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Featured

18 PROTECTING AMERICA’S WATERWAYS
Marine Science Technicians (MSTs) perform a wide variety of duties that protect U.S. waters and the public. They are the Coast Guard’s lead personnel in investigating pollution incidents and enforcing environmental and safety laws.

Departments

2 COMMUNICATIONS

5 NED PERSPECTIVE

6 SHIPMATE FORUM

8 ON & OFF CAPITOL HILL
No TRICARE Fee Increases or Chained CPI, but …

14 NEW FRA LIFE MEMBERS

16 MEMBERSHIP MATTERS
The Next Generation

28 CANDIDATES FOR FRA NATIONAL OFFICE

30 TAPS

32 REUNIONS / LOOKING FOR...

34 NEWS FROM THE BRANCHES

36 FRA AUXILIARY NEWS
Message from North Central Regional President Teresa Norton

LOYALTY, PROTECTION AND SERVICE
FRA IS A CONGRESSIONALLY CHARTERED, NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION ADOVATING 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
Coast Guard Marine Science Technicians employ diverse scientific and safety skills and training to protect the environment and the American public from a variety of threats.
Grassroots Advocacy Makes a Difference

AS CONGRESS WORKS TO develop a spending plan for FY 2014, lawmakers have a lot to consider. They are wrestling with the constrictions of sequestration and seeking a variety of ways to trim spending, including increasing fees and reducing benefits for military personnel and retirees. (See the NED Perspective column on page 5 and the overview of the FY 2014 National Defense Authorization Act on pages 12 and 13 for more details.) As a grassroots legislative advocacy organization, FRA’s primary goal is to ensure the enlisted perspective is heard on Capitol Hill and, in the current budget climate, it’s more important than ever for shipmates to be engaged with their elected officials.

It’s easy to communicate your concerns to your senators and representatives with FRA’s online Action Center at www.fra.org. This easy-to-use feature offers pre-written letters (or you can write your own) on a variety of legislative concerns that can be sent with the click of a button. If you don’t have a computer or Internet access, the information in FRA’s Communicate With Your Elected Officials booklet will be very helpful to you. This free directory of lawmakers is available by calling Member Services staff at 1-800-FRA-1924 or e-mailing Teresa@fra.org.

FRA members are the lifeblood of our organization and the very foundation of our grassroots advocacy on behalf of enlisted service members. Please make your voice heard today!

As a general rule, FRA Today does not publish book reviews, but I’m exercising my editorial privilege to make a rare exception this month. I recently read a great book that I think will be appealing to many shipmates, particularly those who served aboard submarines, as divers and/or corpsmen.

Shadow Divers: The True Adventure of Two Americans Who Risked Everything to Solve One of the Last Mysteries of World War II by Robert Kurson

Reading like a great fiction novel, this true tale follows the six-year journey of John Chatterton and Richie Kohler, two deep-water wreck divers who discover an unidentified World War II U-boat submerged in 230 feet of frigid water off the coast of New Jersey. No historian, expert or governmental agency had any record of a U-boat being sunk in these waters and the two divers leave no stone unturned to identify the vessel and pay tribute to the men who died with her. This fascinating story explores each character’s background and how it influences their never-give-up approach to solving the mystery. And, as the story unfolds, it also reveals these two unlikely partners’ growing respect for one another, their connection with the German crewmembers and their commitment to bring closure to these men and their families.
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The Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission

**A SPECIAL COMMISSION TO** review military compensation, retired pay and other benefits was authorized in the FY 2013 National Defense Authorization Act and the recently named members will begin work soon. The mission of the Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission (MCRMC) is to evaluate pay, retirement and various benefit programs and make recommendations for reducing costs.

The legislation establishing the commission marked the culmination of efforts by the Department of Defense (DoD) to reform retirement benefits. This issue was addressed by the 11th Quadrennial Review of Military Compensation (QRMCP) and was the focus of a July 2011 report entitled “Modernizing the Military Retirement System” by a Task Group from the Defense Business Board (DBB).

Issues cited in the report included “findings” that the current retirement system was designed for an era when life spans were shorter, pay was not competitive and second careers following military service were rare. In addition, 17 percent of active duty and Reserve personnel receive retirement benefits—making the current system seemingly “unfair” to the remaining 83 percent. The DBB argues that the current program is too expensive, particularly during a period of shrinking defense spending following a decade of war in Iraq and Afghanistan. Bottom line: The retirement system is seen as unfair, unaffordable and inflexible; and should, according to the DBB and other critics, be replaced with a program where all future serving personnel accrue benefits, similar to a civilian-type retirement thrift savings plan (TSP).

