, Airmen, families, and supporters who make up this remarkable organization.

Before looking ahead, I want to take a moment to express my sincere gratitude to **Julie Grandaw** for her more than three years of dedicated service and leadership as Executive Director. Under her guidance, NGAMN continued to grow in strength and impact—enhancing our advocacy efforts and building lasting partnerships that set the stage for continued success. Julie's hard work and commitment have moved this organization forward in meaningful ways, and we are all grateful for her contributions.

As I begin this new chapter, I am deeply inspired by the mission and the people of NGAMN. I believe in the power of what this organization can achieve—especially in advancing parity for our National Guard members with their active-duty counterparts. Whether through legislative advocacy, professional development, or strengthening our network of support, NGAMN stands as a vital voice for those who serve our state and nation.

Together, we will continue building on this foundation of excellence and broadening our reach. The future is bright, and I am honored to help lead NGAMN into its next era of growth and impact.

Thank you for your trust, your service, and your support. I look forward to connecting with each of you in the months ahead and advancing the priorities of the National Guard Association of Minnesota.

Sincerely- Lyle

NGAMN representing MN for
the All States Roll Call!
SKOL!!!!



Minnesota National Guard's Government Relations Officer

Lt. Col. Mindy Davis



Funding for the dual status military technician (DSMT) program. Nationwide, the National Guard had to internally overcome a payroll shortfall for our DSMTs this past fiscal year, and we expect a similar shortfall this FY26. Nearly half of our full-time workforce (800 Soldiers) are DSMTs who primarily work in readiness-generating fields like aircraft and vehicle maintenance, many at Camp Ripley. We stand to lose 10% of that workforce if the shortfall is not overcome.

Passing the Fighter Preservation and Recapitalization Act of 2025 (cosponsored by Sens. Smith and Klobuchar) and advocating for next generation fighters for the 148th Fighter Wing in Duluth. The U.S. Air Force fighter fleet is older, smaller, and less ready than it has been in over 50 years. This bill aims to support force-wide modernization while ensuring that Air National Guard (ANG) wings like our 148th are modernized in parity with active duty. The 148th Fighter Wing is uniquely well-suited and ready to receive F-35s – they are one of just two ANG wings in the country that execute the complex suppression of enemy air defense mission; they own the largest, most diverse air space in the continental US; and are consistently among the best manned and most ready units in the nation. However, because they fly the “newest of the old” F-16s, they are projected to be among the last ANG wings in the nation to be modernized. Rep. Stauber has been an incredible champion for this effort, and Sens. Klobuchar and Smith have also co-sponsored the legislation and expressed support.

Other key issues we’ve pursued this year include increased and more flexible funding for the State Partnership Program, which matches the Minnesota National Guard with the Croatian and Norwegian Armed Forces for mutually beneficial interoperability exchanges. Rep. Stauber put forward and passed a House NDAA floor amendment that would authorize 2-year funding for the program. We hope to see that in the final law!

A longer-term priority is military construction funding parity for the National Guard. The Army National Guard makes up 40% of the Army’s footprint but is slated to receive just 4% of military construction funding. That figure has been gradually declining each year to this unsustainable low.

“Your voice matters. We encourage association members to contact your congressional and state representatives to: support new fighter aircraft for the 148th Fighter Wing in Duluth and advocate for adequate technician funding to preserve the full-time workforce critical to readiness. Together, we can ensure the Minnesota National Guard remains a national leader in defense capability and readiness.” **NGAMN President Ryan Blasevic**

2025 NGAUS Conference

Highlights & Takeaways

Senior Leader Addresses

- Gen. Dan Caine (Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff) delivered the opening keynote, emphasizing: “When you mobilize the Guard, you mobilize the Nation.”
- Gen. Steven S. Nordhaus (Chief, National Guard Bureau) underscored the Guard’s enduring role across centuries (citing 1636) and the imperative of readiness for both homeland and overseas missions.
- Gen. Randy A. George (Army Chief of Staff) discussed transformation, modernization, and the vital contribution of the Guard to overall Army structure and capability.
- Gen. John D. Lamontagne (Commander, Air Mobility Command) recognized the Guard’s membership in the air mobility, refueling and aeromedical missions and stated: “We cannot do our mission without this talented team.”

Theme & Strategic Focus

- A dual focus on domestic missions (disaster relief, homeland security) and warfighting readiness (drone/AI threat, Indo-Pacific posture).
- One of the featured panel discussions addressed un-piloted aerial systems (UAS) and the growing importance of that domain. *Maj. Gen. Shawn Manke was part of the panel.*
- The role of the Guard as part of the total force: e.g., coverage that the Guard constitutes about 20 % of the joint force despite a smaller budget share.

