

The 40th Adjutant General of Maine
Address to a Joint Session of the 127th Maine Legislature
22 March 2016

President Thibodeau, Speaker Eves, members of the 127th Legislature and distinguished guests; thank you for this invitation, opportunity, and honor. Fellow Airmen, Soldiers and Department civilians; thank you for volunteering to be here this morning... Your hard work and dedication is the foundation of both these remarks and for any success we will have in the future. I think the primary reason I've been given this opportunity today is due to the respect and understanding the legislature has for the commitment, sacrifice, and importance of what you do every day.

I have been in this position for just over 60 days and continue to learn every day. In my previous role as the 101st Wing Commander, I spoke often about the challenges, uncertainties, and opportunities in the context of people, mission and funding. These are pretty consistent themes in my new role.

During the course of this address I will discuss the Bureau of Veterans Services and Maine Emergency Management Agency, as well as the Maine National Guard. I will also introduce several members of the Department to give them the extra recognition they deserve. Almost twelve years ago, the Maine Bureau of Veterans Services had appointed a new director, a man with much experience in the military and in civilian business. He took over a bureau coping with shrinking budgets, and a set of demands which were rapidly changing. He was charged with serving a population of veterans and their families which is the second largest in the nation by percentage, and ranges in age from those who served in World War II, Korea and Vietnam, to the younger

veterans of our current wars. All with different needs and capabilities. Assisted by his staff, he dove into this work, and for over a decade, Mr. Peter Ogden worked with a level of energy and commitment which many still find astonishing. He expanded our state veterans cemetery system and made it one of the best in the country, he established a comprehensive program of recognition for all of our veterans and traveled from the biggest cities to the smallest towns in the state to ensure these men and women were given the recognition and thanks they have earned from all of us. After years of service to the State of Maine, Mr. Ogden retired last year. Please join me in recognizing Pete Ogden, who is in the gallery today.

If anyone can replace Pete, it is Adria Horn, the new Director of the Bureau. Many of you have already worked with her and know she is a tireless advocate for Maine Veterans. As a West Point graduate and current Major in the US Army Reserves with five operational deployments, she is already successfully adapting the Bureau to the changing Veteran environment. We will continue to work with the legislature to implement recommendations from the report of the Commission to Strengthen and Align the Services Provided to Maine Veterans, that was just released in January. There is no shortage of organizations trying to help Maine's Veterans, but taking the time to analyze whether common goals are being met and identifying gaps in services is important. Thank you to the co-chairs of the Commission, Sen Ron Collins and Representative Jared Golden, and all the members who participated in this process. Mr. Bruce Fitzgerald leads the Maine Emergency Management Agency. They work diligently to ensure the state is focused on mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery in disaster situations with state, federal and county partners. Last winter

MEMA coordinated the response to January blizzards and the resulting Presidential disaster declarations in four counties. Unfortunately, Washington County which had the most significant challenges was unable to receive FEMA assistance. MEMA continues to work with FEMA in a multi-state effort to reform their snow policy for future events. Significantly, we have created a new Cyber security coordinator in MEMA to work collaboratively with other agencies. MEMA, along with Maine Office of Information Technology, Department of Education and Maine Center for Disease Control completed the Cyber Storm V exercise last week. Each agency learned important lessons and worked through scenarios of how they would respond to disruptions of their daily IT systems. MEMA, the Maine National Guard, Maine OIT, and Maine State Police have been working together and with other partners in and outside of government to develop cyber response plans, preparedness exercises, and awareness training. You can count today as part of that awareness training. Much more is needed in these areas, and we need all agencies, partners, and communities to be thinking and planning for their own cyber preparedness and recovery from a disastrous event. Our agencies cannot take on the responsibility for all of government, and the responsibility for cyber preparedness and awareness starts at each agency and with each employee.

Governor LePage signed an Executive Order in 2014 requiring all Executive Branch employees to complete annual cyber awareness training. Basic cyber hygiene and training is critically important to protect our systems, both in the workplace and at home. Governor LePage has also directed OIT, MEMA and the Guard to work with all state departments and stakeholders to make sure Maine adopts best practices from the

public and private sector. In the coming years, Maine's progress in cybersecurity preparedness and disaster recovery capabilities will be critical

Going forward the biggest challenge is the uncertainty revolving around federal Homeland Security grants to Maine. The President's 2017 budget could result in significant cuts which would affect several staff positions, as well as major training, exercise and preparedness programs at County and Local levels. MEMA is already "one deep" in most positions, so normal staff turnover is challenging in itself with the diverse responsibilities of the Agency.

