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FRA *today*



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"Manned, trained and equipped to the highest level of readiness"

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Featured

18 TOTAL FORCE OF THE FUTURE

After two years of research and analysis, the Commission on the National Guard and Reserve (CNGR) offered its recommendations for reshaping America's reserve force and revising the role reserve personnel play in national defense and homeland security. Now the devil's in the details.

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LOYALTY, PROTECTION AND SERVICE

FRA IS A CONGRESSIONALLY CHARTERED, NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION ADVOCATING FOR CURRENT AND FORMER ENLISTED MEMBERS OF THE U.S. NAVY, MARINE CORPS AND COAST GUARD ON CAPITOL HILL. FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE BENEFITS OF MEMBERSHIP, PLEASE VISIT WWW.FRA.ORG OR CALL 800-FRA-1924.

ON THE COVER

The role of the reserve force is increasingly important. FRA provides an overview of the CNGR's recent recommendations and shares the insights of the senior enlisted leaders of the USN, USMC and USCG Reserve Forces.



Eileen Murphy

Timeless Concerns

IN 1924, THIS PUBLICATION was *The Fleet Reserve Bulletin*. Subscriptions were 50 cents per year. Membership in the Fleet Reserve Association did not include the subscription price, and was \$12 per year. Using an inflation calculator, I discovered that would equate to \$146.41 today. It certainly was a large sum of money for the Sailors who were joining FRA to have representation on Capitol Hill to fight for their pay.

The Association's representative on the Hill, Bob White, wrote in the 1 January 1924 Fleet Reserve Bulletin, "ALL HANDS, regulars and reservists, get together and pull a steady stroke" to fight for pay. He went on to say it should be "but a small matter for men to join the Fleet Reserve Association, but it is a 'BIG MATTER if [pay] is cut.'"

On 11 January, Shipmate Charles W. Gerhardt, from Cincinnati, Ohio wrote in to thank the Association for the publication and its work. In his letter, he noted that he enclosed his payment and shared an incredibly important — and timeless — point...

"If every man in the service and [all eligible for membership] will do his bit, line himself up with White, contribute his share, even be it one dollar, I'll gamble everything I own, can beg, borrow and steal, that White will go over the top. How any man, about to benefit through White's efforts, can lay back, is beyond me. Without 100 percent support, White should throw up the job right now, go back to his civilian job, and never again consent to help put through legislation that benefits enlisted personnel..."

He further noted, "If it were possible to organize them into one big membership, what strength we would have," and shared an anecdote of having, that night, called several people eligible for membership to tell them about the work being done by the Association and urged them to join. Although they were previously ignorant to the issues presented, they did not see that joining would help the cause and refused. "These same birds would yell their heads off if their (pay) was reduced or stopped," he wrote.

At the time, there were only a few hundred members of FRA. FRA has had hundreds of thousands of members come and go since 1924, but today we still ask: What about the rest of those who are eligible and don't join?

There is an entire FRA legislative team on Capitol Hill today. The concerns still include pay, but also health care, education, family readiness issues and more. It is even more important for each eligible person to join the Association today than it was in 1924. *On & Off Capitol Hill* explains legislation introduced that can have a dramatic effect on you and your family. Having a team of professionals fighting for you is an important asset — worth much more than the \$25 a year membership cost we have today (which includes the magazine!).

Shipmate Gerhardt pushed for "one big membership" and we have certainly laid the foundation for that. Make shipmate Gerhardt proud — call those who you know are eligible for membership and let them know we need them to join as we continue to fight for their benefit.

Eileen Murphy is the Director of Marketing and Communications and serves as the Managing Editor of *FRA Today*. Please contact her at eileen@fra.org.

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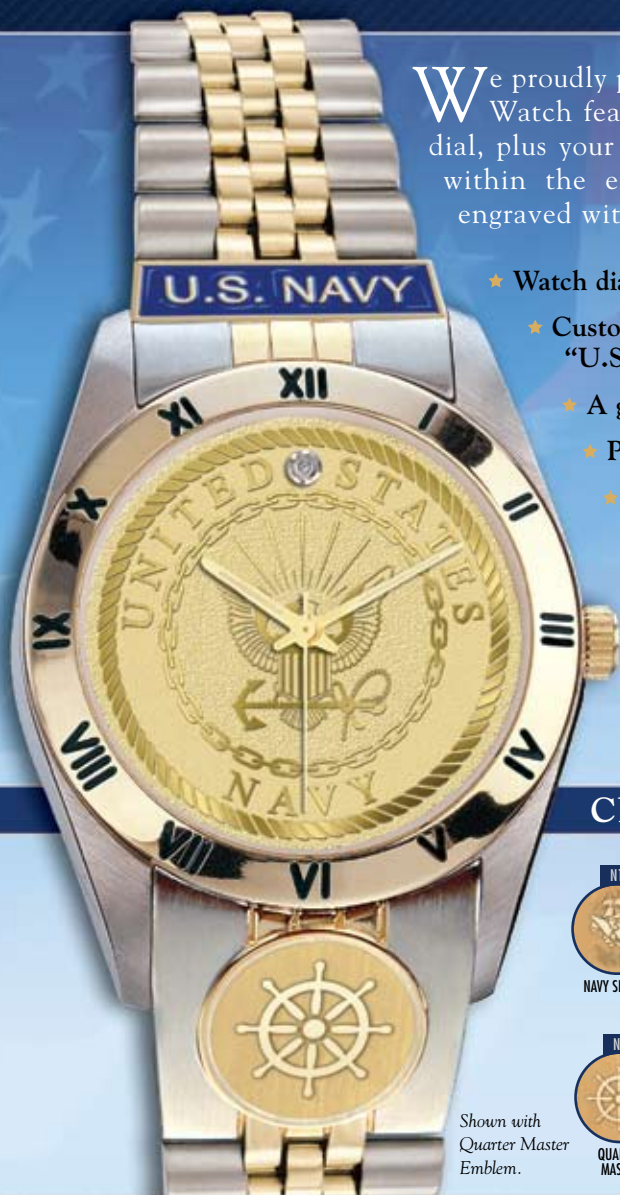
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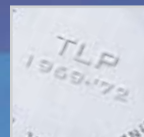
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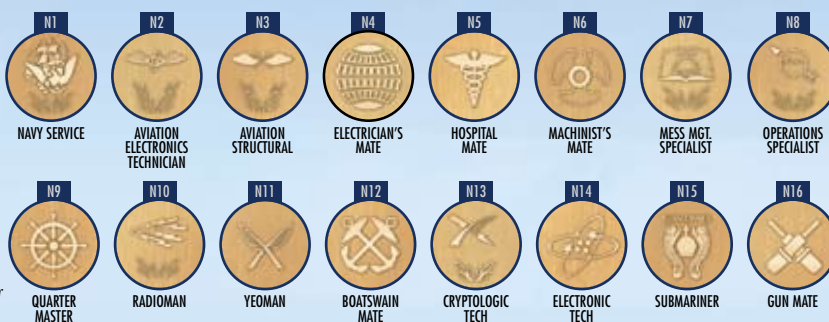


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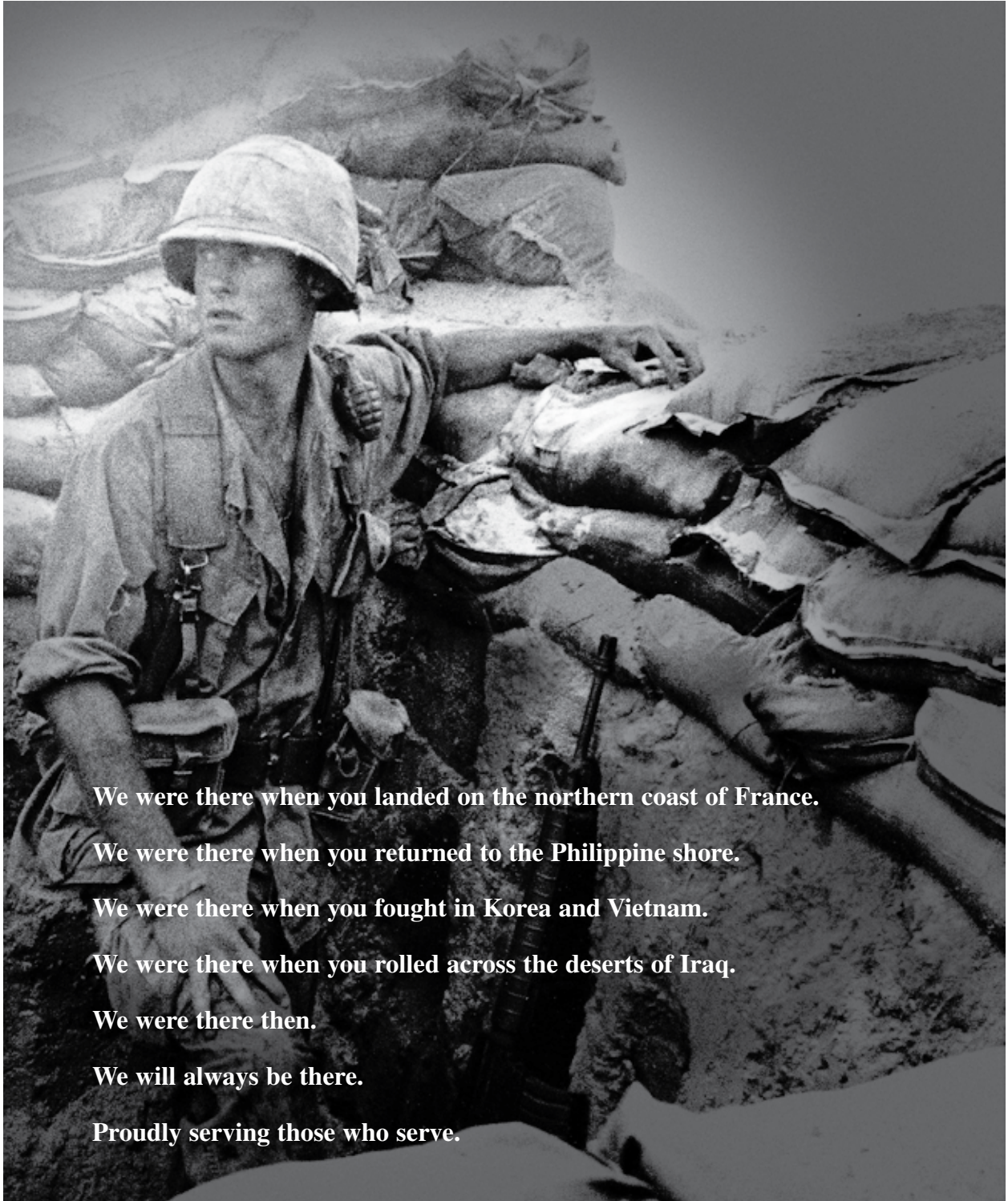
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Joe Barnes

NHQ Compliance With Various Laws

YOUR NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS TEAM is responsible for complying with various reporting and operational requirements mandated in most instances by Federal law. Just like thousands of other associations in the National Capitol area and throughout the U.S., we operate as a business and routinely file reports, comply with employment requirements, monitor changes in statutes and reporting processes, and implement these in conjunction with maintaining our tax-exempt status as a 501(c)19 veterans organization. In addition to our annual independent financial audit, these efforts are very important to our extensive and ongoing work in support of FRA's membership.

