



SECRETARY OF WAR
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WASHINGTON, DC 20301-1000

MAY 07 2026

MEMORANDUM FOR SECRETARIES OF THE MILITARY DEPARTMENTS
CHIEF OF THE NATIONAL GUARD BUREAU

SUBJECT: Reinstating Service Members Unjustly Discharged Under the Coronavirus Disease
2019 Vaccine Mandate

The Department of War continues to implement Executive Order (EO) 14184, “Reinstating Service Members Discharged Under the Military’s COVID-19 Vaccination Mandate,” inviting Service members unjustly discharged under the coronavirus disease 2019 vaccine mandate to return to service. While many have rejoined the fight, our work remains unfinished.

We must not penalize those who separated under coercive conditions rather than await formal administrative or criminal action. Adverse actions — such as, but not limited to, letters of reprimand, terminated assignments, and canceled mandatory educational opportunities — effectively ended the careers of Service members who would have otherwise continued to faithfully serve. We must recognize these specific circumstances for what they were: unjust discharges.

Therefore, under the 1-year extension of the expedited reinstatement program established in accordance with EO 14184, I direct the Secretaries of the Military Departments to ensure that upon receiving applications for reinstatement, the Boards for Correction of Military or Naval Records (“Boards”) evaluate any service members petitioning to determine whether they were unjustly discharged. While the Boards will evaluate each case individually based on documented evidence, it is appropriate to consider members as unjustly discharged if the evidence shows adverse actions solely related to vaccine refusal that precipitated their separation (including but not limited to letters of reprimand, active or denied vaccine exemption requests, withdrawn assignments, unsatisfactory participation in a Reserve Component, or cancelled enrollments in mandatory professional military education). The Boards must ensure that such cases present no evidence of unrelated adverse information (including but not limited to letters of reprimand or other records of misconduct unrelated to vaccine refusal, documented failure to meet height or weight standards, or other significant readiness issues) that could have led to their discharge.

When evaluating appropriate record corrections for unjustly discharged members, the Boards should strongly consider EO 14184’s intent, which was to return these warriors to the Force. Boards exercising their discretion may heavily weigh the member’s willingness to return to Military Service when determining appropriate relief. For those choosing not to return, the Department remains committed to providing relief through the proactive review of discharge characterizations, reentry codes, separation program designators, and narrative reason — which has almost universally resulted in upgrades, in many cases restoring lost eligibility for GI Bill educational benefits — as well as the repayment of recouped bonuses, where appropriate.

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