MEMA also has a retiring legend. Lynette Miller began work at MEMA on November 5, 1990... over twenty five years ago. She has been a fixture at the Agency through every kind of disaster event that has impacted Maine, notably the Ice Storm of 1998, several hurricanes, numerous flooding and winter weather events.

Lynette also handled all public communications, including creating and maintaining MEMA's website and electronic communications such as weather notifications. She coordinated the River Flow Advisory Commission before its formal creation by the Legislature in 1997. Lynette was our primary legislative liaison, speechwriter, and "big thinker." She was at times a teacher, mentor, coordinator, mediator, employee advocate, liaison to partner agencies, and historian. For many, she was the face and voice of MEMA. Lynette is also present today. Please join me in thanking Lynette Miller for her many years of faithful service to the State.

The Maine Air and Army National Guard have over 3200 men and women serving across the state. Before I go any further I'd like to recognize a few more individuals.

Sergeant First Class Joshua Way of the 251st Engineer Company was credited with saving the life of 6-year-old Nathan Curtis on October 11th, 2015 by performing CPR on the unresponsive child. Rescue crews arrived 10 minutes after Josh's wife dialed 9-1-1.

On October 26, 2015 MSgt Eric Curtis of the 265th Combat Communications Squadron, was there when

a member of MSgt Curtis's gym experienced a heart attack and fell unconscious. MSgt Curtis, using his Air Force CPR Instructor skills, led the other gym member's efforts to resuscitate by applying CPR and a defibrillator. The member's life was successfully sustained until Westbrook Emergency Medical personnel could arrive and transport him to the hospital where he received quadruple bypass surgery and is alive today.

CPT John Gates, CPT Don Lachapelle, Senior Master Sergeant Jeffrey Cook, Staff Sergeant Patrick McHugh, Senior Airman Peter Currier and Airman First Class Elijah Munn risked their lives in Etna, Maine, on December 5th. Their tenacious effort successfully extricated an unconscious Maine Air National Guard member from a burning vehicle after a crash on Interstate 95.

The outcome of these stories could have been catastrophically different if your Guardsmen were not present to assist. I know there are countless other stories of Airmen and soldiers responding to needs in their communities using skills, training and a propensity to help. Please join me in recognizing *SFC Way, MSgt Curtis, CPT Gates,*

CPT Lachapelle, SMSGT Cook, SRA Currier, and A1C Munn who are in attendance today.

The Maine Air National Guard is commanded by Brig General Gerry Bolduc, with Brig Gen John D'Errico, the Chief of Staff, Brig Gen Scott Young, Assistant Adjutant General, and State Command Chief, CMSGT Bob Peer.

We are very lucky to have the 265th Combat Communications Squadron and the 243rd Engineering Installation Squadron in South Portland as part of the Maine Air National Guard. Whether it is supporting federal agencies enhancing cyber operations and network infrastructure, deploying to Afghanistan to support communication capabilities, or recently deploying to Bodo, Norway to provide Cyber capability for US Air Forces Europe in an exercise; these Airmen are a great resource for both the state and nation.

The 101st Air Refueling Wing in Bangor is the largest organization in the Maine Air National Guard with nearly 900 Airmen and 10 KC-135 aircraft. Led by Wing Commander, Colonel Adam Jenkins and Wing Command Chief, CMSGT Dan Moore, the wing continues to deploy more airmen and airplanes than ever before. During calendar year 2015, 162 personnel operationally deployed for 7041 man-days and that number will be exceeded in 2016. Operational flying hours this year will be the highest the wing has ever recorded. Three years ago we thought the deployments were slowing down, today we have 65 airmen and four airplanes deployed in theater. We have deployed consistently for the last fifteen years but this is the largest single deployment

to this theater the Wing has done....and we have been told not to expect it to slow down.

