

MR. SCOTT REESE, MAYOR OF BLACKFOOT AND CHAIRMAN, IDAHO STATE
COMMITTEE, EMPLOYER OF GUARD AND RESERVE

The Idaho Committee of Employer Support for the Guard and Reserve (ESGR) is a state committee organized under the National Committee, an agency within the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs. Because the nation's Ready Reserve components comprise approximately 46% of our total available military manpower, excluding retirees and because these Reservists, as a necessary part of the national defense, will spend more time away from the workplace defending the nation, it is imperative that an understanding and cooperation between Reservists and their civilian employers be promoted. In addition, the employer educational programs promoted by the National as well as the Idaho Committees encourage employee and citizen participation in National Guard and Reserve programs by:

1. Gathering community appreciation for the role of the National Guard and Reserve in our national defense
2. By educating employers about personnel policies and practices that accommodate employee participation in the National Guard and Reserve
3. By assisting in preventing, resolving, or reducing misunderstandings that result from military duty requirements under the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA).
4. Assisting in training National Guard and Reserve members about their obligations and responsibilities to employers

Specifically, with these goals in mind, the Idaho Committee of over 100 volunteers in six regions have begun an aggressive campaign to educate, involve, and inform both employers, reservists, and their families so that the Army National Guard's 116th Brigade Combat Team that was deployed to Iraq last year will have a seamless transition back to civilian life later this year. The 5-Star Program, promoted by the Idaho Committee of ESGR, is designed to recognize those employers who provide additional training and benefits to Reservists that are above and beyond the USERRA requirements. Since October of last year, the Idaho Committee has tripled the

number of 5-Star Employers in the state. The Idaho Committee nominated the name of a Boise employer, IDACORP, for the national "Freedom Award" and has been recently notified that the company was selected for the recognition that will take place in the White House in October. We believe that the importance of this recognition will encourage other employers to look more seriously at providing exceptional benefits to those individuals who provide much needed sacrifice and service to our country. Additionally, the committee has partnered with the Idaho Inter-Service Family Assistance Council (ISFAC) to provide briefings with The Adjutant General of the State of Idaho and representatives from all of the major branches of the service for family members at ten locations statewide from July through October of this year. This same group is coordinating efforts to welcome and brief returning National Guardsmen and Reservists and will schedule "welcome back" demob briefings around the state once a date of return is more certain. The state committee for the ESGR will be providing USERRA training to the county service officers at their annual meeting in August and is actively scheduling Boss Briefings and USERRA training at the employer level. Committee members act as liaisons between employers and Reservists by providing technical assistance and by receiving and investigating claims in any disputes that arise after their return. The annual meeting of the Idaho Committee will focus on this important Ombudsman responsibility by bringing in a national representative to provide training. In short, the Idaho Committee of the Employer Support for the Guard and Reserve believes that asking citizen soldiers to serve as frequently and as intensely as we are now asking them to do is a long-term concern to employers and we are committed to the work of sustaining soldiers both in the workforce and in their duties in support of our national defense.