



NATIONAL GUARD ASSOCIATION OF THE UNITED STATES, INC.

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October 26, 2015

The Honorable Robert A. McDonald
Secretary
US Department of Veterans Affairs
801 Vermont Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Secretary McDonald:

On behalf of the more than 45,000 members of the National Guard Association of the United States and the nearly 500,000 soldiers and airmen of the National Guard, I wish to register our strong concern to the possible reduction in standards of anesthesia delivery in surgery at Veterans Administration medical facilities.

The Veterans Health Administration (VHA) is currently proposing new regulations within the nursing handbook that directly affects the quality of care of veterans receiving anesthesia during surgery. Current VHA policy encourages the use of physician-lead anesthesia teams. NGAUS believes that removing the requirement of having a trained anesthesia physician present during surgical operations represents a degradation of the level of care for our veterans. The risks and complications associated with the administration of anesthesia during surgeries should not be taken lightly when serving an aging and injured veteran population.

As you are probably aware, the vast majority of states require a licensed physician with years of education and experience in anesthesia to be present during all surgeries. Why would the Veterans Administration want their federally-owned medical centers taking steps to lower broadly accepted standards of surgery care for our nation's men and women who have served their country?

Thank you for taking the time to consider NGAUS's position on continuing to provide veterans the highest quality of care possible.

Sincerely,

Gus Hargett
Major General, USA, (Ret)
President