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FRA Alerts Congressional Leaders on Budget Threats

Following the Secretary of Defense's announcement outlining the Department's FY 2013 budget request, the Fleet Reserve Association (FRA) advised House and Senate leaders of the Association's strong opposition to proposals aimed at significantly reducing military retirement benefits. In a letter to leaders of the Senate and House Armed Services Committees – Senators Carl Levin (Mich.) and John McCain (Ariz.), Representatives Howard McKeon (Calif.) and Adam Smith (Wash.) – FRA National President Jeffrey Gilmartin outlined the concerns of past, present and future service members who are increasingly concerned about pending cuts to the Defense budget.

During a recent press briefing, Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta and Army General Martin Dempsey, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, announced advance details of the FY 2013 Defense budget, that will include a new TRICARE-for-Life enrollment fee for Medicare-eligible military retirees, substantially increased healthcare and pharmacy costs for all retired service members and a commission to explore "cost-effective" changes to the existing military retirement system.

"Many of these retirees were promised free healthcare for life in return for careers of service with low pay and often arduous duty and associated sacrifices," explained Gilmartin in the letter. "The majority of them retired from the enlisted ranks with significantly less retired pay than more recent retirees who've benefited from significant (and long overdue) pay and benefit enhancements enacted since 2000. These older retirees are increasingly anxious about plans to impose a TRICARE-for-Life fee and increase TRICARE Prime premiums above and beyond the 13-percent hike and future CPI-indexed adjustments authorized for this year."

Despite endorsements from senior uniformed leaders, there are also serious concerns within the career force – tomorrow's retirees – about proposals to revise the military retirement program. "Based on response to FRA's recent online survey, those currently serving are gravely concerned that amending retirement benefits will negatively impact recruiting, retention and overall military readiness," said Gilmartin.

FRA also called on the lawmakers to honor commitments made to those who served in the past as well as safeguard the interests of those serving today and in the future. "Military service is unlike any other career or occupation and providing benefits commensurate with the associated level of service and sacrifices is part of the cost of defending this nation," concluded Gilmartin.

About FRA

FRA is a congressionally chartered, non-profit organization representing the interests of current and former enlisted members of the U.S. Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard. In addition to its advocacy work on Capitol Hill, FRA also sponsors a national Americanism Essay Contest and assists its members with disaster relief grants. The Association also sponsors an Education Foundation that awards scholarships to deserving college students.

The Association recently celebrated its 87th anniversary and, as the collective voice for all Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard enlisted personnel, FRA speaks on behalf of its members on Capitol Hill. There is no law protecting military benefits, so FRA is here to stand guard.

To learn more about FRA, visit www.fra.org; follow us on Twitter at [@FRAHQ](https://twitter.com/FRAHQ); or Like us on Facebook at www.fra.org/fb.