At home, a robust operational mission continues. Contingency Aircraft Support Operations on the ground processed 785 transient aircraft, while our aircraft flew 1500 hours of operational missions, and offloaded more than 14 million pounds of fuel (over 2 million gallons)

Over 2100 soldiers make up the Maine Army National Guard commanded by Brig Gen Tim Corbett, with Command Sergeant Major Scott Doyon as the Senior Enlisted leader and Chief Warrant Officer Five Darrell Stevens, the Command Chief Warrant Officer.

While deployments have slowed, 44% of Maine current Soldiers have deployed to either Afghanistan or Iraq...12% have deployed more than once. The experience and readiness levels of our soldiers are high.

The Maine Army National Guard completed construction on two major new facilities: The Brunswick Armed Forces Reserve Center and the State Aviation Readiness Center in Bangor. Also, construction began on our new Joint Forces Head Quarters, "Camp Chamberlain". Camp Chamberlain is projected to be completed in 2018 and will be the new home of Joint Force HQ here in Augusta. These new facilities are incredible both in meeting environmental standards and design.

Budget reductions have significantly affected the Department of Defense in recent years. Nationally, the Army National Guard is reducing in size from approximately 350,000 soldiers to 335,000 soldiers. The Maine Army Guard's share of this reduction

will be around 100 positions over the next couple of years. I want to clarify that no one who is currently serving in these positions will have to leave. All of the Soldiers will continue to be able to have a rewarding career in the Maine Army National Guard. While reducing force structure is never easy, this process has provided our organization the ability to modernize some critical capabilities. Through working with our partners at the National Guard Bureau, we were able to retain the 133rd Engineer Battalion, which has a proud history and lineage of service to the nation and state. An example of this modernization is the 152nd Component Repair Company, based in Augusta and Bangor, will transition to become the 152nd Support Maintenance Company. This transition will slightly downsize the unit in numbers, however it will provide a much more relevant mission set and modern equipment to best assist our state and nation. Through these reductions, we were able to maintain the Maine Army Guard strength above 2000 Soldiers, ensuring that the Army and Air National Guard will have the right capabilities to assist the state whenever and wherever needed.

On December 2nd, 2015 the Maine National Guard congratulated the nation of Montenegro on their historic invitation to join NATO. Montenegro's membership in NATO will contribute to Balkan and European stability and has national and strategic level implications for the region. The State of Maine has been involved with Montenegro since 2007 under the National Guard's State Partnership Program. Through this program, the National Guard conducts military-to-military engagements in support of US defense security goals. Maine Airmen and Soldiers have been integral to the success and continue to help Montenegro create a modern military. I am excited that tomorrow a delegation from the Maine National Guard will be at the Library of

Congress to help celebrate the NATO invitation. This is a big deal for Montenegro. But it's also a big deal for the Maine Soldiers and Airmen who will share that sense of accomplishment on an international level.

Many of you know that the Secretary of Defense announced that all branches of service and all occupational skills will be open to women. The Maine Army National Guard has two units that were previously closed to women, and we are pleased to say that we are recruiting into these positions. Interestingly, The National Guard is celebrating International Women's History Month in March. Maine has been a trailblazer. The first ever female to serve in the National Guard in any state, was from Waterville, Maine. The year was 1956 and she served in New York. The first women to serve in Maine were four nurses who joined the Maine Air National Guard later that same year. Yesterday, the Maine Air National Guard announced that CMSgt Kelly Hoffses will be the next State Command Chief. Her civilian job is as a State of Maine employee for DHHS and she will be the first female state command chief in the history of the Maine Air National Guard.

The message that I like everyone to hear about the Maine National Guard follows three themes.

First, we are good at what we do. The MAINEiacs of the Air National Guard continued to build on the storied reputation by winning their twelfth Air Force Outstanding Unit Award. This award is selected from active, guard and reserve units. The Maine Army Guard accepted the Army Reserve Environmental Stewardship Award for being the best in the nation. Every year we have a list of units and individuals that win awards or are recognized as standouts. Anecdotally, I seldom go anywhere without being approached

with a good news story about working with a Maine Guardsman, whether at home or deployed.