Examples of these include new reporting regulations for non-profit organizations which are legislated by the Pension Protection Act of 2006. This was briefed by Finance Officer Paul Rigby to delegates attending the recent Southeast Region Mid-Year Meeting in Sanford, Fla., and information was disseminated via weekly and Branch Report mailings to Branch Secretaries. Information on Branch reporting requirements is also posted on FRA's web site at www.fra.org. The law also requires us to provide quarterly statements to NHQ staff members indicating what is in their 401(k) accounts.

The Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002 also impacted non-profit organizations, requiring greater attention to the fiduciary responsibilities of boards of directors. According to Eileen Morgan Johnson from the law firm of Whiteford, Taylor & Preston LLP, who wrote in ASAE's *Association's Now* magazine "Boards and their individual members can be held liable for the actions they take and for the actions they fail to take based on a reasonable person standard." She also states

"Board members can be held personally liable if the organization fails to complete state and federal filings or obtain state approval to do business or solicit contributions." Sarbanes-Oxley also requires better defined official document retention and destruction policies.

Other compliance requirements include new and significantly more detailed lobbying reports in the wake of the Capitol Hill lobbying scandals. Effective on 1 January 2008, FRA is required to file quarterly reports on the Association's lobbying efforts to include its work on specific legislative proposals and the costs associated with all lobbying activities. In addition to the Association reports, each registered individual lobbyist must file a separate report detailing his/her lobbying and the associated costs.

In conjunction with these, DLP John Davis and I attended a Military Coalition-sponsored legal briefing on pending changes on lobby reporting requirements held here at our National Headquarters late last year. John has attended other briefings and workshops on the new requirements and we're on schedule to be in full compliance by mid-April.

Recent Congressional hearings focused on the practices of veterans' charities (NED Perspective, February 2008 FRA Today) and how collected funds are being spent. These are related to more stringent monitoring efforts and stricter standards and oversight by watchdog groups that include The American Institute of Philanthropy and the Better Business Bureau's Wise Giving Alliance.

Due to tighter oversight requirements, each FRA Board of Directors is briefed on their fiduciary responsibilities and given a list of practical

guidelines and basic rules for Board officers and others with significant Association-related responsibilities. As stated by David P. Goch, FRA's legal counsel from the law firm of Webster, Chamberlain & Bean, "As a fiduciary, without any written or even oral acquiescence, the Board member is obligated to put the interest of the corporation (FRA) before his/her own, act responsibly and in the best interests of the corporation (FRA)."

As the managing officer of our National Headquarters, I'm responsible for complying with legal requirements associated with employing staff members. FO Paul Rigby and Admin Department Head Alicia Landis assists with various HR functions and with monitoring other relevant laws which include the Fair Labor Standards Act; the Uniformed Services Employment & Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA); the Occupational Safety and Health Act; Americans with Disabilities Act and other labor laws connected with staff employment.

These are but a few of the compliance requirements we act upon regularly at National Headquarters. Be assured that we're monitoring new laws and associated regulatory requirements and acting on these as necessary.

Joe Barnes is FRA's National Executive Director and Chairman of the National Committee on Legislative Service. A member of Navy Department Branch 181, he is also an advisor to the National Committees on Budget and Finance and Membership and Retention.

Commissary Benefit

A side effect of our commissaries, besides the savings which grow year-by-year as the civilian grocery stores keep jacking up prices, is that the commissary is about the only place where shipmates see each other. We have met shipmates at USN, USAF and USA bases from Maine to Florida, Texas to Illinois, San Diego to Washington state, and Alaska to Hawaii.

One thing we learned from these random meetings is that so many of our friends who went to the four corners of the world chose to retire and settle down near a military installation that had commissary facilities.

David Chigos

SBP Improvements

I understand the Survivor Benefit Plan [premium] payments taken from our retirement check are supposed to be stopped. When will this take place? What is the exact date?

Byron Lawrence, Jr.

From FRA: Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) premiums will stop on 1 October 2008 for retirees who have reached age 70 and have paid SBP premiums for 30 years (360 payments). This is a result of FRA-supported legislation that passed in 1999.

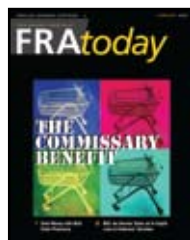
Effective 1 April 2008 SBP annuity payments will increase from 50 to 55 percent of base retired pay (45 percent offset) for survivors who also receive Social Security benefits. This reduction in the offset is also the result of FRA's legislative efforts from 2005.

Last Month's Pay

As the Director of a Navy Retired Activities Office, I must respond the letter "Final Months Pay" [in the March 2008 issue of *FRA Today*]. The idea of [allowing survivors to keep a retiree's] total final month's pay has merit and would save paperwork for the Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS). Most problems we encounter in our office center around this subject, and come in two forms.

In the first case, the service member has in the past named someone other than the current spouse to receive the arrears pay and did not change the info with DFAS. The second is that the current spouse has not returned the Form 1174 (sent by DFAS) with a copy of the death certificate to DFAS or when the funds deposited on the first of the month were recalled, the funds were not in the account due to use. Both [cases] cause a number of phone calls and letters to sort out and correct.

Paul F. Loveless Jr.



Korean War PTSD

Lauren Armstrong's article about PTSD was excellent, but she left something out about which veterans have it. I am a member of the Korean War Veterans Association, and we have accepted the media leaving us out when talking about the wars. They all say WWII, Vietnam, Desert Storm, etc. Please remember we still call it the "Forgotten War."

Bill Webster



From FRA: Post Traumatic Stress Disorder can affect anyone who has experienced a traumatic event, and combat in any theatre, in any decade certainly qualifies. Hundreds of Korean War veterans die each day, many as a result of combat-related injuries and illnesses. Thank you for bringing this omission to our attention.

Mail-Order Pharmacy Concerns

Several years ago, I mailed four new prescriptions to Express Scripts, [TRICARE's mail-order pharmacy contractor]. After two weeks, I e-mailed the company and asked where my pills were. I was told the pharmacist is working on them. Three days later, still no pills, so I call. Answer: The pharmacist is working on them. A few days more and I call again and get the same answer. By the time I'm down to two or three pills, I call my doctor and ask for new scripts to be sent to my retail pharmacy. I have my pills that afternoon.

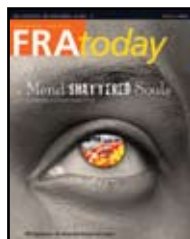
Four weeks later, I received a letter from Express Scripts containing [the original] prescriptions. The letter said the scripts could not be filled because they could not make out the doctor's signature. I took the letter to my doctor's office and learned that they had not received any phone calls or faxes from Express Scripts. I will not use the mail order pharmacy while Express Scripts has the contract.

John S. Jackowski

From FRA: The TRICARE pharmacy benefit adds significant value to retirees' health care coverage, and Bob Washington, FRA's health care advisor, works closely with TRICARE to ensure beneficiaries' concerns are addressed.

One of the advantages of the program is beneficiaries' ability to fill their prescriptions at military treatment facilities, retail pharmacies and through the TRICARE Mail Order Pharmacy (TMOP). TMOP provides a safe and cost-effective way get 90-day supplies of most medications prescribed for ongoing conditions such as high blood pressure and diabetes. TMOP has come a long way in the past four years, so you might consider giving it another try.

Submissions Send Shipmate Forum letters to: Editor, *FRA Today*, 125 N. West St. Alexandria, VA 22314. E-mail submissions may be sent to fratoday@fra.org. Please include "Shipmate Forum" in the subject line. FRA reserves the right to select and edit letters for publication. Letters published in *Shipmate Forum* reflect the opinions and views of FRA members. They do not necessarily reflect the official position of FRA as a whole. FRA is not responsible for the accuracy of letter content.



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John Davis

President Proposes and Congress Disposes

AS FRA TODAY GOES to print Congress has begun work on the President's proposed FY 2009 budget. The Senate and House Budget Committees have marked-up their respective FY 2009 budget resolutions, which will be sent to their respective chambers of origin for floor amendments and a vote. The annual budget resolution is a non-binding measure that sets annual spending limits for the federal budget.

Both resolutions reject the Administration's proposals to increase TRICARE fees for retirees under age 65 and a VA tiered annual enrollment fees for veterans in Priority Groups 7 and 8. (The \$120 TRICARE-for-Life fee proposed by the Task Force on the Future of Military Health Care was not included in the Administration's budget proposal.) Both budget resolutions provided an additional \$3.2 billion more for veterans' programs than requested in the Administration's 2009 budget submission. The additional funding is intended to improve the processing of veterans' claims for disability compensation and fund

veterans' health care programs, including enhancements in mental health, Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), and Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) treatment.

FRA scrutinizes the budget proposals and advocates for adequate funding of health care, pay, housing, and other benefits and quality-of-life enhancements. With one party controlling the White House and the other party controlling Congress, the old axiom that "President proposes and Congress disposes" could apply. This is especially true when the current occupant of the White House is a "lame duck" (not running for office). Congress has learned, however, that the President can and will veto legislation and Congress may not have the votes (two-thirds vote in both chambers) to override his veto.

The association appreciates the initial bipartisan opposition in both chambers to TRICARE and VA health care fee increases, and support for adequate funding for the Department of Veterans Affairs and Wounded Warrior initiatives.

Congress Addresses Military Education Benefits

In response to the President's State of the Union Address, Representative Roscoe Bartlett (Md.) has introduced "The Montgomery GI Bill Educational (MGIB) Assistance Transferability Act" (H.R. 5229) to expand transferability of MGIB benefits to military family members. Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison (Texas) has introduced a companion bill, "The Montgomery GI Bill Educational Assistance Transferability Act" (S. 2575), in the Senate.

FRA has requested that these proposals be expanded to also allow Veterans Education Assistance Program (VEAP) era senior enlisted personnel to enroll in MGIB, as is authorized in "The Montgomery GI Bill Enhancement Act" (H.R. 4130), sponsored by Representative Tim Walberg (Mich.). While FRA supports the opportunity for family members to use a service member's MGIB benefits, there are thousands of senior enlisted personnel who entered military service during the VEAP era who do not have education benefits. The Association continues to advocate for the adoption of an open-enrollment period for these service members. Allowing VEAP-era career

enlisted personnel to participate in the MGIB is an equity issue and should be included in this expansion of MGIB eligibility.

FRA is also supporting Rep. Nancy Boyda's (Kan.) amendment to "The College Opportunity and Affordability Act" (H.R. 4137) that requires states to provide service members and their families in-state tuition rates for state colleges and universities.

Due to the nature of military service, service members are frequently transferred from one state to another. Because many states tie a student's eligibility for in-state tuition to their parents' state of residency, this leaves the children of many military families at constant risk of losing their in-state benefits. Rep. Boyda's amendment will alleviate this problem. The bill further allows dependents to retain their in-state status until graduation as long as the student remains continuously enrolled.