In response, FRA defends the retirement system as a major part of the military benefit package and a significant draw for personnel to complete careers of 20 or more years of service. We also weighed in with the Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction (which failed to identify an alternate plan to mandatory “sequestration” cuts), the Secretary of Defense, during congressional testimony and interaction with key oversight committees and others in top leadership positions to express FRA’s strong opposition to “civilizing” the military retirement plan. Military service is unique and less than 1 percent of the population is shouldering 100 percent of the responsibility for national security, and the importance of benefits to sustain the All-Volunteer Force via adequate recruiting and retention levels cannot be overstated.

Despite these concerns, DoD continued to press for reform and a plan similar to the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) process was proposed: Once submitted, Congress would only be allowed an up or down vote on the proposals, in effect bypassing congressional oversight committees. This plan was included in the DoD 2013 Budget, however, the House and Senate versions of the 2013 NDAA differed on this issue, resulting in establishment of the aforementioned commission with a broader mandate. It’s important to note that the House and Senate Armed Services Committees will have important oversight responsibilities with regard to the recommendations put forward by the MCRMC and that FRA and other organizations will have an opportunity to address anticipated proposals impacting benefits.

Specifically, Sec. 671 of the FY 2013 NDAA addresses the establishment of the MCRMC and tasks the panel to ensure the long-term viability of the All-Volunteer Force; maintain a reasonable quality of life for service members and their families to foster successful recruitment, retention and military careers; modernize and achieve fiscal sustainability for compensation and retirement systems. The MCRMC’s recommendations must include a proviso that retirement benefits remain unchanged for those entering service before enactment of the FY 2013 NDAA and the legislation also prohibits anyone who worked for a veterans’ service organization or military-related association within one year of the Commission’s establishment from serving on the panel.

The Commission is to conduct public hearings and the Secretary of Defense’s recommendations to the Commission are due within nine months of the Commission’s establishment. Recommendations will be based on consultation with the Secretary of Homeland Security regarding the Coast Guard. A report detailing findings and conclusions is due to the President no later than 15 months after the Commission establishment date.

FRA will be closely tracking the Commission’s work and weighing in at every available opportunity. As DoD and Congress struggle to find alternatives to the additional $52 billion in sequestration cuts (scheduled to take effect on October 1, 2013), everything is a potential target for the budgetary axe. Track what’s happening and communicate regularly with your elected officials via the FRA Action Center at www.fra.org.

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**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 Future Planning.
Looking For … Success

Thank you, FRA Today! I listed a Looking For … notice in the May 2013 issue and my friend, Pat Garcia, called me from Madera, Calif. We are busy catching up on our respective careers. Yep, he was reading his FRA Today and saw my notice.

Arnold Nixon

Free Healthcare for Life

Would you please update me and others who entered active duty service prior to December 1956 on the status of “free medical care for life”?

William Bassett

FRA Response: Despite numerous legislative initiatives to eliminate the Medicare Part B premiums for military retirees who served prior to December 7, 1956, Congress has yet to enact legislation that would make it official. The most recent attempt was the introduction of the Keeping Faith with the Greatest Generation Military Retirees Act (H.R. 4593) in the 111th Congress (2009–2010), but the measure died at the end of the session. No bills were introduced in the 112th Congress (2011–2012) and, due to the current budget climate, it’s unlikely the effort will find a champion during the current Congress.

FRA believes that promises made should be promises kept and uses every opportunity to remind lawmakers and staff that many military retirees were promised free healthcare for life. The Association contends that these career service members earned TRICARE benefits with 20 or more years of arduous military service and continues its efforts to halt the dramatic increases to existing TRICARE fees or implement new ones proposed by the Administration.

Interoperable Electronic Health Records

I have found the experience and views on electronic health records interesting. It is one of those situations where there are both positive and negative experiences.

My experience has been positive. In the medical system where I receive my treatment, the hospitals, doctors and other providers have been converting to electronic health records for a few years. I have noticed through conversations with the examining physicians that they had checked my records before they came in to see me. Some have done it in front of me and I have watched them make entries into the system. I have also signed legal releases authorizing them to do it, so I know it is being done on a large scale. I also have six relatives working in the medical field who have confirmed the use of electronic health records. In some hospitals, everything is electronic. The best part of it is that I have been authorized entrance via the Internet into the various systems and can view my own records and reports on various test results and examinations. If there is something I may have missed during my visit, I will find it during a review of the record. I don’t have to wait days for a letter or phone call from the doctor’s office for test results. The latest change permits me to communicate with my doctor through e-mail if I have any questions. All my medications are ordered electronically from local or military providers. Electronic health records are here, but conversion takes time.