Business & Governance

- Delegates approved resolutions that will form the basis of next year’s legislative agenda. *Minnesota National Guard submitted resolutions passed.*
- Board elections and by-laws changes were held (or proposed).
- The industry exhibition was robust, reflecting the wide spectrum of Guard missions (Army, Air, domestic).

Networking & Social Elements

- Outside the formal sessions, the host city-programming leveraged Milwaukee’s attractions: sport fishing on Lake Michigan, a Harley-Davidson ride in SE Wisconsin, golf tournament, mixers in the Deer District, harbor boat tours, a fireworks show.
- These social/networking activities underscored that the conference was not just business, but also about building relationships across states and components.

Save the Date!

NGAUS National Conference

148th General Conference & Exhibition | Indianapolis, Indiana

August 28-31, 2026

Each year, approximately four **Company Grade Officers have the opportunity to attend the national conference for professional development in a funded status.** This includes all travel expenses, allowing them to spend the weekend engaging with guest speakers and participating in development sessions alongside Army and Air Guard Officers from across the nation. Along with the Capital Summit, this event offers an outstanding opportunity to witness the tangible benefits of NGAUS membership in strengthening the National Guard force. It also provides CGOs the chance to network with and pose questions directly to Department of Defense leadership. Here are some reflections from our CGOs who attended the 2025 Conference in Milwaukee:

NGAUS 2025 in Milwaukee was an unforgettable experience!

This year, I had the opportunity to attend the NGAUS conference in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Leading up to it, I didn't know much about NGAUS or any of the other members attending, but it proved to be an invaluable experience and I made many new connections. NGAUS advocates for the National Guard by lobbying Congress for resources, equipment, and benefits. Their annual conference brings together active and retired Guard members to vote on legislative priorities, hear from prominent speakers and panels, and network with military personnel and vendors from across the globe.

This year, we were fortunate enough to hear from distinguished leaders including the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Chief of the National Guard Bureau, the Chief of Staff of the Army, and the Commander of Air Mobility Command. Each night there were fun opportunities to network with people from other states and territories at various events with lots of free food.

I highly recommend attending the annual NGAUS conference. It provides a unique forum to engage with those advocating for our benefits, learn about National Guard history and current events, hear from high-level speakers, and connect with colleagues from every state, territory, and around the world. I'm excited to attend next year in Indianapolis!"

Capt. Emily Berg, 133rd AW

What stood out most was the opportunity to hear directly from high-level military and civilian leaders. Their insights gave me a clear understanding of the direction the National Guard is headed and reinforced the importance of our role in national defense. It's rare to be in the room with such influential voices and walk away inspired, informed, and motivated.

Beyond the professional value, the conference was just plain fun. Spending time with fellow Guardsmen, making new connections, and building lifelong friendships—like the one I made with Emily—was truly special. The energy, camaraderie, and shared purpose made every moment memorable.

For anyone who's never been involved with NGAUS or attended a national conference, I'd say this: go. You'll walk away with a deeper appreciation for the Guard, fresh perspectives on leadership, and a network that spans the country. It's not just a conference—it's an experience that grows your career and your community. Can't wait for next year!

1st Lt. Colton Rossow, 1ABCT

2025 Holiday Party

The National Guard Association of Minnesota Officers' Holiday Party is

December 5, 2025

Please join us at the
Embassy Suites Minneapolis Airport
7901 34th Ave South, Bloomington, MN 55425

The attire is Business/Business casual. It is a great evening to break out that Christmas tie and/or socks. Social hour starts at 6 p.m. Meal served at 7:15 p.m. Onsite parking is free. Come join us for an evening of information and fun!

The cost for the dinner is \$65 per person.

Champagne Chicken which is pan seared chicken breast with roasted grapes and leeks in a light cream sauce. Served with roasted fingerling potatoes and asparagus.

Includes a house salad and a chocolate mousse dessert.

Two complimentary drink tickets with each meal. All dinners include regular and decaf coffee, hot and iced tea.

Please let us know if you have any dietary restrictions.

Register at:

<https://www.ngamn.org/events>

by November 28th!

Save the Date!

NGAMN State Conference

121st State General Conference & Exhibition | St Louis Park, MN

April 17-19 2026

The NGAUS Distinguished Flying Unit Award Recipient
The 148th Fighter Wing
in recognition of exceptional performance
in combat readiness and operational effectiveness



2025 Scholarship Recipients

Congratulations to the following college students for their
outstanding essays this year!

Sam Schaefer

\$1000 McGough Scholarship

Harrison Schmitz

\$1000 NGAMN Scholarship

Jake Kooiker

\$500 NGAMN Scholarship

Lydia Schaefer

\$500 NGAMN Scholarship



**A very special thank you to McGough for their continued
support in recognizing our students!**



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