Congressmen Rubén Hinojosa (Texas) and Mike Castle (Del.) also introduced FRA-supported legislation that will help returning veterans successfully transition to college life. "The Securing Success for Veterans on Campus Act" (H.R. 5143),

will provide resources to establish one-stop support centers on campus designed to help veterans successfully complete a higher education.

Senators Jim Webb (Va.), Chuck Hagel (Neb.) and Frank Lautenberg (N.J.) reintroduced the revised "Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act" (S.22) and announced Senator John Warner (Va.), former chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, as one of four lead co-sponsors of the bill. Warner's support adds renewed momentum to the effort to strengthen and reform educational benefits for the nation's veterans. For detailed information about the measure, including DoD's concern about the legislation being a "retention killer," read Tom Philpott's syndicated Military Update article (6 March 2008) at www.fra.org.

The bill would provide service members who have served since 11 September 2001 with improved educational benefits similar to those provided to World War II-era veterans. The House companion bill (H.R. 2702) was introduced by Rep. Bobby Scott (Va.).

FRA Staff Meets with Guard and Reserve Commission Chairman and Members

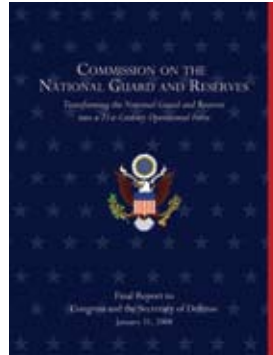
FRA staff and representatives from several other TMC organizations met with Guard and Reserve Commission Chairman Arnold Punaro, and commission members Patty Lewis and former Secretary of the Navy William Ball to discuss the panel's recently released final report. The commission completed a congressionally-mandated examination of the seven Reserve components of the U.S. military, over a two-year period, and its report includes six major conclusions, 95 recommendations, supported by 163 findings. The report assesses the necessity, feasibility, and sustainability of the "Operational Reserve" which is significantly different from the "Strategic Reserve" used in the Cold War.

FRA is particularly concerned that the commission endorsed proposals from the 2006 Defense Advisory Committee on Military Compensation that would make major changes in the active duty retirement system, including requiring members to serve until age 57 or older in order to draw retired pay immediately.

Other recommendations include several FRA-supported suggestions submitted to the commission that include:

- Increasing resources to secure adequate end strength, equipment and training to sustain "Operational Reserve" status;
- Improving family health coverage by allowing the government to subsidize continuation of a private employer's family coverage during activation;
- Enhancing Reserve retirement and MGIB benefits; and
- Streamlining pay systems; (FRA has expressed concern that an unintended consequence of this change could eliminate the current compensation value of 2-for-1 base pay for Reserve drill duty.)

The full report is available on the Commissions website at www.cngr.gov. Read more about the Guard and Reserve Commission Report on page 16.



USFSPA Reform

The Defense Department has sent recommendations for reforming the Uniform Services Former Spouse Protection Act (USFSPA) to staff of the House and Senate Armed Services Committees. Similar to recommendations sent to Capitol Hill last year, the proposals will be considered as amendments to the FY 2009 Defense Authorization bill and include:

- Basing former spouse award amount on member's grade/years of service at the time of divorce (and not retirement),
- Prohibiting award of retired pay while member is still on active duty,
- Permitting members to designate multiple SBP beneficiaries.

FRA staff attended the American Retirees Association's (ARA) annual board meeting to discuss strategy for introducing legislation that will address the inequities of this onerous law. DLP John Davis reiterated FRA's belief that USFSPA is a poorly-written, one-sided law that Congress needs to review and amend so provisions of this federal law are not ignored by state courts in divorce proceedings. The Association also believes this law should be more balanced in its protection for both the service member and the former spouse. FRA continues to advocate for hearings and legislation addressing these inequities.

Last year FRA was one of only a few groups that signed onto a "Friend of the Court" petition to the U.S. Supreme Court by the USFSPA Litigation Support Group (ULSG) to declare USFSPA unconstitutional (Tammy Adkins, et al v Robert M. Gates). Unfortunately, the Supreme Court declined to hear the case.

FRA Testifies on VA Funding, Health Care Fees and MILCON

FRA reiterated its legislative priorities during testimony before the House Military Construction, Veterans Affairs and Related Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee. FRA's Director of Legislative Programs (DLP) John Davis shared the Association's concerns regarding the \$3.2 billion shortfall in funding for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), its opposition to healthcare fees for beneficiaries in Priority Groups 7 & 8, and the scope and quality of military construction. Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy Joe Campa, Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps Carlton Kent, and their Army and Air Force counterparts testified before this same panel in early February, expressing their concerns regarding military quality-of-life issues.

DLP Davis also thanked the subcommittee for funding the largest annual budget increase in the Department of Veterans Affairs' 77-year history. The FY 2008 increase includes additional health care funding with an emphasis on research and treatment for Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). The legislation also provides money for much needed additional VA case workers to reduce the major backlog of disability claims. These and other enhancements were strongly supported by FRA. The subcommittee sent a clear message that this year there is no higher funding priority than to ensure proper treatment, housing and support facilities for all of our wounded warriors and their families to which we owe so much.

Other issues addressed included: Funding for barracks, housing, childcare centers and other critically important quality of life (QOL) programs, Montgomery GI Bill (MGIB) enhancements to include an MGIB enrollment period for Veterans Education Assistance Program (VEAP) era personnel, VA data security, and rebuilding of the Armed Forces Retirement Home.

Davis also thanked Reps. Chet Edwards (Texas), who chairs the subcommittee, and Walter Jones (N.C.) for introducing the "Military Retirees Health Care Protection Act" (H.R. 579), as FRA believes that the Defense Department has not sufficiently investigated other options to make TRICARE more cost-efficient. Read the full testimony in the Legislative section of the FRA website (www.fra.org).

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Stimulus Tax Bill with Veterans' Payment Becomes Law

President Bush signed the economic stimulus package into law recently. Known as "The Recovery Rebates and Economic Stimulus for the American People Act" (H.R. 5140), the legislation, sponsored by Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi (Calif.), authorizes a rebate check of up to \$600 for most income-earners, based on their 2007 tax returns.

A Senate floor amendment was adopted that also authorizes a one-time \$300 payment to disabled veterans and veterans' widows if they received \$3,000 in Social Security or veteran's disability benefits last year. The amendment was sponsored by Majority Leader Harry Reid (Nev.) and will impact some 250,000 veterans and survivors.

According to the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), personnel who are not otherwise required to file a tax return may still be entitled to an economic stimulus payment from the federal government. To receive the stimulus payment, file a 2007 IRS Form 1040 or Form 1040A and report at least \$3,000 in qualifying income. Individuals can include the amount of their VA benefits to qualify for the stimulus payment, and may add the amount of their VA disability compensation, pension, or survivors' benefits to any other qualifying income to reach the \$3,000 requirement. Other qualifying income would include wage earnings or Social Security benefits. The words "Stimulus Payment" should be written at the top of the 1040A or 1040.

In late March 2008 the IRS mailed a packet of information to recipients of VA benefits who did not file a tax return last year. The packet will contain guidance to assist with stimulus payment claims. For those who file a 2007 tax return, the IRS will begin mailing checks in May. For additional information, visit the IRS web site at www.irs.gov.

VA Disability Rating Reform Introduced in House and Senate

Senator Richard Burr (N.C.) and Representative Steve Buyer (Ind.), ranking members (respectively) of the Senate and House Committees on Veterans' Affairs, are sponsoring legislation that would simplify and modernize the disability determination system at the Department of Defense (DoD) and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). The legislation is based on recommendations by the President's Commission on Care of America's Returning Wounded Warriors, co-chaired by former Senator Bob Dole and former Health and Human Services Secretary Donna Shalala. The "America's Wounded Warriors Act" (H.R. 5509 and S. 2674) would require the VA to replace the current outdated VA rating schedule with a new schedule that takes into account both average loss of earning capacity and reduction in quality of life. It would also create "transition" payments to help medically discharged veterans, so they can focus on treatment, rehabilitation, and getting back into the workforce. Although the bill would simplify the claims process by ending the requirement that all disabled service members get rated by both DoD and VA, there is significant risk associated with this proposal, including reduced compensation for some severely disabled personnel and the elimination of the 30-percent disability retirement threshold that now establishes TRICARE eligibility for disabled members and their families.

The legislation would also establish a new disability retirement system for service members deemed unfit for service and pay a lifetime annuity based on rank and years of service, regardless of the level of severity of the service member's disabilities. Veterans would receive the entire DoD annuity and any VA disability benefits, and a clearly-defined rule would be created regarding the benefits a medically-discharged service member would receive.

Lifetime eligibility for health and dental coverage under TRICARE would be determined after congressional consideration of a DoD study, and other retirement benefits, such as commissary and exchange privileges, would be extended to all who retire under the new system.

Additionally, the legislation directs VA to submit a proposal to Congress detailing the new rating schedule and transition payment rate structure. The new system would be open to all veterans, and recipients of compensation under the old system would have their disability ratings grandfathered, unless they submit a claim under the new system. FRA is concerned about the structure of the proposed system and the potential impact on disabled personnel. The Association's Legislative Team is reviewing the bill to further evaluate its impact.

Increases in Travel Reimbursement for Eligible Veterans, Reservists

Mileage reimbursement rates for veterans visiting Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) hospitals and clinics increased from 11 cents per mile to 28.5 cents per mile — the first increase in 30 years. VA officials predict more than one million veterans will be affected by the increase. The 2008 appropriations act provided funding for VA to increase the beneficiary travel mileage reimbursement.

As mandated by law, the VA also increased the deductible amounts applied to certain mileage reimbursements. The new deductibles are \$7.77 for a one way trip, \$15.54 for a round trip, with a maximum of \$46.62 per calendar month. However, these deductibles can be waived if they cause a financial hardship to the veteran.

There is also a pending Senate bill (S. 2654) that seeks to increase the VA travel reimbursement to 48.5 cents per mile (the current rate for government employees) and eliminate the deductible altogether for vets traveling to VA medical facilities. The Citizen Soldier and Military Veteran Travel Reimbursement Act, introduced by Sens. Norm Coleman (Minn.) and Blanche Lincoln (Ark.), would also improve and expand the current travel reimbursement program for Reservists who travel more than 50 miles for their monthly drill weekend. Members can use the FRA Action Center at www.fra.org to contact their senators to support this legislation.

Five Years of VA Health Care for Combat Veterans

Military veterans who served in combat since 11 November 1998, including veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan, are now eligible for five years of free medical care for most conditions from the VA. This measure increases a two-year limit that has been in effect nearly a decade, and has no effect on veterans with medical conditions related to their military service. Veterans may apply at any time after their discharge from the military for medical care for service-connected health problems. The expanded benefit is part of the FY 2008 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) signed by President Bush in January and applies to care in a VA hospital, outpatient clinic or nursing home. It also extends VA dental benefit availability from 90 to 180 days after discharge.