Richard E Dornblaser

It has been noted that for quite some time, Congress has allocated funding for a uniform “paperless” health record system for the Departments of Defense (DoD) and Veterans Affairs (VA). As I recall, DoD has had an electronic health record system in operation for quite some time. All VA-eligible patients migrate to the VA from one of the DoD services, whether as a military retiree electing to be covered by the VA, or merely by virtue of having served in the military service, and thereby have [or had] a military health record.

My question is: What is/was the necessity of developing another “unique” system for the VA? Why not simply adopt the health record system from DoD? Adoption of the DoD system would eliminate the need to transcribe the existing record into the VA’s format, and possibly the unduly [long] delays in qualifying for VA coverage, especially for service-connected disabilities. Or possibly, it’s that bureaucrats in the VA don’t really trust the DoD medical folks to make a determination before a person is separated from the military!

I don’t know how many millions of tax dollars were wasted on this fiasco before it was scrapped!

Mike Goldman

FRA Response: Thanks for sharing your perspective on this. Hindsight’s always 20/20, but it sure seems logical that the two departments would have set up their electronic record-keeping software in a fashion that would have allowed the two systems to communicate. But the fact is, they didn’t. Now it’s a cumbersome and expensive proposition to try to merge the two systems, or start from scratch with a more unified structure. The goal is to create just what you described: a system that allows service members to transition seamlessly from DoD to VA, with medical records available to both agencies for use in medical treatment, as well as claims determinations.

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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No TRICARE Fee Increase or Chained CPI, But ...

AS FRA TODAY GOES to press, it appears that dramatically increasing TRICARE enrollment fees and changing the formula for determining cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs) for military retirees, Social Security recipients and others are off the legislative radar screen, at least for now. Proposals to calculate COLAs using the less generous chained CPI formula have been discussed for months, but no legislation is currently advancing to authorize this change. Neither the House nor the Senate Armed Services Committee version of the FY 2014 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) includes provisions to raise fees for TRICARE beneficiaries. (Read below for more details.)

Despite this bit of optimism, it is important to remember that neither version of the NDAA accounts for $52 billion in sequestration cuts that will impact the FY 2014 Defense budget if alternative spending reductions are not approved prior to September 30, 2013. Additionally, increasing the debt ceiling has yet to be addressed in Congress and both issues have the potential to negatively impact pay and benefits, including shifting health care costs to retirees and/or reducing future cost-of-living-adjustments.

These issues may be resolved “outside the regular order,” which means they could pop up quickly and limit the time shipmates and others have to weigh in with their legislators before a final vote. Shipmates are urged to subscribe to FRA Newsbytes, if they haven’t already done so, to stay up-to-date on legislation that could have a dramatic impact on benefits. To subscribe to this free weekly legislative e-mail, log onto the FRA website (www.fra.org) and click “Update Member Info” on the upper left side of the page or e-mail newsbytes@fra.org with “Subscribe” in the subject line and your name and address in the message. For shipmates without e-mail access, a recorded version of Newsbytes is available each Friday afternoon by dialing 1-800-FRA-1924 (ext. 112).

Members are also urged to use the FRA Action Center at www.fra.org regularly to share their views with elected officials by sending prewritten messages on priority personnel-related issues.

SecDef to Detail 2014 Sequestration Cuts

Secretary of Defense (SecDef) Chuck Hagel announced in late June that the Defense Department is developing plans for dealing with a possible $52 billion in 2014 sequestration budget cuts. The plan will soon be submitted to the Senate Armed Services Committee (SASC), since neither the House (H.R. 1960) nor Senate (S. 1197) versions of the FY 2014 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) account for the reductions that will take effect on September 30, 2013, unless alternative spending cuts are approved by Congress.

SASC Chairman Carl Levin (Mich.) and Ranking Member James Inhofe (Oklahoma) requested a plan from SecDef Hagel in May. In conjunction with his responses, Hagel stated, “It is my hope that Congress will work to enact a package of deficit reductions that the President can sign that de-triggers sequestration by the end of the year.”

Members are urged to use the FRA Action Center to ask their elected officials to exclude Defense from the next round of sequestration cuts.

UnitedHealth Switches Leaders for TRICARE West Region Contract

UnitedHealth Group Inc., has changed leadership in its division that handles the TRICARE West region. This follows complaints from the Defense Department (DoD) and beneficiaries that UnitedHealth’s poor performance had led to delays in obtaining medical care. The company assumed responsibility for the contract on April 1, 2013, and Tina Jonas, a former Pentagon comptroller, has been appointed as the unit’s new president. Jonas previously served as president of a separate unit of UnitedHealth and now has “all operational responsibilities” for the division.

