Army National Guard Director Lt. Gen. Clyde Vaughn presented the National Guard's highest award to Nebraska's Senator Ben Nelson for his leadership and support to service personnel.

Vaughn presented the Sonny Montgomery Award to Nelson in a ceremony in Nelson's office on Monday.

"I am truly humbled that the National Guard selected me as the recipient of the Sonny Montgomery Award," said Senator Nelson. "As chairman of the Personnel Subcommittee, I take great pride in ensuring that our country delivers on its promises to our men and women in uniform."

Senator Nelson was recognized for his leadership on the Fiscal Year 2009 National Defense Authorization Act, which led to the largest increase in Army National Guard full-time manning in more than 22 years.

Additionally, he supported four other National Guard-initiated legislative proposals:

• Controlled grades—Updates the limits by grade of full-time officers and senior enlisted members of the Army and Air National Guard in order to reduce delays in promotions in specified grades.

• Unit vacancy promotions—Removes a barrier to promotion consideration of qualified National Guard Officers ordered to active duty in support of a contingency operation.

• Dual-Hat Commanders—This change in law would allow the President and a Governor to consent to the appointment of an officer for "dual-hat" (state and federal) status in advance of actually taking command of forces and therefore guarantee continuity of command.

• Increase age limit for chaplains and medical officers to 68.

This award was established in 1996 in honor of Major General G.V. "Sonny" Montgomery, a legendary advocate for the National Guard in Congress whose support earned him the title "Mr. National Guard."