We are good at what we do because we have great people who get up in the morning and want to do the right thing. We don't have a choice. It is the legacy and heritage that has been passed to us, epitomized by General Joshua Chamberlain and the 20th Maine. You can be proud of your Maine National Guard

The second theme is the future is bright. With a tight federal budget, living through sequestration, furloughs, the budget control act, and shrinking end strength of both the Army and Air Force; you can't help but have a little uncertainty or even concern for the future. But I think the future is bright. While end strength, the total number of soldiers and airmen in uniform, has been steadily decreasing, both the Army and the Air Force are saying they can't get any smaller. In the past two years both the Army and the Air Force have been the focus of mandated commission reports to look at total force structure and policies affecting the integration of active and reserve forces. Active duty leadership has agreed with the vast majority of the findings and recommendations. Even more importantly, in a period of budget challenges, relying on the National Guard is the absolute best value for America. For the Army Guard, beyond the ability to deploy to support combatant commanders, the relevance and focus on capabilities to support local and regional disasters or terrorism has been gaining focus and funding. For the Air Guard, the air refueling mission is in more demand than ever before; is integral to almost every core function of the Air Force, and is a perfect fit to our geography. For both the Air and the Army Guard, the growing demand for cyber capabilities will continue to present opportunity. We were notified last week of potentially gaining a new

cyber team in the Army Guard. Here is your takeaway: Great people, great mission and we get to do all of this while living here in the great state of Maine. Uncertainty and challenges? Absolutely. But I wouldn't trade places with anyone. The future is bright.

My third theme is service. Every time I speak to Airmen and Soldiers, I thank them for their service. I know they have a choice...and many don't make the choice or can't.

Recruiting and retention is probably the most important strategic concern I have. In order to provide a ready force for both the President and the Governor we need to recruit and retain to fill our manning authorizations. If we want to gain new missions, we have to have success recruiting, but it is getting more difficult. A recent study showed 70% of 17-24 year olds are ineligible for military service due to education, police record, drug use, physical standards or obesity. Just from 1995 to 2008 ineligibility from obesity went from 12 -21% of potential recruits. Kids are making poor choices. So now we are left with only 30% eligible and 97% of those choose not to serve in the military. That is the math that gets you to the 1% of the population that serve. It is a challenge we all have to meet. Honoring and supporting veterans has an important role as potential recruits see how their service will be appreciated. Positive, capable leadership plays an important role in providing an experience where the airmen and soldiers feel their service is valued and their mission relevant. But we have to get them in the door.

I want to thank the Veterans and Legal Affairs Committee and the legislature for passing LD1343 last year and working to get it out of Appropriations. The tuition waiver for our Airmen and Soldiers is critical to our recruiting efforts. Maine is the only New England state that doesn't provide tuition assistance. As I've talked to legislators, it is hard to imagine legislation that is more overwhelmingly supported. I am excited and optimistic

now that there is an alternate plan for funding this program without a fiscal note. I would like to thank the University of Maine System and Community College System for working to identify savings in the existing biennial budget that would allow this to be implemented this year without the need for a supplemental appropriation. It is a fact we have lost existing National Guard members and an untold number of recruits to the other New England states. We all know the odds of these folks coming back to Maine is not good. This is important.

We need to appeal to the young adults who are eligible to serve and we need to decrease the number who are ineligible. We need to do more on childhood obesity and fitness; and give kids the incentive not to make bad choices with drugs, crime or leaving school. Not to over simplify the problem, but if the promise of tuition assistance can be the motivation to alter bad choices we may help solve more problems than just recruiting.

So when I thank someone for their service I am really thanking them for making good decisions along the way to be part of the 1% of the population who are both eligible to serve and make the choice to serve. Today's recruits have seen video of the towers falling on 9/11 most of their life. They joined a force that has been operationally focused and engaged for 25 years. They choose to put on the uniform where integrity, selfless service, honor, duty, sacrifice and excellence matters. Our Guardsman have deployed, are deployed or will deploy putting stress on families, employers and co-workers; but they choose to serve. Thank them for their service.

I appreciate the opportunity to give you an update on the Bureau of Veterans Services, Maine Emergency Management Agency and the Maine National Guard. I hope you

take away that we have a Department and National Guard full of talented people—that are good at what they do, that have a bright future and have chosen to selflessly serve the State of Maine and Nation.

I am honored to serve as the 40th Adjutant General for the State of Maine. Thank you.