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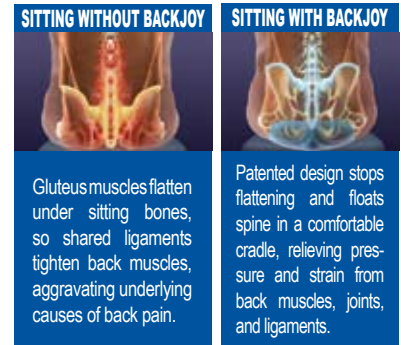
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Coast Guard Testimony

FRA submitted a written statement addressing key Coast Guard personnel issues and supporting many of the concerns referenced by Master Chief Petty Officer of the Coast Guard (MCPOCG) Charles "Skip" Bowen during his testimony before the House Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation Subcommittee. Other witnesses included Chief of Staff VADM Robert Papp, Jr. and Sean Connaught, administrator of the Maritime Administration.

MCPOCG's testimony included requests for improved USCG infrastructure, increased child care options, improved access to health care, upgraded housing, transferability of MGIB benefits, hiring preferences for spouses, and adequate end strength for both active duty and the reserve components of the Coast Guard.

FRA also submitted a statement for the record in conjunction with a hearing on the Coast Guard's FY 2009 budget by the Senate Ocean, Atmosphere, Fisheries, and Coast Guard Subcommittee. Consistent with past testimony, FRA strongly supports Coast Guard parity with DoD benefits and adequate funding to sustain this in the future.

The subcommittee hearing also focused on stalled authorization legislation (S. 1892) that addresses several important personnel issues. These include authority for service members to retain leave they would otherwise forfeit if they are supporting major disasters or other emergencies declared by the President; legal assistance for Coast Guard Reservists who have served on active duty for more than 30 days under mobilization authority; and reimbursement for certain medically-related travel expenses when a service member is stationed on an INCONUS island and his/her family member is referred to a specialty care provider off-island. Among other issues, the bill also authorizes Coast Guard end strength of 45,500, and makes Coast Guard retirees eligible for residence in the Armed Forces Retirement Home (AFRH).

Pay Increase Bill Introduced

Rep. Gus Bilirakis (Fla.), a member of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee, is sponsoring "The Military Pay Improvement Act" (HR 5481) to provide a minimum 3.9-percent increase in basic pay for active duty personnel and drill pay for Reservists in FY 2009.

The Administration is requesting a 3.4-percent pay increase for the military, an amount that equals the average private-sector pay increase last year as determined by the Employment Cost Index (ECI). FRA wants to continue closing the gap between military and civilian pay by requiring military pay increases at least 0.5 percent above the annual ECI. Members are urged to contact their US Representative on this issue through the Action Center at www.fra.org.

DeCA Patron Council Meeting

The Defense Commissary Agency's (DeCA) Patron Council recently met at the Association of the U.S. Army (AUSA) headquarters in Arlington, Va. NED Joe Barnes is a member of the Patron Council, which also includes representatives from the active duty, Guard, Reserve, retired and family-member communities. The Council meets regularly to share views, recommendations, and provide commissary information to their constituents/beneficiaries. Acting Director and CEO Rick Page and other staff members provided a comprehensive DeCA brief and shared plans for new commissary stores, including the reopening of a commissary at NAS Joint Reserve Base Fort Worth, Texas, which is a BRAC site.

Senate Panel Rejects TRICARE Fee Hikes

Prior to the budget committees' mark-up, the Senate Armed Services Committee (SASC) also rejected the Pentagon's proposal to increase TRICARE fees and pharmacy co-pays for younger military retirees. In a letter to the Senate Budget Committee, SASC Chairman Carl Levin (Mich.) and Ranking Member John McCain (Ariz.) asked for \$611 billion in new budget authority for DoD in FY 2009, but did not specifically ask for \$1.2 billion to make up for the proposed revenue from the TRICARE fee increases and pharmacy co-pays. Congress could cover the added cost by diverting money from other programs.

FRA continues to oppose these drastic fee increases and supports the "Military Retirees Health Care Protection Act" (H.R. 579) sponsored by Reps. Chet Edwards (Texas) and Walter Jones (N.C.), and "The Military Care Protection Act" (S. 604) sponsored Senators Frank Lautenberg (N.J.) and Chuck Hagel (Neb.). Members are urged to visit the Action Center (www.fra.org) to encourage your elected officials to be co-sponsors of these legislative proposals.

USMC Budget Brief

Brigadier General Michael R. Regner, USMC, the legislative assistant to the Commandant of the Marine Corps, briefed FRA and representatives from other organizations at the Association's National Headquarters on the Marine Corps' FY2009 budget and unfunded program requirements. The presentation also focused on various people-related programs including wounded warrior initiatives, end strength levels (189,000 now and 194,000 for FY 2009), recruiting and retention (making quotas with no enlistment bonuses). Discussion included VEAP-era education benefits, reform of the Uniform Services Former Spouse Protection Act (USFSPA), streamlining overseas military voting procedures, and allowing Reservists mobilized since 9/11 to receive credit for early retirement.

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Penny Collins

Outreach Endeavors

PARTICIPATING IN OUTREACH EVENTS can be very rewarding and significant to membership recruiting and retention. There are many national and local events in which FRA branches can participate that will not only raise awareness and visibility for our organization, but also make a meaningful contribution to the community.

Recently, the US Navy published the 2008 Calendar for America, a schedule of outreach or community awareness events, which includes Navy and Fleet Weeks, Blue Angels Air Shows, NASCAR events, diversity and recruiting events, as well as ship commissionings. There are more than 100 events listed on the schedule that would be ideal for an FRA information booth.

Joe Barnes, FRA's National Executive Director, and I recently visited

the Armed Forces Retirement Home (AFRH) located in Washington, D.C. It is a huge compound of buildings and land totaling 272 acres in the middle of the city. The purpose of our visit was to have lunch and interact with the residents and take a tour of the facility. Two of the FRA shipmates we met were transferred from the AFRH facility in Gulfport, Miss., after Hurricane Katrina hit the Gulf Coast. This was truly a golden outreach opportunity to meet and greet members and prospective members. Shipmates and branches in the D.C. area are encouraged to participate in the AFRH's volunteer program. Please call the AFRH Volunteer Services Office at 202-730-3410 for more information.

The ultimate outreach event is when FRA can pay tribute to America's

heroes. On 1 March 2008 the Navy Reserve celebrated its 93rd anniversary at the Navy Memorial in Washington, D.C. Two Navy Reserve SEALs, Special Warfare Operation 1st Class Luis Ortiz and LT Ephrayim Aven, received Bronze Stars with combat device for their heroic actions in Iraq. FRA proudly presented them with complimentary one-year memberships to demonstrate our commitment to Loyal, Protection and Service.

Outreach events are great opportunities for getting the word out about FRA. Check for community activities and outreach opportunities in your area.

Penny Collins is a member of FRA Branch 24 in Annapolis, Md. and can be reached at penny@fra.org.

Outreach Manager Bob Washington on the Road

OUTREACH MANAGER, BOB WASHINGTON, attended a Celebration of Freedom Gala honoring Medal of Honor recipients sponsored by the Congressional Medal of Honor Foundation and the Congressional Medal of Honor Society. Bob's participation was sponsored by TriWest Health Care Alliance. The event was held at the Ronald Regan Library in Simi Valley, Calif. and was sponsored. FRA was among several organizations that participated in this outreach event.



With SgtMaj Kent attending the Medal of Honor Gala at the President Ronald Reagan Library in Simi Valley, CA on 9 February 2008. 43 of 107 Medal of Honor recipients were in attendance.



Jack LaGrow, Ed Dockery, Bob Washington and Jimmy Short represent Branch 181 and National Headquarters at the 93rd Naval Reserve Birthday event at the Navy Memorial.



Command visit with Commander, Naval Air Force, Atlantic Fleet Force Master Chief Fred Pharr on 13 Feb 2008 to discuss FRA's important work.



Command visit with Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron 28 (HSC-28) Command Master Chief Linda Dennehy on 14 Feb. 2008.



THE COMMISSION ON THE NATIONAL
GUARD AND RESERVE RECENTLY RELEASED
ITS FINAL REPORT, MAKING NEARLY
100 RECOMMENDATIONS
FOR RESTRUCTURING THE RESERVE
COMPONENT. WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR THE

TOTAL FORCE C



After two years of research and analysis, the Commission on the National Guard and Reserve (CNGR) offered its recommendations for reshaping America's reserve force and revising the role reserve personnel play in national defense and homeland security. In the first independent, comprehensive study of the National Guard and Reserves since World War II, the commission spent two years reviewing thousands of documents, conducting more than 850 interviews, listening to statements from 115 witnesses during 17 days of public hearings, and holding 52 formal meetings. The result was a 448-page report that included six overarching conclusions and 95 recommendations that are now being examined by the President and members of Congress. The full report and an executive summary are available at www.cngr.gov.

OF THE

FUTURE

The report repeatedly references the need for “an operational reserve force” and urges Congress and the Department of Defense (DoD) to enact the changes necessary “to make the reserve components a ready, rotational force.” Additionally, the commission concluded that DoD’s responsibility to protect the homeland is equal to its combat responsibilities, and as part of DoD, the Guard and Reserves should “play a lead role in supporting the Department of Homeland Security” in addressing threats to American lives and property. The CNGR also concluded that current laws and

TOTAL FORCE OF THE FUTURE

policies reflect an outdated, Cold-War vision of the reserve force and major changes are needed in DoD's organization and culture to ensure effective integration of reserve and active duty capabilities. To maintain a new standard of readiness, the commission contends, there must also be an ongoing commitment to invest additional resources in the reserve components. Last, but not least, the CNGR recognized that supporting not only the Reservist, but also his/her family and employer are critical to retention and operational readiness.

Some of the commission's supporting recommendations are founded in basic common sense. For example, the commission urges DoD to ensure that rapid response forces are "manned, trained and equipped to the highest level of readiness," and the budget for the operational portion of the reserve component is "adequate to meet readiness needs." Other recommendations, if implemented, would significantly improve the quality of life for reserve personnel and their families. These are all worthy pursuits, but enacting these and other proposals, and paying for them, will be no small feat. The devil's in the details.

Some of the proposals, if implemented, will require a significant shift in the current military culture that draws a distinction between active duty personnel and their reserve counterparts. For example, the CNGR contends that blurring the line between active and reserve components will facilitate a more integrated total force, and suggests eliminating "Reserve" from all titles, signature blocks and unit designators.

Many of the proposals, such as the commission's recommendations to ensure individual Reservist's medical readiness, reduce out-of-pocket dental costs, and implement outreach programs to educate reserve families about the benefits associated with active service, are all in line with FRA's legislative agenda. As details emerge, FRA will surely back many of these initiatives. Other recommendations, however, raise concern.

For example, the CNGR proposes combining active duty and reserve retirement programs. Although combining administrative functions may have merit, FRA adamantly opposes the commission's further recommendation to set minimum age requirements for retirement eligibility. The CNGR suggests that Reservists and active duty personnel who serve at least 10 years would be vested and eligible to receive a retirement benefit at age 62. Those serving at least 20 years would be eligible at age 60; and retired pay and benefits would be available at age 57 for those serving at least 30 years.