The delays affected members of the program’s TRICARE Prime plan in the West Region, which has 1.6 million beneficiaries in the 21 states served by UnitedHealth. Due to long delays TRICARE Management Activity (TMA) allowed a waiver (through July 2, 2013) that suspends the requirement that all referrals be approved by United Healthcare before the beneficiary could obtain specialty care.
Retirement and Compensation Commission Appointed

The FY 2013 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) authorized a nine-member Commission to review all military compensation, benefits and retirement programs. The President appointed one commissioner to serve as the panel’s chairman, and the House and Senate each appointed four members, respectively. The appointees were recently announced and include the Honorable Alphonso Maldon, Jr., Chairman; former Senators Larry Pressler (SD) and Bob Kerrey (NE); former Congressmen Chris Carney (PA) and Steve Buyer (IN); retired Navy Adm. Edmund Giambastiani, Jr.; retired Army General Peter Chiarelli; former DoD Comptroller Dov Zakheim and Mike Higgins, former professional staffer with the House Armed Services Committee. Programs to be reviewed by the Commission include pay and retirement; MWR, commissaries and exchanges, housing, dependent schools, health care, disability and survivor benefits, education benefits, Impact Aid, support for dependents and support/funding to States, territories, colleges and universities. DoD is required to provide the commission with its recommendations by November 1, 2013, with the stipulation that the commission will not reduce benefits for any current retiree. (See NED Perspective on page 5 for more details.)

VA Reports Reduction in Claims Backlog

During a recent Senate Veterans Affairs Committee (SVAC) hearing, Thomas Murphy, director of compensation service for the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) announced that the VA has reached a “tipping point” in its struggle to reduce the massive disability claims backlog. The backlog of claims pending more than 125 days has been reduced from 866,000 to 816,000 since January 2013. VA Secretary Eric Shinseki vowed to reduce disability claim processing to no longer than 125 days for adjudication with 98 percent accuracy rate by the end of 2015.

In related news, the House passed the FY 2014 Military Construction/Veterans Affairs appropriations bill (H.R. 2216) that provides $155 million to implement a paperless claims process system (Veterans Benefits Management System-VBMS) and funding for 94 more claims processors.

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Military Predatory Lending Warnings and CFPB Orders Refunds

Attorneys General from 13 states sent an open letter to Secretary of Defense (SecDef) Chuck Hagel, requesting more robust protections for service members exposed to predatory consumer lending practices. The letter states: “Our military service members are disproportionately targeted by predatory lenders. Military bases are surrounded by storefront predatory lenders, many of which charge triple-digit annual interest rates.”

FRA strongly supported provision in the FY 2007 National Defense Authorization Act known as the Military Lending Act (MLA). Although the law was broad, the DoD regulation implementing the Act was limited in the types of consumer credit covered. The letter from the State Attorneys General also states that, “While the MLA has been largely successful in curbing abusive lending in categories covered by the Department’s current rules, the narrow categories and definitions create large loopholes that permit lenders to fashion abusive or predatory transactions that avoid MLA’s protections.” The letter further requests that SecDef broaden the current regulation’s definition of covered consumer credit to provide comprehensive protections against abusive lending practices and that it be done expeditiously.

In related news the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) ordered U.S. Bank and Dealers’ Financial Services (DFS) to end deceptive marketing and lending practices that target active-duty military members. The two companies must refund $6.5 million to service members for failing to properly disclose all the fees charged to troops who used the companies’ Military Installment Loans and Educational Services (MILES) auto loans program, and for misrepresenting the true cost and coverage of add-on products financed along with the auto loans. The companies are also faulted for the process associated with payments for cars bought through MILES via military allotment.

FRA Hosts Coast Guard Caucus Event

FRA recently hosted its 15th annual Coast Guard Caucus Breakfast, an event designed to expand awareness of the Coast Guard’s remarkable service to our nation and promote dialogue between members of Congress and key Coast Guard leaders.

The Caucus is a bipartisan group of 78 lawmakers who share a common interest in the Coast Guard, co-chaired by Representatives Howard Coble (N.C.), the only USCG veteran serving in Congress; Frank LoBiondo (N.J.), Rick Larsen (Wash.) and Joe Courtney (Conn.). Other lawmakers in attendance included Representatives John Garamendi (Calif.), who is the Ranking Member of the Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation Subcommittee; Rob Wittman (Va.) and Delegate Donna M.C. Christensen (Virgin Islands), who all praised the versatile, multi-mission service of USCG. FRA JrPNP Jeff Gilmartin and East Coast Regional President Don Hoover also attended the event.

