Standing on our convictions

Are you standing on the courage of your convictions? Our guest blogger, Gabe Haugland, shares his story about joining the Iowa National Guard, stemmed from an encounter with a powerful quote.

"Those who expect to reap the blessings of freedom must, like men, undergo the fatigue of supporting it." — Thomas Paine

I first encountered those words in 2004 while walking through the old Iowa Army National Guard armory on Dubuque Street in Iowa City with my cousin Tyler Davin, who had just enlisted that week. They were written in bold font on one of the walls inside the armory. And an encounter it was.

As I read that quote, Pain's words pierced bone and flesh, emotion and reason, intellect and will, cutting straight to my core. It was as if Thomas Paine himself had thrown down the gauntlet in front of me and was now standing, with arms folded, waiting for my response.

In light of the many blessings God has bestowed on me by virtue of birth in this great nation, the logic of the conversation between Paine and myself that was was simple:

Paine: *Gabe, do you expect me to reap the blessings of freedom here in the United States?*

Gabe: *Yes, clearly. Not only do I expect and receive those blessings daily, but I hae been so blessed it's almost an afterthought anymore.*

Paine: *I appreciate your honesty.*

Gabe: *Minimal. Perhaps none. Thanks for asking.*

And with that, our conversation ended. I knew what I had to

do. I joined my cousin Tyler and enlisted into the Iowa National Guard later that week. It took every ounce of courage within me, but I carried out my conviction.

Of course military service is not for everyone, but it is not enough to cast our vote on Election Day and stand by the rest of the year, decade after decade, without doing much more than pulling a level. We must do more.

So stand on the courage of your convictions. Ask yourself what fatigue you've undergone for your country. And then ask yourself what more you can do. If you don't, Thomas Paine may just have a word with you about character.