FRA is concerned because the proposed age-based retirement system does not adequately reflect the unique demands of career military service. This proposal is similar to an active duty retirement recommendation made by the Defense Advisory Committee on Military Compensation (MACMC) in 2005. FRA opposed the age-based retirement plan in 2005 and continues to challenge the impact it will have on retention. FRA will be monitoring this proposal closely as Congress and DoD examine it and the other report recommendations.

FRA recently spoke to Force Master Chief of the Naval Reserve Dave Pennington, USMC Reserve Force Sergeant Major Jimmy Cummings, and Master Chief Petty Officer of the USCG Reserve Jeff Smith to discuss a variety of quality-of-life programs available to reserve personnel and their families. Their insights will guide FRA's advocacy efforts with regard to the CNGR recommendations and other issues that affect Reservists.

MANPOWER ISSUES

FRA asked these senior enlisted leaders how the nation's increased reliance on reserve forces will impact their service's manpower needs.

Master Chief Dave Pennington, USNR:

The Navy Reserve, like the Navy as a whole, is getting smaller. We're trying to fit our force to the fight of the future. The identified maritime threats are no longer limited to blue-water threats, and we're shaping our force to address brown- and green-water threats as well. The reserve component is obviously a part of that.

Our mission and skill sets are driving our manpower numbers as the reserve force has become more operational. We currently have between 4,000 and 5,000 Sailors mobilized on any given day, with many of those supporting Individual Augmentee (IA) missions. IA assignments are those missions outside the Navy's inventory of responsibility, and most of our IAs are supporting Army missions and requirements. For example, it's not a Navy requirement to guard detainees or do customs work in Iraq. We don't have Navy billets designated to do those jobs. We are not sending units to do this type of work, but sending individuals. Navy Reservists are fulfilling about 40 percent of the IA mission.



Sergeant Major Jimmy Cummings, USMCR:

The authorized growth for the active duty Marine Corps will make maintaining reserve manpower more difficult, because we expect to have a lot of reserve Marines join the active duty force. This is great because they are still serving, but their transition takes manpower away from the reserve component. We aren't growing the reserve right now, though. Based on force generation models, there is no need for the active duty force to dip deeper into the reserve component for the next few years. We feel we are at the right strength to meet the needs of the active duty force.

We'll be asking our reserve recruiters and career retention specialists to work a little bit harder. Our career retention specialists are our duty experts on available benefits and reenlistment opportunities, and they handle all reenlistments. They've done very well over the years and it's even more important for them to step up their efforts.

I believe the increased end strength in the USMC's active component will have a short term effect on the reserves. In the next three or four years, the active duty force will be larger and as their commitments expire, there will be more personnel leaving active duty and going to the reserve.

Master Chief Jeff Smith, USCGR: The US Coast Guard Reserve is currently authorized for an end strength of 10,000, but we are only funded for 8,100. Of our Selected Reserve members, about 500 are mobilized in support of DoD missions, some of whom are forward deployed. Another 500 or so are mobilized in support of USCG requirements. While we are currently managing mission requirements, I am concerned about our ability to sustain them in the future without an increase in end strength.

The Coast Guard Reserve Affairs staff is currently working with the Workforce Forecasting team to better quantify, by rate and specialty, the workforce needed to meet contingency requirements at various levels. This initiative will be ongoing for the next 12 to 18 months and will provide

Below is a general overview of other report recommendations that may directly impact our members.

Recommendations for a new, integrated personnel management system include:

- Policies that increase retention of experienced and trained individuals for longer reserve and active careers;
- A more flexible promotion system based on achievement;
- Joint service and joint professional military education opportunities for reserve enlisted personnel (comparable to those available to their active duty counterparts);
- Reduction of the number of duty statuses from 29 to two: on active duty and off active duty;
- Standardized duty statuses across the services;
- A combined pay and personnel system that is streamlined for efficiency and accuracy;
- Replacing the currently-required 48 drills with 24 days of active duty service;
- Allowing all service members to receive up to five percent of annual basic pay in matching government contributions to the Thrift Savings Plan (TSP), vested after 10 years of service;
- Retention bonuses at pivotal years of service; and
- Separation pay based on pay grade and years of service for vested personnel.

The commission recognizes the influence families and civilian employers have over a Reservist's decision to remain in the military, and recommends a support system for all three components of the reserve community. The commission recommends:

- Elimination of the 30-days-of-active-duty requirement for receipt of full BAH (basic allowance for housing);
- Allowing service secretaries the authority to reimburse members for travel expenses when they must travel more than 50 miles to participate in reserve activity;
- Services should budget for and provide lodging for Reservists who travel more than 50 miles to perform inactive duty training;
- Allowing Reservists to use MGIB-SR benefits after their discharge if they were activated for a specified period of time;
- Educating reserve families (particularly those who live far from military treatment facilities) about healthcare, simplifying the TRICARE claims and reimbursement process, and establishing an ombudsman program with a single toll-free customer support number;
- Offering Reservists access to the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program in addition to TRICARE Reserve Select.
- A "massive information campaign" to educate reserve personnel and families about Military OneSource program;
- Increasing family involvement in the mobilization/demobilization process;
- Expansion of the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR) program;
- Streamlining the DoD and VA disability determination process;
- Revision of pre- and post-deployment health assessments to include greater participation by healthcare providers (versus self-assessment tools currently used) and focus on reintegration concerns.

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us with an analytical picture of which rates have the potential to grow, shrink or remain the same. We are also reviewing the affects sustained operations have on the total reserve workforce.

RETENTION

FRA asked how operations tempo and other factors have affected retention rates for the reserve components.

Pennington, USNR: Our retention rates are phenomenal; better than ever before. By nature, our manpower numbers are fluid. We usually experience a 30 to 35 percent attrition rate, but during this time of war, our attrition rate is only 22 percent. Why? From cargo handling and coastal warfare to civilian affairs teams, our Reservists are doing meaningful work. They feel the need to contribute and the work they do is gratifying to them.

The recent report from the Commission on the National Guard and Reserve (CNGR) talks about operationalizing the reserve component. To me that means putting people to work doing viable missions and eliminating the perception of part-time employees. When mobilizations are less prevalent, the commission suggests that reserve personnel continue to work side-by-side with their active duty counterparts. Reservists have always wanted to be engaged; many have often felt underutilized. I believe the CNGR's recommendations will boost retention rates even more.

Creating an operational reserve will require change and will cost money, but eliminating the weekend warrior mentality makes a lot of sense. We can pay salaries and benefits for five Reservists for the same amount of money we spend to employ one active duty Sailor. Many reserve Sailors bring civilian skills that directly relate to Navy billets, like corpsmen, construction workers and law enforcement personnel. Others are Navy veterans who've been off active duty for a limited period of time. Both groups are huge value-added assets. In the final analysis, there will still be a

sliver of our force who can not commit to supporting the operational reserve and we will need to continue a strategic mission for those Sailors. The Sailors I speak with want to do real work. Whether 36 days a year, 60 days a year or 90 days a year — they want to do something that is making a difference and contributing to mission accomplishment.

Cummings, USMCR: If you base retention on those Marines who leave service at the end of their contract, we are doing about the same or maybe even a little better than in years past. If you consider the number going to active duty, that's where a gap comes in.

I believe many Marines are staying in because they are doing what they signed up to do. They aren't complaining about deployments as long as the dwell ratio is maintained. The dwell ratio is the amount of time a reserve Marine is back home compared to mobilized/deployed. Our target is 1:4 — one year deployed to four years at home. We're achieving our goal with certain MOSs and we're making progress in other MOSs, but overall, we're not there yet. I believe we'll have to see a full cycle of five years or so in order to achieve this goal. It may not be attainable for all MOSs.

Smith, USCGR: The Coast Guard Reserve has a healthy retention rate. We've remained pretty consistent at or above 86 percent, and of the 14 percent that leave the USCGR, approximately eight-and-a-half percent transition to the active force. That's a good news–bad news story. It is good news that they are not leaving the Coast Guard and that the active component is benefiting, but it is bad news that we have a number of personnel leaving the reserve component who may never return. Additionally we bring about 300 members released from active duty (RFAD) into the Reserve annually. This provides for a healthy flow of personnel and allows both the active and reserve components to maintain experienced people in our ranks.

With the current state of the economy, we anticipate that the retention rate

will remain close to its current level. In general, Coast Guard Reservists tend to join and stay for the longer haul. Because we are executing our missions on a day-to-day basis, our Reservists see an immediate return on their investment of time and energy. They feel they are doing meaningful work for a purpose larger than themselves. That's a reward far above any monetary benefit we can provide.

EDUCATION BENEFITS

FRA is a strong advocate for increasing education benefits for all personnel, and more specifically, we are working to improve reserve benefits relative to those received by active duty personnel. FRA also supported recent increases in reserve Montgomery GI Bill (MGIB) benefits and allowing Reservists 10 years to use their MGIB benefits. FRA asked these senior enlisted leaders about existing and future education benefits.

Pennington, USNR: Until about two-and-a-half years ago, Navy Reservists had MGIB, but no Tuition Assistance (TA) benefit. We found some funding, got it fixed internally, and TA will begin in FY 2009.

When the active duty MGIB benefit was increased a few years ago, the change was not reflected in the reserve program, and as a result, reserve MGIB is only 28 percent of the active duty benefit. We appreciate FRA's efforts to bring the reserve MGIB benefit more in line with the active duty benefit.

I believe we've gone above and beyond in providing ample opportunities for VEAP-era personnel to enroll in the MGIB. That said, transferring the benefit to spouses and children wasn't in the equation before. If DoD allows transferability, I believe one more window of opportunity should be offered to VEAP-era personnel.

Cummings, USMCR: Education benefits are very, very important. I recently met with a group of about 150 Marines, and about 75 of them were attending college. Almost all the students were using their

TOTAL FORCE OF THE FUTURE

MGIB benefit, and they all were quite pleased to have the benefit.

There's no doubt that the active duty MGIB benefit is not adequate. The current benefit does not pay for a four-year college education and I believe our country needs to do more for the young men and women who commit four years of their lives to us. Veterans from WWII took advantage of the GI Bill and increased the productivity for our nation. We need to provide a similar benefit for today's service members, both active and reserve, so they can make similar contributions.

Smith, USCGR: We don't anticipate any change in our retention rate as a result of the new authorization which allows reservists to use their MGIB benefits after they depart the service.

The MGIB-AD (Chapter 30) benefit for the active component is a contributory program where the member pays \$1,200 into MGIB and can receive benefits up to 10 years after separation, as with the new MGIB-SR (1606) authorization. Reservists serving on active duty in excess of two years (previously three years) are also authorized to participate in MGIB-AD. Reservists can also increase their MGIB-AD benefits by up to \$5,400 by making an additional \$600 contribution. Reservists can also take advantage of MGIB-SR (1606) and Reserve Education Assistance Program (REAP, 1607), if they qualify, which are non-contributory programs; they receive the benefit without being required to pay into the program.

The Coast Guard Reserve offers a lucrative Tuition Assistance program that's equal to the active component benefit, and far exceeds benefits offered by DoD services. As a result, a Coast Guard reservist arguably has even greater educational benefits than their active component counterpart. Although MGIB-SR pays less than MGIB-AD, reserve educational benefits are non-contributory and the reservist has the opportunity to take advantage of other programs not offered to the active component.