Master Chief Petty Officer of the Coast Guard (MCPOCG) Michael Leavitt introduced Coast Guard Commandant Admiral Bob Papp at the Capitol Hill event, who reminded lawmakers and staff members of the challenges facing the service. Papp acknowledged FRA’s long-standing and strong commitment to the Coast Guard and thanked NED Joe Barnes for his role in helping establish and sustain the Coast Guard Caucus Breakfast. Papp and Rep. Joe Courtney provided a brief update on the planned construction of the U.S. Coast Guard Museum in New London, Conn., and the Commandant also thanked the CPO community for their successful fundraising efforts to refurbish the 85-year old Coast Guard Memorial in Arlington National Cemetery.

NED Speaks at ALA Congressional Caucus

FRA National Executive Director Joe Barnes recently spoke about current compensation and benefit issues at the American Logistics Association Congressional Caucus and Public Policy Forum on Capitol Hill. The event focused on all aspects of the military resale system (commissaries and exchanges), including serious threats to sustaining these important programs due to DoD budget cuts and the possibility of additional arbitrary sequestration cuts in 2014 and beyond. Other speakers included Rep. Howard “Buck” McKeon (Calif.), who chairs the House Armed Services Committee; and Reps. Joe Wilson (S.C.) and Susan Davis (Calif.), the chair and ranking member, respectively, of the House Personnel Subcommittee.

Happy 115th Birthday, Navy Corpsmen

The Navy Hospital Corps recently celebrated its 115th anniversary and FRA salutes the brave men and women who provide quality care and heartfelt compassion at home, aboard ship and in the field of combat.

FRA’s Education Foundation offers a special scholarship for children of enlisted Navy corpsmen who serve or have served with Marine units. Thanks to an endowment from Col. Hazel Elizabeth Benn, the Foundation provides a $2,000 scholarship to qualified applicants entering their freshman or sophomore year of college. Applications for the 2014 Benn and other FRA Education Foundation scholarships will be available after September 1, 2013. For more information, visit www.fra.org/foundation
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A Civil War Treasure of the Smithsonian Institution

When Lovett’s secret was finally revealed in 1873, his coins and original dies began a colorful saga. Today, one of his original 1861 Confederate Cents is highly sought-after by both coin collectors and Civil War enthusiasts. One sold at a 2005 auction for more than $74,000! Lovett’s original hand-engraved dies for the coins eventually came to be housed in the prestigious collection of the Smithsonian Institution®.

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The House version of the FY 2014 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA, H.R. 1960) passed the House, and the Senate version of the legislation (S. 1197) has been approved by the Senate Armed Services Committee and is awaiting consideration by the full Senate at press time.

Neither bill authorizes the drastic increases to TRICARE enrollment fees for military retirees (Prime, Standard and TRICARE-for-Life) that were requested by the Administration; however, the House version authorizes a $4 increase in co-payments for retirees under age 65 and their family members for outpatient care under TRICARE Prime. Co-pays for doctor visits would increase to $16, except for mental health care, which would remain unchanged at $12. The House bill also requires the Defense Department (DoD) to make a one-time offer of continued coverage for TRICARE Prime beneficiaries who live in areas where the Prime option will be discontinued as of October 1, 2013.

The bills differ on military pay, with the House authorizing a 1.8-percent pay hike, while the Senate capped the increase at 1.0 percent. The House bill also authorizes “veteran status” for members of the Reserve Component who served 20 or more years. The Senate bill mandates the Military Lending Act (MLA) be enforced by the Department of Justice (DOJ) and allows retirees participating in the Survivor Benefit Program (SBP) to designate that benefits be payable to a Special Needs Trust to care for disabled children.

Both bills reduce overall military end strength by 40,000 (a 7,100 cut in Marine Corps manpower and a 900 increase in Navy end strength) and authorize additional Impact Aid ($25 million) for public schools serving children of military personnel. Additionally, both versions have extensive, albeit different, provisions aimed at preventing sexual assault, improving prosecution of perpetrators and protecting victims.

Although the full Senate has yet to debate its version of the legislation and Senate floor amendments are yet to be filed, neither bill addresses improvements for concurrent receipt, repeal of SBP/DIC offset, reform of the Uniformed Services Former Spouses Protection Act (USFSPA) and other improvements the Association supports. And, as mentioned above, neither version accounts for FY 2014 DoD sequestration cuts of $52 billion that will take effect if alternative spending cuts are not approved prior to September 30, 2013.

