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## **Tennessee Army National Guard spearheads program for the continued service of retired active-duty warrant officers**

(written by: Lt. Col. Marty Malone)

**NASHVILLE, Tenn.** – In a first-of-its-kind program led by the Tennessee National Guard, warrant officers who have retired from the Active Duty Army can now join the National Guard and continue their service.

In 2021, the U.S. Army and National Guard Bureau updated their policies to allow the National Guard the necessary tools to recruit qualified retired active-duty warrant officers. These warrant officers will keep their retirement pay while also serving in the National Guard.

“This program has been talked about for years, however, Tennessee is the first in U.S. Army history to implement this strategy,” said Brig. Gen. Warner Ross, Tennessee’s Assistant Adjutant General-Army. “This will greatly impact the readiness across our force as it allows our organization to supplement our ranks and hard to fill positions with highly qualified individuals.”

Historically, this was only allowed to happen with Soldiers deemed indispensable by the Secretary of the Army. Now, all retired active-duty Army warrant officers are eligible. The Tennessee National Guard is the first state in the nation to formalize a state policy to begin accepting warrant officers with valuable talent into their ranks.

“This is an exciting time for the warrant officers,” said Chief Warrant Officer 2 Nykeah Williams, Warrant Officer Strength Manager for Tennessee. “Tennessee’s warrant officer strength is currently at 92%. Our goal is to continue to raise our strength and set a higher standard than we have ever attained.”

One example where this new program benefits the Tennessee National Guard is with the warrant officer vacancy for the Airdrop Systems Technician (Military Occupational Specialty 921A). Currently, there are no qualified parachute riggers in the Tennessee Guard and no positions within that career field. The position has been vacant for 1,430 days. In the next 12 months alone, eight warrant officers are retiring from Active Duty Army that meet the Airdrop Systems Technician requirements. Tennessee could fill this vacancy with this new program.

Another issue driving this program is the changing demographics within the active-duty warrant officer cohort. In 1991, the active component had 1,500 warrant officers with over 20 years of experience. As recently as 2019, the active component had less than 350 warrant officers with



over 20 years of experience, and they were all chief warrant officer 5s. With a smaller population of talent leaving active duty, and therefore available to the reserve component, new recruiting initiatives were necessary to maintain National Guard readiness.

Tennessee released a policy in May of 2022 codifying the process and providing implementation guidance to appoint retired active duty warrant officers in the Tennessee Army National Guard.

The process begins with Tennessee's Command Chief Warrant Officer identifying critical vacancies. The list of vacancies and corresponding career fields are then made available to all Military Personnel Management Offices of all U.S. Army commands in coordination with Human Resources Command and Military Personnel message updates.

Active-duty warrant officers in a retired status may apply for vacancies by contacting the Warrant Officer Strength Manager for Tennessee. Once that office has a complete and approved packet, they will coordinate with Tennessee's Officer Personnel Branch to access the warrant officer into the Tennessee Army National Guard.

Final approval for accession into the Tennessee Army National Guard is approved by Tennessee's Adjutant General under the advisement of the National Guard Bureau and the State Command Chief Warrant Officer.

Retired active duty warrant officers will be accepted into the Tennessee Army National Guard for an initial three-year tour. Continuation after the initial tour will be granted based on the needs of the state and the performance of the warrant officer.

Preferred ranks for accession are chief warrant officers 2 and 3. Members at the rank of chief warrant officer 4 will be accessed by exception and at the discretion of the State Command Chief Warrant Officer. This program will not apply to chief warrant officer 5s.

One major point of interest for warrant officers considering this program may be how National Guard and retirement pay may be impacted. Also, how continued service could affect retired pay calculations.

For pay purposes, the individual may elect either a day of retired pay or drill pay. They will not be paid for both.

For retirement calculations, the warrant officer's rank at retirement will be their rank at the start of Army National Guard service. If they are promoted while in the Tennessee Army National Guard, their active-duty retirement will be updated when the warrant officer retires again from the National Guard. The member will remain on the U.S. Army retired list after their National Guard service time is complete, even if the warrant officer serves over 20 years in the National Guard after retirement from the active component.



For those receiving a Veteran's Administration disability, there is no change to how this is paid. If they are paid drill pay, they will forfeit 1/30th of their monthly VA disability pay for each day drilled. It is the same with the warrant officer's retirement pay, it's their choice. A member could receive VA disability and active-duty retirement at the same time if they choose not to receive drill pay.

There are other stipulations if ordered to or when volunteering for active duty while in a National Guard status. The retirement will be calculated at the end of guard service to reflect that time into the retirement. If activated for a Title 10 mobilization, the member will be recalled from retirement to an active-duty status regardless of the duration of the orders. Upon completion of Title 10 activation, the member's retirement will be recalculated to reflect the years of service, rank, and year of the new pay scale.

Tennessee is excited to be on the cutting edge of this new personnel management policy and if interested in learning more, please contact the Tennessee's Warrant Officer Strength Manager at [ng.tn.tnarng.mbx.ngtn-tnarng-wosm@army.mil](mailto:ng.tn.tnarng.mbx.ngtn-tnarng-wosm@army.mil).

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