We would prefer the VA execute the reserve portion of the MGIB benefit with a pay-for-participation process. Under the current DoD actuarial system, when a reservist is eligible for the benefit, the service pays. The Coast Guard's payment into the actuarial account for reserve educational benefits far exceed the usage. Under the VA system, we'd pay only for the services used.

HEALTH CARE

FRA invited comment on the TRICARE Reserve Select benefit.

Pennington, USNR: I hear all the time that the TRICARE Reserve Select (TRS) is the biggest recruiting tool we have, along with TRICARE for Life, which is a huge retirement benefit. Enrollment in TRS is still relatively low, because many Reservists have healthcare coverage through their civilian employers. Many employers also continue other benefits, meet salary differentials, and consider Reservists for promotions while they are mobilized.

Cummings, USMCR: TRS is a great program, but less than three percent of USMC Reservists are taking advantage of it. We continue to promote the program and I believe Marines know about it, understand how to enroll and what the benefits are.

The biggest reason we hear is that our Reservists have health care through another channel. Some have great employers who maintain their health care coverage; others are young students who are still covered on their parents' policies. But even if only one Marine needs the coverage, it's a worthwhile program. We should be able to provide an avenue for Reservists to access health care insurance.

Smith, USCGR: TRICARE Reserve Select (TRS) is going well. We continue to advertise the new TRS program in our Reservist magazines and on our Coast Guard Reserve website, and our records show that 355 reservists are enrolled in the program with coverage for 521 family

members. There's no doubt that the new TRS program is a greatly improved program over the old three-tiered program. It's much simpler and has been received much more favorably by our Reservists. Over the long haul, I believe TRS will be a valuable recruiting and retention tool, but it is already an important readiness tool.

I occasionally hear anecdotal concerns about access to care, which really depends on where the Reservist is serving. There are challenges, but I don't remember the last time I heard about significant problems. We're definitely making progress.

RETIREMENT

Thanks to recent legislation, Reservists' retirement eligibility is reduced by three months for every cumulative 90 days of active duty service. FRA is working to make the policy retroactive to 11 September 2001. How do reserve personnel in your service view these initiatives?

Pennington, USNR: We've been fielding questions about reducing the age at which Reservists receive retirement benefits for a long, long time, so the recent changes are welcomed. This change is very appropriate in light of the amazing mobilization rates and increased operational use of the reserve component. It's the right thing to do as we ask more and more of our reserve personnel.

Cummings, USMCR: Most reserve Marines believe the new retirement eligibility policy is a good one, but many feel they were sold short. Many reserve personnel who served in Iraq since 2003 are saying, "Hey, I got shot at a lot over there. Is my service not as valuable as the reserve member serving today?"

Making the new retirement formula retroactive to 11 September 2001 is certainly worth fighting for. Many reserve Marines who saw heavy combat are not getting this benefit. The 60-year age requirement was based on a strategic reserve. We are more operational now and adjusting the retirement benefit makes sense.

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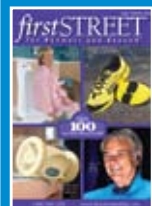
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¹ Kaiser Family Foundation. Health Care in America. www.kaisernetwork.org. Daily Reports. November 29, 2007. Viewed 12/6/2007.

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Smith, USCGR: This new retirement policy is being received favorably by Coast Guard reservists. It is a good first step in recognizing the sacrifices Reservists and their families have made in support of Operations Iraqi Freedom, Enduring Freedom and Noble Eagle (OIF/OEF/ONE). Making the authority retroactive to 11 September 2001 would undoubtedly impact significantly more Reservists, many of whom supported OIF/OEF/ONE and have already transitioned to "gray area" retirement prior to receiving retired pay. I'd like to see the efforts of those Reservists, who've also made significant sacrifices over the past six years, similarly recognized.

TRAVEL REIMBURSEMENT

Congress recently agreed to allow (not require, nor pay for) services to reimburse up to \$300 in drill-related travel expenses. What does this mean for reserve personnel in your service?

Pennington, USNR: Authorizing benefits without appropriating the money to pay for them has always been a challenge. It's been going on for a long time, and it usually comes back to manpower, which is the most expensive part of the budget. As I mentioned previously, even if we pay travel and per diem for Reservists, it's still cheaper than paying for an active duty member.

Cummings, USMCR: I honestly don't know if the Marine Corps will implement the travel reimbursement benefit or not, because no funding was designated to pay for it. This means that in order to implement the benefit, each service will have to cut from other programs to pay for it.

We can fill our basic core competencies with local recruiting efforts. But for critical billets, we need to reach out nationally. If we're looking for a sergeant major or commanding officer with 18 to 20 years of experience, we want Marines everywhere to apply, so we can select the best qualified candidate, not just the

best available in the local area. If we had the ability to realistically reimburse travel expenses, we could attract the best qualified candidates for those key billets. Even if funding were available, I still believe Congress missed the boat. Three hundred dollars is not enough to get a reserve Marine from his home in Virginia to his drill location in California.

Smith, USCGR: This authorization is welcome by our reserve component personnel, and the Reserve Affairs staff and I applaud it. Travel reimbursement will help us ensure we have the right folks in the right job, particularly for critical or high-priority assignments. It would help us broaden the pool of candidates. As DoD bases close as part of the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) initiative, Reservists may have to travel even further to fulfill their reserve obligations. It's not realistic to expect them to pay all travel expenses out-of-pocket.

However, there are challenges and risks involved in implementing an optional benefit without a corresponding funding increase. We will evaluate how this benefit may be utilized to improve mission execution, specifically readiness for mobilization. Many of the same reservists who would benefit from this authorization are also receiving other benefits such as High-Priority Unit pay. We need to consider benefits and entitlements as packages rather than as individual items. Due to the complexity of this issue and the potential fiscal impact, we do not expect any broad implementation in FY 2008.

Since we are committed to providing adequate support to our Reservists to ensure a high state of readiness, we have submitted a resource proposal requesting additional funding to allow for future implementation of this authorization.

FRA'S ROLE

FRA asked these senior enlisted leaders how we can best support reserve component personnel.

Pennington, USNR: I appreciate the FRA and the work you do on behalf of our active duty and reserve personnel. During my three-year tenure in this position, I can honestly say that FRA has always been there as an advocate for our men and women in uniform — an organization that's going to stand in the gap and do what is right by the people they serve. I'm a big fan. Keep up the good work.

Cummings, USMCR: Please continue to be an advocate for reserve and active duty personnel. We are a total force and anything less than a total-force concept is unacceptable.

When our services make their budget requests or legislation is introduced that affects our service, FRA speaks on behalf of its members. They keep important pay and benefit legislation on the front burner.

I also believe we need to do our part. We need to educate our Marines about what FRA does and let them make an informed decision about joining. I was in the Corps for years before I knew about the fantastic job FRA does for us.

Smith, USCGR: I encourage you to continue your on-going efforts to advocate for enhanced benefits and quality-of-life for active, reserve, retired, and veteran members of our sea-going services. I particularly appreciate FRA's efforts to ensure the Coast Guard and the USCG Reserve are not overlooked or left out of legislative language that impacts our service. FRA does a great job of keeping our service and our people on an equal footing with our DoD counterparts, and I appreciate that tremendously.

I also appreciate FRA's advocacy in the appropriations arena. It's great to have programs and benefits authorized, but without the funding to pay for these benefits, it's challenging to take full advantage of the tools. Your efforts benefit all the reserve components.

BRANCH 346 PANAMA CITY BEACH, FLA.

The Fleet First Team proudly displays the trophies they earned for taking first place in the American Pool Association Division 400 for the fall season. They played 16 games against eight other teams to take the title. The team also won first place in the winter session, and are awaiting their trophies.

**BRANCH 101 SANTA CLARA, CALIF.**

Branch 101 members at the annual ceremony commemorating the sinking of USAT Dorchester by a Nazi submarine in the North Atlantic. Four Chaplains gave up their life vests so that others might survive. All four went down with the ship. Of 902 men aboard the Dorchester as it sailed into 'Torpedo Alley,' only 227 survived the frigid waters. Retired CPO's are (L to R) Armand Petri, Tom Flowers, Robert Hughs and Rene Estes.

**BRANCH AND UNIT 267 ST. LOUIS, MO.**

On 4 December 2007, Shirley Ferrington (President of Unit 267) visited the Navy Recruiting District, St. Louis, MO, and presented \$100 Shop 'n Save gift cards. Shown left to right: CDR Kevin Boyle; Shipmate Dale Ferrington (Shirley's husband and Branch 267's finance officer); PS2 Mark Laurence (classifier); Shirley Ferrington; and CMC Kenneth Jones. (Photo by: MC2 Tom Smith, NRD St. Louis)

**BRANCH 163 PHOENIX, ARIZ.**

Branch and Unit 163 members participated in the Phoenix, Ariz., 2007 Veteran's Day Parade for the seventh consecutive year. Riding on the float, pulled by a 1947 Chevy tow truck are Br. Pres. Russell Hrouda, Br. 1st Vice Joe Bland, Br. 2nd Vice Glenn Linkey, Br. Sec. Dwight "Gib" Hall, Unit Chaplain Ida-May Hrouda.

BRANCH 1 PHILADELPHIA, PA.

Branch 1 President PRPNE William H. Reese presents the George L. Carlin Branch 001 "White Hat Award" to Captain Ted Harrup, USCG, on 3 February 2008. The White Hat Award was presented for appreciation of outstanding service to FRA and Branch 001 at USCG Sector Delaware Bay.



**BRANCH 201 AUSTIN, TEXAS**

Branch 201 Vice President Russ Miller greets the surviving crew members of the USS Goodhue at their recent annual convention held in Austin, Texas. The crew members were honored by a flag line manned by members of the Texas Patriot Guard Riders. Vice president Miller is a Patriot Guard Ride Captain.

**BRANCH 40 CHESAPEAKE, VA.**

(L to R) Chuck Terrell, USMC veteran; Gary and Kim Wilkinson (Chuck's mother and stepfather), USMC retirees; Joni & Jeffrey Matthews and Jim Wartenbe, USN retirees were all initiated into FRA by PRPEC Jim Scarbro.

**BRANCH 137 MINDEN, NEV.**

Two members from the same family are initiated into Branch 137. One more family member will join when he returns from sea duty. Shown (l to r) are Gary Welch, Pres. Bud Harris and Norbert Monohan.

**BRANCH 115 ALLENTOWN, PA.**

Shipmate Fritz Szutar organized a Veterans' Day breakfast for 80 vets residing in Marion Landing. Hank Whittier, Executive Director of the VA Ocala, Fla., office, updated veterans on the latest information from Washington followed by a Question and Answer session. Accompanying the Director were three aides from U.S. Congressman Cliff Stearns local office, who provided hand-outs and unveiled floor plans for the new 95,000-sq. ft. VA clinic to be built in Marion County. The state of the art facility, expected to be in operation in two years, will provide many of the medical services now only available at the VA Hospital in Gainesville, Fla.