Once both chambers approve their respective bills, a conference committee will reconcile the differences between the two measures.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>ISSUE</th>
<th>H.R. 1960*</th>
<th>S. 1197**</th>
<th>FRA POSITION</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TRICARE Fee Increases and Pharmacy Co-Pays</td>
<td>Does NOT authorize new/higher TRICARE enrollment fees for Prime, Standard and TRICARE-for-Life or pharmacy co-pays.</td>
<td>Similar to House provisions.</td>
<td>FRA supports both House and Senate provisions.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prime Service Area (PSA) Reduction</td>
<td>Authorizes continued TRICARE Prime coverage for beneficiaries who live outside 40-mile radius of MTFs and BRAC sites (Sec. 711).</td>
<td>No similar provision.</td>
<td>FRA supports House provision.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Active Duty and Reserve Pay Increase</td>
<td>Authorizes a 1.8-percent active duty/Reserve pay hike, equal to the Employment Cost Index (ECI) and one-year extension of various pay and bonuses (Sec. 601).</td>
<td>Authorizes a 1-percent active duty/Reserve pay hike and one-year extension for various pay and bonus programs (Sec. 601 &amp; 603).</td>
<td>FRA supports House provision.</td>
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<td>End Strength</td>
<td>Cuts active end strength by 40,000 (7,100 cut for the Marine Corps, 900 increase for the Navy) (Sec. 401).</td>
<td>Similar provision (Sec. 401).</td>
<td>FRA supports end strengths adequate to meet operational commitments, lengthen dwell time and minimize expanding deployment periods.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Predatory Lending Protections</td>
<td>No similar provision.</td>
<td>Requires enforcement of Military Lending Act (MLA) by the Department of Justice (Sec. 661).</td>
<td>FRA supports the Senate provision.</td>
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<tr>
<td>SBP Special Needs Trust</td>
<td>No similar provision.</td>
<td>Allows Survivor Benefit Program (SBP) participants to designate benefits to a Special Needs Trust for disabled children (Sec. 643).</td>
<td>FRA supports Senate provision.</td>
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<td>Veteran Status</td>
<td>Authorizes “veteran status” for members of the Reserve Component who served 20 or more years (Sec. 642).</td>
<td>No similar provision.</td>
<td>FRA supports House provision.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Renaming the Secretary of the Navy</td>
<td>Changes the name of the Secretary of the Navy to the Secretary of the Navy and the Marine Corps (Sec. 901).</td>
<td>No similar provision.</td>
<td>FRA supports House provision.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Impact Aid</td>
<td>Provides $20 million in aid to schools impacted by military populations and $5 million for military children with special needs education (Sec. 571).</td>
<td>Provides $25 million in aid to schools impacted by military populations and $5 million for military children with special needs education (Sec. 571).</td>
<td>Supplemental Impact Aid funding enhances funding from Department of Education. FRA supports the Senate provision.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notification of Reserve Deployment Cancellation</td>
<td>Requires 120 days advanced notice for deployment/cancellation deployment of Reserve Component units (Sec. 511).</td>
<td>Requires 180 days notice for the cancellation of deployment of Reserve Component units (Sec. 508).</td>
<td>FRA supports the House provision.</td>
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<tr>
<td>DoD/VA Electronic Health Record</td>
<td>Requires DoD and VA to implement seamless electronic sharing of medical healthcare data by Oct. 1, 2016 (Sec. 734).</td>
<td>No similar provision.</td>
<td>FRA supports the House provision.</td>
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</table>

*Provisions reported are based on House bill (H.R. 1960) that passed the House.

** Provisions reported are based on Senate legislation (S. 1197) that was approved by the Senate Armed Services Committee.
CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL THE following shipmates who have chosen to become Life Members during the second quarter of 2013. If you’d like to become a Life Member, call 1-800-FRA-1924 and speak with one of our Member Services representatives.

### April

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### May

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New amplified phone lets you hear AND see the conversation.

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Do you get discouraged when you hear your telephone ring? Do you avoid using your phone because hearing difficulties make it hard to understand the person on the other end of the line? For many Americans the telephone conversation – once an important part of everyday life – has become a thing of the past. Because they can’t understand what is said to them on the phone, they’re often cut off from friends, family, doctors and caregivers. Now, thanks to innovative technology there is finally a better way.

A simple idea... made possible with sophisticated technology. If you have trouble understanding a call, the Captioning Telephone can change your life. During a phone call the words spoken to you appear on the phone’s screen – similar to closed captioning on TV. So when you make or receive a call, the words spoken to you are not only amplified by the phone, but scroll across the phone so you can listen while reading everything that’s said to you. The captioning function can be turned on as needed. Each call is routed through a call center, where computer technology – aided by a live representative – generates immediate voice-to-text translations. The captioning is real-time, accurate and readable. Your conversation is private and the captioning service doesn’t cost you a penny – all you need is a high-speed Internet connection from any Internet provider and a standard phone line. Callers do not need special equipment or a captioning phone in order to speak with you.

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The Next Generation

THOSE WHO ARE CURRENTLY serving our country are the next generation of military retirees, veterans and FRA members. There are many ways to support these service men and women and, at the same time, show them the value of FRA membership and fellowship.

