

250 Years of Service. The Next 250 Opportunities.

By Regina LeValley

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In 2026, America celebrates 250 years. For the National Guard, service to this country began even earlier.

The Guard traces its roots to December 13, 1636, when citizen-soldiers in the Massachusetts Bay Colony were organized into permanent militia regiments. Nearly 140 years before the Declaration of Independence, ordinary people were already balancing the responsibilities of home, work, and community with the call to serve.

As America grew, the Guard evolved with it. What began as local militias gradually became a more organized and nationally integrated force. The Militia Act of 1903 helped establish the modern National Guard, and the National Defense Act of 1916 formally strengthened its role as the nation's primary reserve force while preserving its connection to the states. Guard members went on to serve in both World Wars, and after World War II, the creation of the Air National Guard expanded that mission even further.

In the decades that followed, the Guard evolved again, moving from a force held largely in strategic reserve to one routinely called upon for operations at home and around the world.

Through every chapter, one part of the Guard's identity has remained remarkably constant: **its members live in both the military and civilian worlds.**

Today's Guard and Reserve members carry that tradition forward as employees, business owners, students, parents, neighbors, and spouses who also answer the call to serve. They may respond to disasters in their own communities, deploy in support of federal missions, or bring skills developed in their civilian careers directly into their military service. Their civilian lives and military readiness are not separate stories. They strengthen one another.

That connection is what makes Pathways 250 especially meaningful as America marks this milestone anniversary. Celebrating 250 years gives us an opportunity to honor the service that helped shape our nation, but it also asks us to consider how we support the people continuing that legacy today.





Through Pathways 250, VetJobs is working to secure the next 250 employment opportunities for the military-connected community. For Guard and Reserve members, meaningful civilian employment can provide far more than a paycheck. It can create stability for a family, strengthen a career that continues alongside military service, and provide opportunities to grow skills that benefit both the workplace and the mission.

For nearly four centuries, Guard members have stood ready when their communities and country needed them. Reserve members have carried that same commitment while building careers and lives throughout civilian America. **Pathways 250 gives donors an opportunity to stand behind them in a practical and lasting way.**

Every gift helps make possible the individualized career support, training, employer connections, and resources that move military-connected job seekers toward meaningful employment. It turns gratitude into action and recognition into opportunity.

America's first 250 years were shaped by people willing to serve. As we look toward the next 250, we have an opportunity to invest in those carrying that tradition forward and help ensure that opportunity, stability, and meaningful careers are part of what comes next.



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