**BRANCH 92 NEW ORLEANS, LA.**

Branch President Jim Fuentes (left) presents S/M Gasper Michel with his 40-year pin and certificate for continuous service since December 1967.

**BRANCH 251 MOUNTAIN HOME, ARK.**

NP Lawrence Boudreaux presents Shipmate Murray Lauderdale with his 45-year continuous membership pin.

To submit a photo for News From the Branches, please e-mail a photo as an attachment in jpeg format to FRAToday@fra.org or mail a high-quality photograph to *FRA Today*, 125 N. West Street, Alexandria, VA 22314. Please include a brief description of the photograph and include the names of those pictured. Laser prints and scanned copies of photographs cannot be accepted.

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CGC Castle Rock (WAVP/WHEC-383)

25–27 June 2008, New London, CT. Contact Harry Aldrich, 54 Hubbardston Rd., Templeton, MA 01468, harryaldrich@verizon.net.

Light Photographic Squadron 62 (VFP-62)

3–6 April 2008, Mobile, AL. Contact Ken Jack, wildacres@pennswoods.net.

MCB-9 Seabee Association

8–10 September 2008, Las Vegas, NV. Contact Bobby Fletcher, 702-897-6613, ichibanseabee@aol.com.

Navy Nuclear Weapons Association

24–28 September 2008, Bremerton, WA. Contact GMTc John Gray, 6332 Toon Ave SW, Port Orchard, WA 98367, 360-895-3188, www.navy Nucweeps.com.

NMCB1

10–12 October 2008, Washington D.C. Contact Peter Dowd, 89 Edward Rd Marshfield, MA 02050, 781-837-0393.

USS Agawam

9–12 September 2008, Virginia Beach, VA. Contact Dick Cypher, 2200 Berryhill Ct., Edmond, OK 73034, 405-359-1513, Dcy47@aol.com.

USS Agerholm (DD-826)

3–6 September 2008, Racine, WI. Contact Harold Thompson, USS Agerholm Association, 2264 Lavista Woods Drive, Tucker, GA 30084-4211, 770-493-7648.

USS Alamo (LSD-33)

11–13 September 2008, St. Louis, MO. Contact Mike Schuerman, 636-586-5472.

USS Antietam (CV/CVA/ CVS-36 & CG-54)

17–21 September 2008, Oklahoma City, OK. Contact Bill Hiebert, Sec./Treas., 7901 Candlewood Drive, Alexandria, VA 22306, 703-768-6419, william.hiebert@att.net.

USS Bache (DD/DDE-470)

14–18 October 2008, Annapolis, MD. Contact Ken Smith, 765-647-0870.

USS Barry DD-933

11–14 September 2008, Charleston, SC. Contact Larry Loss, 1435 Stanley Ave, Glendale, CA 91206, 818-549-9439, larrydd933@yahoo.com.

USS Bearss (DD-654)

6–9 October 2008, Charleston, SC. Contact Jerry Walkins, Pres., 412-487-6073, jerrywalk@verizon.net.

USS Belleau Wood Association

17–21 September 2008, Charleston, SC. Contact Richard Fread, 727-848-5409, rdfread@verizon.net.

USS Bexar APA/LPA 237

18–21 September 2008, Newport News, VA. Contact Steve Malloy, 1542 10th St., Bremerton, WA 98337, 360-373-1093, ussbexar@comcast.net.

USS Canberra (CA-70/CAG-2)

8–12 October 2008, San Diego, CA. Contact Ken Minick, P.O. Box 130, Belpre, OH 45714, 740-423-8976, crewservices@usscanberra.com.

USS Casa Grande (LSD-13)

23–28 September 2008, Myrtle Beach, SC. Contact Ben Lines, 193 West Shore Road, New Preston, CT 06777, 860-868-0408, BenJuneLines@aol.com.

USS Cascade (AD-16)

14–22 September 2008, King Of Prussia, PA. Contact Barb Kennovin, 176 Teal Drive, Long Neck, DE 19966, 302-945-2719.

USS Cavalla SS/SSK/AGSS-244 & SSN-684

25–26 April 2008, Galveston, TX. Contact Cavalla 2008, P.O. Box 1046, Pentwater, MI 49449, 409-740-3555, Cavalla2008@aol.com.

USS Chickasaw (ATF-83)

28–3 October 2008, Renton, WA. Contact Richard Gibson, 704-243-2303, rdgibson@prodigy.net.

USS Clinton (APA-144)

29–3 October 2008, Reno, NV. Contact D. Atkinson, 409-739-1341, deape@aol.com.

USS Coolbaugh (DE-217)

15–19 September 2008, Philadelphia, PA. Contact Harvey Weiss, 241 Rothell Rd., Toccoa, GA 30577, 706-886-2709.

USS Dwight D. Eisenhower (CVN 69)

19–22 June 2008, Branson, MO. Contact Gatherings Plus, 417-338-4048, pamb@bransonmilitaryreunions.com.

USS Everett F. Larson (DD/DDR-830)

16–20 October 2008, Washington, DC. Contact Pete Barnett, 8625 Pappas Way, Annandale, VA 22003, 703-978-6558, pbarnett1@cox.net.

USS Hank (DD-702)

17–21 September 2008, Colorado Springs, CO. Contact John Jones, 5130 Almont Ave., Colorado Springs, CO 80911, 719-393-0171, jjandjj1@comcast.net.

USS HIGBEE DDR/DD 806

16–20 October 2008, Plymouth Meeting, PA. Contact Gil Rodello, P.O. Box 1554 Springfield, OR 97478, 541-747-1408, gilrodhigbee@comcast.net.

USS Iwo Jima (LPH-2/LHD-7)

15–19 October 2008, Chesapeake, VA. Contact Robert G. Mcanally, 152 Frissell Street, Hampton, VA 23663, 866-237-3137, yujack@megalink.net.

USS James Monroe SSBN 622

25–29 April 2008, Fredericksburg, VA. Contact James Bayliss, P.O. Box 426 Hazelwood, MO 63042, 314-428-6355, ssbn622events@sbcglobal.net.

USS Kimberly (DD-521)

19–23 October 2008, Myrtle Beach, S.C. Contact George Scott, 8351 Sylvan Dr., W. Melbourne, FL 32904-2421, 321-676-2307, ggs33@aol.com.

USS Mansfield (DD-728)

13–17 August 2008, Baltimore, MD. Contact Bob Edwards, 410-760-9715.

USS New Mexico (BB-40)

18–21 September 2008, St. Louis, MO. Contact Vernon Dascher, 636-949-9413.

REUNIONS continued from page 29

USS New Orleans (LPH-11)

15–19 October 2008, Chesapeake, VA. Contact Robert G. Mcanally, 152 Frissell Street, Hampton, VA 23663, 866-237-3137, yujack@megalink.net.

USS Ogden (LPD-5)

25–28 September 2008, Nashville, TN. Contact Charley Adair, 512-357-6732, shobuds10@yahoo.com.

USS Okinawa (LPH-3)

15–19 October 2008, Chesapeake, VA. Contact Robert G. Mcanally, 152 Frissell Street, Hampton, VA 23663, 866-237-3137, yujack@megalink.net.

USS Prichett DD561

9–14 September 2008, Ft. Mitchell, KY. Contact Terry Crawford, 528 Mildred Wood River, IL 62095, 618-259-3007, prichett@charter.net.

USS Proteus (AS-19)

9–12 October 2008, Branson, MO. Contact Paul Castle, 619-237-1314, paul1@ix.netcom.com.

USS Randolph (CV/CVA/ CVS-15)

15–21 September 2008, Covington, KY. Contact Sal Rizza, 321-454-2344.

USS Solace (AH-5) WWII

23–25 October 2008, Orlando, FL. Contact Charles Badger, Sr. 206 Camden Road, Altamonte Springs, FL 32714-2645, 407-869-1731.

USS Thomas Jefferson Veterans Association

15–18 October 2008, Laughlin, NV. Contact Paul Wm. Orstad, 30 Surrey Lane, Norwich, CT 06360-6541, 860-889-4750.

USS Towers (DDG-9)

18–21 September 2008, Branson, MO. Contact Raymond Wong, 1634 38th Avenue San Francisco, CA 94122, 415-566-7285, usstowersddg9@pacbell.net.

USS Tripoli (LPH-10/CVE-64)

15–19 October 2008, Chesapeake, VA. Contact Robert G. Mcanally, 152 Frissell Street, Hampton, VA 23663, 866-237-3137, yujack@megalink.net.

USS Triton (SSN586) & (SS201)

3–7 September 2008, Charleston, S.C. Contact Henry Jackson, 2575 Lockemeade Way Lawrenceville, GA 30043, 770-682-7935, henryjak@bellsouth.net.

USS Tutuila (ARG-4)

11–13 September 2008, Newark, New Jersey. Contact Charles Estelle, 228 Main Street, New Milford, NJ 07646, 201-262-0753.

USS YOSEMITE (AD-19)

30 April – 4 May 2008, St. Louis, MO. Contact Stan Galloway, 719-544-9267, mcpc@earthlink.net

USS W. S. Sims (DE/FF-1059)

17–20 September 2008, San Diego, CA. Contact Ken Campbell, 1-903-543-8154, campbell903@windstream.net.

USS Wabash (AOR-5)

5–8 June 2008, Charleston, SC. Contact Steve Martin, 126 Two Hitch Rd., Goose Creek, SC 29445, 843-863-8852, bmcsret@bellsouth.net.

USS Wainwright DLG/CG 28

15–20 July 2008, Jacksonville, FL. Contact Dan Bowman, 5567 Winton Rd., Fairfield, Ohio 45014, 513-829-7280, dnlbow@aol.com.

VAH-21/TRIM

5–7 September 2008, Tucson, AZ. Contact Gerald Tripp, 495 Casper Dr., Hemet, CA 92545, 951-926-6047, trippg748@roadrunner.com.

VMF-VMA-311 WW2 to Present

10–14 September 2008, Philadelphia, PA. Contact Jim Galchick, 1290 E. 12th St. Salem, OH 44460, 330-337-9383, jgalchick@neo.rr.com.

VR-22

1–4 October 2008, Virginia Beach, VA. Contact Gene Shonkwiler, 1801 Columbia Drive, Winter Haven, FL 33881, 863-969-3850, GShonkwile@aol.com.

Members can post reunions online at www.fra.org, submit to reunions@fra.org or mail to: FRA Reunions, 125 N. West St., Alexandria, VA 22314.

ON & OFF CAPITOL HILL continued from page 12

SBP Improvements Take Effect

Effective 1 April 2008 the SBP annuity payments increased from 50 to 55 percent of retired pay (45 percent offset) for survivors who also receive Social Security benefits. This was the last scheduled offset reduction outlined in FRA-supported legislation enacted in 2005.

FRA also strongly supported previously enacted legislation that authorizes SBP participants to be “paid up” if they have obtained the age of 70 and have made contributions for 30 years (360 payments). This paid-provision will take effect on 1 October 2008.

Judge Allows Military Widows to Sue for More SBP Benefits

A Federal Court of Claims has issued an opinion upholding three military widows’ ability to take legal action against the Department of Defense for SBP payments the widows believe were illegally withheld from them. The widows claim DoD unlawfully reduced or eliminated their SBP payments after they remarried (after the age of 57) and accepted Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). A more detailed analysis of the court case is available in Tom Philpott’s syndicated Military Update column (4 February 2008), which is posted at www.fra.org.