Shipmates and branches that are located near military installations or recruiting stations have an opportunity to associate with the next generation of shipmates through programs and events that recognize outstanding performance among enlisted Sailors, Marines and Coast Guard personnel. Participating in these recognition events continues a long-standing FRA tradition and strengthens our standing as a professional military association. It also supports a tenet of our preamble: “To assist in obtaining the best type of personnel for our Sea Services.”

Shipmates in Branch 20 (Groton, Conn.) have a 17-year history of recognizing excellence among Sailors who are assigned to the Navy’s Submarine School and Submarine Learning Center in Groton. PNP George P. Hyland has been instrumental in establishing and maintaining strong ties with the school’s officers and enlisted leadership. The branch hosts a luncheon for the Sailors of the Quarter and their supervisors, during which the Sailors’ exemplary work is highlighted. This long-standing partnership has benefited both the Sub School and the branch, and the luncheons have become a tradition that both groups look forward to.

Branch 182 (Bethesda, Md.) also recognizes superior performance by participating in the Sailor of the Year program at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center. This year’s honorees (see photo below) attended the March branch meeting, where each received a plaque and a one-year FRA membership. This award program was established and continues through a generous bequest from the estate of Shipmate Alexander ‘Al” Wadas. Branch 182 is actively engaged in recognizing outstanding cadets at a nearby Sea Cadet Battalion — yet another way to connect with a future generation of FRA members.

Shipmates in Branch 9 (San Diego, Calif.) have been recognizing outstanding Sailors at Naval Medical Center, San Diego (formerly Navy Hospital Balboa) since 1994. To date, Branch 9 has participated in 80 ceremonies and presented more than 270 awards to honor the excellent service of these Sailors.

Branch 293 (Elizabeth City, N.C.) conducts its monthly branch meetings at the USCG Chief Petty Officer’s Association Building, where shipmates have the opportunity interact with Coast Guard and other active duty enlisted personnel. Nearly one third of the branch’s 347 members are currently serving (on active duty or as Reservists), including Petty Officer Second Class Jonathan Avery, who was selected as the Enlisted Person of the Quarter for USCG Air Station in Elizabeth City (see photo below).

Recognition programs are outstanding opportunities to associate with the next generation of FRA shipmates. Whether it be an awards program for outstanding service members or superior students in a local JROTC or Sea Cadet program, all of these activities are an integral part of FRA’s mission and important to FRA’s future.

Penny Collins is FRA’s Director of Membership Development and a member of FRA Branch 24 in Annapolis, Md. She can be reached at penny@fra.org.
Our story begins in the sweltering jungles of South America. My search for precious emeralds hit a dead end, so my partner suggested we expand our horizons. I agreed. When he asked where we should go, I said, “everywhere.”

We journeyed through Africa and Europe’s greatest cities. We crossed into India and hopped from one Southeast Asian paradise to the next. I was on the verge of giving up when one last detour led to the spectacular gems in our Stauer Spring Emerald Necklace. As you can see, it was worth the effort. And today, they can be all yours for ONLY $59!

You get to share the emerald find of a lifetime. Each natural gem radiated with the vivid green color of spring buds. The stones looked spectacular and the price was almost too good to be true. But my stroke of luck had unforeseen consequences…

The “Emerald Curse” strikes. Back home, I strung those exquisite emeralds and wrapped the necklace as a gift for my wife. That’s when my trouble began. She LOVED it. Absolutely adored it.

In fact, she rarely goes anywhere without the necklace and has basked in compliments from strangers for months now. So what’s the problem? I’m NEVER going to find an emerald deal this good again. By giving her such a perfect gift, I’ve made it impossible to top myself.

Bring yours home today for 80% OFF. Our Stauer Spring Emerald Necklace features 15 carats of emerald beads, hand-wired together with delicate gold-finished links. Some curses you don’t wish on your worst enemies, but this is one I want to share with friends. That’s why today you have the chance to own this stunning collection of stones (available online for $299) for ONLY $59!

Your satisfaction is guaranteed. If you are not completely thrilled by this rare emerald find, send the necklace back within 30 days for a full refund of your purchase price. This stunning necklace at this price is available only while supplies last. So please call today to make sure you don’t let the perfect gift slip away!

You know someone who deserves it.
The Coast Guard’s varied missions are all aligned around three general themes: Protecting citizens from the sea, protecting America from threats that arrive by sea and protecting the sea itself. The service’s Marine Science Technicians (MSTs) play a significant role in all three facets of these Coast Guard responsibilities and, although they perform a wide range of duties, prevention is the centerpiece of their mission.

