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October 9, 2014

The Honorable Howard P. McKeon  
Chairman, Armed Services Committee  
U.S. House of Representatives  
2184 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Fax: 202-225-0858 *202-06882*

The Honorable Adam Smith  
Ranking Member, Armed Services Committee  
U.S. House of Representatives  
2402 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Fax: 202-225-5893

Dear Chairman McKeon and Ranking Member Smith:

The Fleet Reserve Association (FRA) gratefully appreciates your efforts and those members of the Armed Services Committees, and their respective staffs, for the protection of benefits and programs for our military's active duty, retirees, veterans, reservist personnel and families in the FY 2013 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). With an abridged post-election Congressional schedule, FRA would like to weigh in its recommendations before the committee meets and acts on their deliberations for the NDAA. A number of provisions appear in both versions of the Act that FRA supports, such as: additional impact aid for public schools with a larger than normal population base of military personnel; require the Pentagon report on the impact of reduced Prime Service Areas for TRICARE; improve data collection methods for suicide and sexual assault incidents; and, Ship Accountability for Agent Orange presumption (House-section 1090 and Senate-section 1062).

FRA fully supports the extensive Military Coalition (TMC) recommendations sent to you and offers the following recommendations on key issues addressed only in one bill that are especially important to our sea service membership.

The Association believes that excluding Defense from Sequestration is of paramount importance for the national defense and will ultimately have a devastating impact on the viability of the All-Volunteer Force. The recently released 2014 Navy Retention Study indicates low service-wide morale for Navy personnel, perception of an



increasingly high operational tempo, and poor work/life balance. FRA believes that continued sequestration-driven budget cuts will only worsen the low morale within the ranks of our enlisted armed services.

### **Active Duty Provisions**

FRA opposes section 601 of the Senate Committee approved bill that caps military pay, and opposes section 603 to reduce Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH). The Association will be supporting Senate floor amendments to eliminate BAH reductions (Senate amendment #3714) and provide for an active duty pay increase that at least keeps pace with pay in the private sector pay (Senate amendment # 3906). FRA supports section 547 of the House bill that requires a temporary custody arrangement for a child to be based solely on deployment of a service member to revert back to the original agreement upon return of the service member. FRA also supports section 592 of the House bill to establish a working group to evaluate the Integrated Disability Evaluation System (IDES). Further, FRA supports section 642 of the House bill to allow reservists that served in active duty for training for least 6 years allow family members to purchase a VA headstone or marker for their love ones.

### **Retired Issues**

FRA strongly supports section 621 of the Senate Committee approved bill that extends full COLA retirement benefits to all new service members from January 1, 2014 to January 1, 2016. The Association supports section 623 in the Senate legislation to allow reserve retirement pay rollover that will extend a 90 day credit to any two fiscal years. FRA also supports section 625 of the Senate bill that authorizes the option of SBP annuities paid into a special needs trust for disabled dependent children. FRA supports section 643 of the House bill to prohibit funding for closing stateside commissaries. FRA opposes Senate provision (section 702) because of excessive co-pay increases and opposes mail order provisions until the current TFL mail order program has experienced a complete year of review to measure and realize its overall cost-savings potential from the pocket spending of junior enlisted personnel. The Association will be supporting Senate amendments that expand concurrent receipt (Senate amendments #3764, #3765, #3766, and #3809).

FRA strongly supports and endorses pay increases however, not at the expense or on the backs of our service members to pay for other programs and benefits as an off-set to additional costs.

McKeon/Smith ltr  
October 9, 2014  
Page 3

For additional information please contact John Davis, Director of Legislative Programs at (703) 683-1400 x-110.

Your consideration of these recommendations is appreciated.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Thomas J. Snee", with a stylized flourish at the end.

THOMAS J. SNEE  
National Executive Director

TJS:jd:tw

cc: The Honorable Joe Wilson (202) 225-2455  
The Honorable Susan A. Davis (202) 225-2948