FRA was instrumental in the enactment of legislation authorizing the current military SBP program in the early 1970s. Since then, the Association has been actively involved in SBP reform, including the enactment of the paid-up provision that will take effect on 1 October; legislative proposals to shift forward the effective paid-up date, weighing in on eliminating the DIC offset and eliminating the Social Security offset.

The FRA Legislative team is Joe Barnes, National Executive Director, John Davis, Director of Legislative Programs, Bob Washington, Health Care Advisor and Outreach Manager, Chris Slawinski, National Veterans Service Officer and Ed Dockery, Assistant Director of Legislative Programs.



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- ✦ **Safety** - Look for tubs that have built-in grab bars, non-slip surfaces, and water controls that are easily reachable. The "step" into the tub should be less than 8".
- ✦ **Warranty** - The best tubs offer a lifetime, "no-leak guarantee" and 10 year guarantees on the tub, faucet, and jet/air systems.
- ✦ **Installation** - Look for tubs that are designed for "easy" installation. Even if you don't install it yourself, your plumber or handyman will save time and effort (and save *you* money), with these easy install models.
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Angellar, Lewis C., GMG1	010	Echols, Jearl D., HMC	026
Arft, William J., GMCS	053	Emmerth, Robert W., MMC	053
Argall, Martin J., MCPO USN	012	Engh, Charles W., PR1	MAL
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		Ernest, Richard F., ADJC	066
Backus, Bill, EM2	040	Eubanks, James, GMC	MAL
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Breece, Alvin L., SMC	124	Gauer, George W., PRC	MAL
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Brown, Donal G., HMC	289	Gobbo, John G., BMC	289
Brown, James M., CPO USN	MAL	Goodwin, Ralph E., WO1 USN	061
Buchholz, Jean O., ENC	222	Goodwin, Robert L., SMC	096
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Cabe, Ernest P., MM1	MAL	Gray, James H., BM1	MAL
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Leech, Gordon R., EMCS	216
Leggett, Robert Lee, PO1 USN	046
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Lewis, Charles E., ETCS	MAL
Libby, Stuart H., CTIC	MAL
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Lovely, Ted R., Jr., TD1	042
Maestas, Tommy A., ADR1	022
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Manley, Joseph A., Jr., EOC	MAL
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O'Connor, John G., MM1	MAL
Odor, Donald R., SHCS	MAL
O'Neill, Francis J., HMC	309
O'Neill, Loren R., BTC	MAL
Overcash, Carl D., CMC	MAL
Palczak, Frank P., HTC	023
Palmer, Howard, AOC	096



Tommy Holland, CUCM (Ret.)

Last known duty station, NMCB Four.
Contact Ed Clolinger, 662-623-5364 or
Edwardclolinger@panola.com.

HM2 Mike Harms & RM1 Chuck Turley

Stationed at NRS(T) Dixon, CA in
1969-1970. Contact CWO Jerry T.
Hughs, Jhughs5853@aol.com.

Robbie Robertson AD1 (wife Tamiko)

He was from Oklahoma. We were
stationed together VR-24 in 1955 and
Nattc Memphis in 1961. Contact ADCS
Richard Boda (Ret.) at 901-372-2144
or raincoat.1@netzero.net.

Shipmates who served aboard the USS Hart, 1971-1993

Contact Jerry Leatherwood, The USS
Thomas C. Hart DE/FF 1092 Veterans
Association, at 252-524-4021,
jerrywood@embarqmail.com or visit
www.thomaschart.org.

Joe (Jose) Garcia (wife Guadalupe or Lupe)

Stationed at SACLANT in the
1970s. Contact Guillermo (Tito)
Belin (wife Cici) at tbelin75050@
yahoo.com, 972-394-1952 (home) or
972-816-7235 (cell).

Glenn D. Stevens

Served on the USS Canberra. The ship
was stationed in the Mediterranean
1957-1958. I'm trying to locate him
for my father. Please contact Deborah
McKinney at rbr539@aol.com.

Seabees from NMCB 62

Contact Alumni Secretary Norm Hahn,
1805 Oaklawn Dr., Eau Claire, WI
54703, nhahnjr@sbcglobal.net.

Shipmates from Bootcamp NTC San Diego Company 0410, May- September 1952

Contact Charles Mann, 2794 S.
Vienna Road, Scottsburg, IN 47170,
812-752-5590 or chmann3@yahoo.com.

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Peacock, Charles A., PN1	MAL	Shefchick, Mikolay, GYSGT	MAL	Unger, Louis E., HT1	251
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Porter, William H., BT1	043	Small, Burl J., AOC	MAL	Van Dyke, Donald R., POC USN	202
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Puffenberger, Fred H., BMC	312	Soulard, George A., CWO4 USN	070		
Pugh, Leonard T., Jr., ETC	141	Spinks, Roger A., SM1	177	Waddington, Carl D., Jr., ACCS	MAL
		Spongberg, Peter, OS1	MAL	Walsh, Francis F., BTC	MAL
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Quilalang, Anastacio D., NPO USN	084	Stasel, Russel C., E-9 USN	055	Warner, Louis E., ETC	MAL
Quinn, William R., USN RET	070	Stefani, Robert E., SKC	104	Walsh, Gerald, CDR USN	MAL
		Stevenson, Ralph D., SHCM	099	Waugh, James, HMC	MAL
Ramsey, Richard W., GMCM	188	Stickel, Eugene L., CWO4 USN	MAL	Welch, Robert E., PO1 USN	MAL
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Reighn, Jonas C., CWO3 USN	MAL	Stritch, Lawrence A., BMCS	MAL	Wheeler, William J., CTACM	182
Richards, Kenneth G., AGCS	MAL	Sullivan, Kenneth R., SH1	267	White, Henry D., ADC	096
Ricker, Harold E., ACC	027	Sumner, Ervin, SCPO USN	269	Wilkowski, Casimir A., EMCS	MAL
Rierner, Walter W., ADCS	MAL			Williams, Donald B., POC USCG	299
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Roberts, Ralph O., RET	MAL	Taylor, Daniel F., CPO USN	226	Wixom, Barney D., LT USN	MAL
Rose, Lenial T., ADC	057	Testerman, Harold D., 1STSGT	379	Wogan, Gordon E., HMC	MAL
Roushman, Max, CDR USN	MAL	Thomson, Alexander, LCDR USN	MAL	Wolfkill, Truman, ADJC	MAL
Ruiz, Jessie, Sr., SH1	MAL	Tinkle, Clinton, USN RET	MAL	Worley, Billy G., POC USN	MAL
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Scagliola, John J., BM2	MAL	Trias, Telesford, MSC	101		
Schearer, Terry, HTC	136	Trider, William W., SMCM	MAL	Young, Frederick R., AMSC	014
Scheer, Carl E., MGYSGT	276	Trudeau, Norman R., EM1	027		
Schmer, Ivan W., PNC	018	Tuttle, Raymond A., YN3	136		
Schwartz, Paul T., YNC	MAL	Tylak, Frank J., CPO USN	089		
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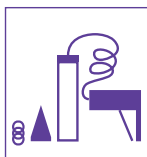
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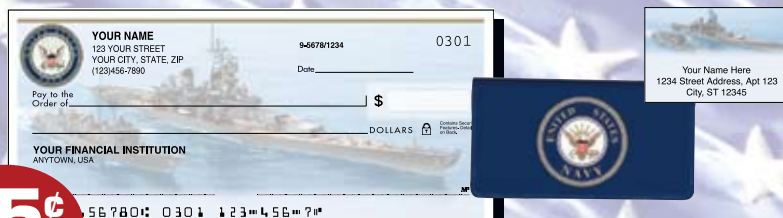


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Message from Southeast Regional President

THANK YOU SO MUCH to the members of the Southeast Region for your confidence in electing me Regional President. I hope I can fulfill your expectations. Having visited six of the units in the Southeast, I can say the Auxiliary is functioning very well.

All of the units are doing some type of community service. A unit adopted a family when the husband was injured and off from work. They purchased food and gifts for the family during the holidays. One unit took gifts "and Santa" (looking strangely like Jack Mefford) to the children's ward of the hospital at Christmas time. This same unit regularly goes to the nursing homes in the area, and visits with the veterans. Another unit collected gifts for the local children's home. Christmas and birthday cards are sent by a unit to all of their members. This is a good way to make contact with your members, even if they can't attend meetings. Make sure you put all this information on your yearly reports so we have a measure of what the units are doing.

In January Roger Mitchell, Regional President Southeast and I had the honor of representing the FRA and LA FRA at the Coast Guard Cutter Blackthorn Memorial Service. The Coast Guard is the newest service group in the Fleet Reserve. The Coast Guard does a wonderful job of protecting our coastline and has many times been put into dangerous situations.

It was an honor representing the LA FRA and being recognized along with all the other veteran organizations at the Birmingham, Alabama National Veteran's Day festivities. This is the largest Veteran's Day Service in the country. It begins with an awards dinner on the 10th followed on the 11th by a luncheon and the Veteran's Day Parade. There were many recognitions for all the Veterans that have served our country, some of which gave the ultimate sacrifice. We must continue to honor these brave men and women.

One of the more pleasant things I have done was attend the 50th Birthday Party for Unit 147 (my unit). Sandra Robbins, JrPNP, presented a 50 year pin to Doris Holcomb, a charter member of the unit. Can you imagine 50 years in the same unit? Way to go Doris! JrPNP Sandra also presented a 50 year pin to Ricky Boggs.

I am looking forward to visiting the units in the Southeast.

Fran Hoadley is the editor of *LA FRA News* and the *FRA Today* Liaison.



CAROLYN WHITAKER
Regional President, Southeast



*Veteran's Day 2007
Birmingham, Ala. Ercel Blair, Unit 89;
Carolyn Whitaker, RPSE; Anne Mitchell,
Unit 102*



*Veteran's Day 2007
Carolyn Whitaker, LA FRA RPSE and
Roger Mitchell, FRA RPSE.*



*Unit 22 Pensacola, FL
President Gracie Vincent presented
longevity pins to the following members
at their Thanksgiving Luncheon (L to R):
Gracie Vincent President, Garrie Phillips
(25 years), Marjorie Boyer (35 years),
Norma Walsh (40 years), Louise Wilson
(45 years), Bobbie Salter (20 years),
Dorothy Dickman (25 years) and Dot
Cresswell (35 years). A grand total of 225
years! Thank you ladies for continuing
your membership.*



*Unit 147, Sanford, Florida
L to R: Ricky Boggs, Elizabeth Pounds
(PNP) Lida Rolfe, Carolyn Whitaker
(SERP), Cecile Moody, Madge Crocker,
Carolyn Sue Reeves, Anna Sanders, Doris
Holcomb (charter member) Sam Bolton.*



*December 2007 Unit 147's 50th
Birthday Party
50-year pin presented by Jr.PNP Sandra
Robbins to Doris Holcomb, the only
charter member of 147.*



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