

Employers Recognized Among 3,236 Nominations Nationwide

SPRINGFIELD, IL (05/03/2012)(readMedia)-- ARLINGTON, Va. – Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR), a Department of Defense agency, announced today that three Illinois employers have been selected as semifinalists for the 2012 Secretary of Defense Employer Support Freedom Award. The Freedom Award is the highest recognition given by the DoD to employers for exceptional support of their Guard and Reserve employees. This year, 133 semifinalists nationwide stood out among an impressive pool of 3,236 nominees.

The Illinois employers named semifinalists are Caterpillar Inc., Peoria; Prairie Grove Consolidated School District 46, Crystal Lake; and Divane Brothers Electric Company, Franklin Park. Freedom Award nominations come directly from Guard and Reserve members, or family members acting on their behalf. The Freedom Award provides service members with an opportunity to recognize employers for going above and beyond what is required by law. Employers chosen as semifinalists support their Guard and Reserve employees through a variety of formal and informal initiatives, including developing internal military support networks, providing full benefits to employees fulfilling their military obligations, caring for the families of deployed employees, and granting additional leave to Guard and Reserve employees preparing to leave for or return from deployments.

"The employers selected as Freedom Award semifinalists have distinguished themselves for their support of their National Guard and Reserve employees, and are truly serving our Nation with their extraordinary commitment to these special employees," said ESGR National Chair James G. Rebholz. "Their efforts are to be applauded, and ESGR salutes these patriotic employers for their special care of their Guard and Reserve employees and their families while they serve our Nation in times of war and peace."

ESGR will announce the 2012 Freedom Award finalists next month after a review board comprised of military and civilian leaders selects the 30 most supportive employers from among the 133 semifinalists. The 15 award recipients will be announced early this summer and honored in Washington, D.C. at the 17th annual Secretary of Defense Employer Support Freedom Award Ceremony on September 20, 2012.

A complete list of Freedom Award semifinalists from each state is available at www.FreedomAward.gov

Written by National Guard PAO Illinois
Thursday, 03 May 2012 14:11

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About ESGR and the Freedom Award:

The Freedom Award was instituted in 1996 under the auspices of ESGR to recognize exceptional support from the employer community. In the years since, 160 employers have been honored with the award. Established as a DoD agency 40 years ago, ESGR develops and maintains employer support for Guard and Reserve service. ESGR advocates relevant initiatives, recognizes outstanding support, increases awareness of applicable laws, and resolves conflict between service members and employers. Paramount to ESGR's mission is encouraging employment of Guardsmen and Reservists who bring integrity, global perspective and proven leadership to the civilian workforce.