



SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
1000 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-1000

The Honorable J. Kevin Stitt
Governor of Oklahoma
Oklahoma City, OK 73105

NOV 29 2021

Dear Governor Stitt,

Thank you for your letter dated November 2, 2021 regarding the Department's coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) vaccination requirements for the members of the Oklahoma Army National Guard and Air National Guard.

In making our decision to require vaccination for Service members, we considered the thousands of hospitalizations and the hundreds of deaths, among Service members, civilians, and their families. COVID-19 takes our Service members out of the fight, temporarily or permanently, and jeopardizes our ability to meet mission requirements. To maintain a healthy and ready military force capable of protecting the American people, the immediate vaccination against COVID-19 is an essential military readiness requirement for all components and units of the military, including the Oklahoma National Guard.

This decision stems directly from my responsibility as the Secretary of Defense to promote the health, safety, and readiness of our military personnel, regardless of duty status, to include all members of the National Guard performing any duty or training, including under title 10 or title 32, U.S. Code. The concerns raised in your letter do not negate the need for this important military readiness requirement.

In accordance with the Presidential authority in title 32, U.S. Code, section 110, to prescribe regulations and issue orders necessary to organize, discipline, and govern the non-Federalized National Guard, all members of the Oklahoma Army and Air National Guard, regardless of duty status, must follow the directions of the Secretary of the Army and the Secretary of the Air Force, respectively, for specific COVID-19 vaccine compliance deadlines and requirements. Failure to do so may lead to a prohibition on the member's participation in drills and training conducted under title 32 and jeopardize the member's status in the National Guard.

Thank you in advance for your support and leadership as we embark on this critical effort together. I can assure you that I share your pride in the patriotism and dedication of all the men and women serving in the Oklahoma National Guard.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Ray O. Austin", is located below the word "Sincerely,".