

Follow us @:



 Arkansas National Guard Public Affairs Office

[arkansas.nationalguard.mil](http://arkansas.nationalguard.mil)

## MEDIA ALERT

April 21, 2021

Contact: Lt. Col. Brian L. Mason  
State Public Affairs Officer  
Arkansas National Guard  
501-212-5020 / 501-590-0318  
[ng.ar.aranng.mbx.daily-guard@mail.mil](mailto:nq.ar.aranng.mbx.daily-guard@mail.mil)



### Guardsmen to receive signed Act 76, pen Gov used

*~ Airman 1<sup>st</sup> Class Noah Welch was impetus behind Senate bill that became law*

**WHO:** Col. Dean Martin, 189<sup>th</sup> Airlift Wing commander

**WHAT:** Will present a signed copy of Act 76 and the pen Arkansas Gov. Asa Hutchinson used to sign the Act into law to Airman First Class Noah Welch

**WHEN:** 1 p.m., Thursday, April 22, 2021

**WHERE:** Jacksonville Little Rock Air Force Base University Center, 1490 Vandenberg Blvd.

**WHY:** Act 76 authorizes a temporary waiver of the completion of initial active duty training requirement for Arkansas National Guard Soldiers and Airmen to use their state educational benefits.

“We’ve had young men and women who signed up to serve their country, but they’re having their lives put on hold because they’re waiting an extremely long time for a background check or for their initial active duty training,” said Col. Dean Martin, 189<sup>th</sup> Airlift Wing commander. “The pandemic has exasperated that to some extent, but the bureaucracy owns some of it, as well. Act 76 fixes that, and gives us flexibility to keep these young people motivated instead of feeling like their time is being wasted away.”

As written now, Act 76 allows for “an exigent circumstance that warrants a temporary waiver of the initial active duty training requirement,” and that the Arkansas National Guardsmen are to be “eligible to receive the tuition benefit under this section.”

Airman 1<sup>st</sup> Class Noah Welch of Cabot is assigned to the 184<sup>th</sup> Attack Squadron at Ebbing Air National Guard Base in Fort Smith. He’s a sensor operator on RQ-9 Reaper reconnaissance aircraft. His idea of a waiver was picked up and sponsored by Sen. Jane English and Rep. Mark Berry, resulting in Senate Bill 35, which became Act 76 when Gov. Hutchinson signed it into law on Feb. 9.

“Airmen Welch’s suggestion for the law change reflects the caliber of young people we recruit in the Guard,” said Col. Leon Dodroe, the 188<sup>th</sup> Wing commander in Fort Smith. “He highlighted the challenge of those passionate to serve who are facing delays to attend Basic

Military Training. His vision to help others receive their educational benefits while waiting to attend training mirrors our own Wing culture of finding a way to get to yes.”