Military Advocate Weekly Update

February 16, 2020

Good Sunday afternoon to all the readers of this weekly column. I last wrote to you two weeks ago and have covered lots of territory since then. I spent a good portion of last week at the Association of Defense Communities annual “Installation Innovation Forum” in San Antonio, Texas, where I learned a quite a few things from my colleagues in other states and installation community and military leaders from all across the country.

Our consultant team and I have also been paying close attention to the President’s FY 2021 defense budget submission and its potential impact on Missouri installations, Service members and families and our defense industry. After a deep dive into the budget documents and consultation with staff in the offices of Senators Blunt and Hawley, Congresswoman Vicky Hartzler and Congressman Sam Graves (who are Missouri’s members of Armed Services or Appropriations Committees), we have some concerns we believe should be addressed by Congress before the defense appropriation is passed. I will detail some of those concerns in next week’s column.

We have also been working to reschedule the Military Appreciation Day 2020, which we had to postpone on February 5 because of winter weather and cancellation of Missouri House and Senate sessions on that day. We are close to finding a new date, and will hopefully be able to announce it during the coming week.

As always, though, I am happy for the chance to keep you updated on important happenings in our military and defense sector across the state and around the country.

ADC Installation Innovation Forum (IIF)

The ADC’s IIF in Texas was a tremendous success, with about 850 attendees from all over the country. About 112 military installations were represented and senior military leaders from the Pentagon attended, as well as representatives from over 200 communities and states across the country. I am currently serving as President of ADC and, as such, I had several speaking roles, served as moderator
for a panel of military leaders, and also participated in a session that highlighted an important agreement at Fort Leonard Wood.

The IIF’s sessions focused on issues related to innovation and its relationship to military readiness. During this time when our nation is facing threats from China and Russia, and regional adversaries such as Iran and China, the military is struggling with fiscal realities and a long list of competing demands, which are requiring new approaches to free up resources and allow investment back into priorities. The IIF was an opportunity for the military and ADC members to share new ideas on how communities and states can best support installations and give military leaders additional options as they work to achieve their missions.

Most of the military’s senior leaders responsible for installations attended the IIF. Among those who I had the pleasure to meet with were: Alex Beehler, Assistant Secretary of the Army for Installations, Energy and Environment; John Henderson; Assistant Secretary, Air Force for Installations, Environment and Energy; Lucian Niemeyer, Acting Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Energy, Installations & Environment; Lt. General Douglas Gabram, Commanding General, U.S. Army Installation Management Command; Lt. General Jason Evans, Army Deputy Chief of Staff, G-9; Vice Admiral Mary M. Jackson; Commander, Navy Installations Command; Major Gen. John Wilcox, Commander, Air Force Installation and Mission Support Center; Brigadier General Daniel Conley, Commanding General, Marine Corps Installations West – Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton; Jennifer Miller, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Installations, Environment, and Energy; Paul Cramer, Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Army (Installations, Housing & Partnerships); Ivan Bolden, Chief, Army Partnerships, and Teran Judd, Director, Air Force Community, Partnership and Air Force Encroachment.

Finally, I was honored to have served on a panel discussion with COL Eric Towns, Garrison Commander of Fort Leonard Wood; Dr. George Lauritson, Mayor of St. Robert, and Dorsey Newcomb, Executive Director of the Sustainable Ozarks Partnership. The panel was focused on the partnership it took to produce a water interconnection between Fort Leonard Wood and St. Robert that will provide emergency water supplies to the installation or the city if a future emergency arises. The interconnection, which will complete construction shortly, was put into place in response to catastrophic flooding on the Big Piney River that disabled Fort Leonard Wood’s water intake for several days in 2017. Training on the installation was almost shut down before the intake facility was put back into partial service.

The state made a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) to the city to plan and construct the interconnection, which is located near the main gate on Missouri Avenue. St. Robert provided match money for the grant and is overseeing construction.
Week ahead

In addition to working to nail down a date for the Military Appreciation Day 2020 during the coming week, I will be attending a mandatory 3 day training session called “The Missouri Way”. This is a part of the Parson Administration’s efforts to improve its performance and its work environment by focusing improving management skills. Next Friday I will also lead a WebEx training session for state, regional and local economic developers regarding the Missouri Military Communities Reinvestment Grant Program and the new Missouri Works-Military incentive to attract new military jobs.

Until next time, I welcome your feedback on the work I am doing on behalf of our military and defense sector.