“Prevention is one of the biggest parts of an MST’s job,” explains MSTCM Jeffrey Lang, the Rating Force Master Chief for MSTs. “We try to prevent accidents and pollution problems by enforcing regulations and making sure vessels and facilities are in compliance with national and international law. We make sure commercial entities have the right documents, equipment and resources in place to operate safely and prevent pollution incidents.”
a’s Waterways
Becoming an MST

The MST rating has changed over the past several decades and has its roots in the Navy’s oceanographer and aerographer ratings, according to Lang. “The Coast Guard’s MST rating was established in the late 1960s and was adapted from the Navy rates that covered weather and oceanography responsibilities. Since then, it’s evolved to be more of a marine safety rating, though the science aspects are still very much a part of our work. The Exxon-Valdez oil spill [in 1989] really put the enlisted MST rating on the map. After being mandated by Congress, the Coast Guard wanted a rating that would focus on marine safety and pollution response.”

Becoming an MST requires attending a 10-and-a-half-week course in Yorktown, Va., and often a long wait to get there, explains MST1 Kristin Gray, an instructor at MST “A” School.

“When new recruits join the Coast Guard, they generally join as unassigned. They don’t select or request a rating at the recruiting station like in the DoD services. Non-rates — Coast Guard personnel who’ve finished boot camp, but haven’t yet been assigned to a specific rating — go to operational units and do a variety of jobs,” elaborates Gray. “They might serve as mess cooks or work in the engine helping the Machinery Technicians or scraping paint on deck. Basically, they are unskilled labor. It really depends on the unit to which they’re assigned, but most units require a non-rate to be there at least four months before they’ll be added to the A School list. Some units require they earn qualifications before they can go on the list. And once they’re on the list, the average wait to get into MST school is currently three years.”

But that’s part of why Gray enjoys her work so much. “The long wait may deter some from joining the MST ranks, but those who are willing to do those more menial jobs while they wait for their chance to go to MST school are usually very committed. It’s not a surprise that most of them are incredibly excited to be here. The best part of my job is mentoring these non-rates.”

Training classes range in size from six to 28 non-rates, who will graduate as MST3s after they complete training modules in Pollution Response, Port State Control, Facility Inspection and a variety of other skills necessary to accomplish the MST mission.

“There was a time when weather was taken out of the curriculum, but I’m glad they brought it back,” says Gray. “Weather impacts everything we do. Our examination of a ship might have to be modified if it’s covered in ice, for example. MSTs oversee the transfer of fuel from a ship to a facility or vice versa, and if there’s going to be a problem it’s likely going to happen during a transfer. And weather can be a huge factor. Pollution response is also dramatically affected by the weather. Oil on the surface of the water can be pushed by the wind and booms to deflect or contain oil spills have a sail and can also be moved by wind. Knowing weather conditions will affect our strategy for containing or deflecting a spill.”

MSTCS Chris James, who is in charge of the MST A School, knows how important this initial training is. “I remind our instructors that we’re all training our reliefs. Senior MSTs trained us, and now it’s our turn to give back.”

There are currently more than 1,250 active duty and more than 600 Reserve MSTs, making it the eighth largest of the Coast Guard’s 21 ratings. According to MSTC Jeffrey Dutcher, the Facility Compliance Branch Chief at the St. Petersburg, Fla., Prevention Office, the MST rating is a popular one among Coast Guard personnel. “The MST rating expanded rapidly to become one of the larger rates in the service. The increase was exponential, particularly after 9/11, and as a result, we have some junior folks handling responsibilities usually managed by more senior personnel. Many USCG members elect to laterally transfer from other ratings to the MST rating.”

Managing the Force

As Rating Force Master Chief, Lang’s responsibilities include managing the MST workforce and making sure the Coast Guard has enough trained personnel to get the job done.

“The current budget climate is forcing us to examine our numbers and I have the opportunity to weigh in on the impact it will have if we reduce the MST workforce too much or too rapidly. It’s a big responsibility, but I like knowing I have some input into the decisions that are being made.”

Workforce management also involves managing the advancement requirements for MSTs. “All Coast Guard enlisted personnel take a rating advancement test before they can move to the next pay grade. If they pass that, they must take a service-wide MST exam that compares them to all the other MSTs in that pay grade,” explains Lang. “There are also factors for certain military decorations and the opportunity to advance is based on how an MST ranks among his or her peers.”

After more than 25 years in the Coast Guard and more than three years in his current position, Lang has a genuine concern for his fellow MSTs and their work environment. “The best part of my job is visiting the MSTs in the field to get an idea of what they’re going through. It’s much better to interact with them one-on-one than communicating by phone or e-mail. It’s important for me to help them do the best job they can do. Whether it’s doing port state control, facility or vessel inspections, pollution response or any of the other jobs we
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do, an MST’s responsibilities are a big part of what the Coast Guard is all about.”

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Facility and Vessel Inspections

Since 9/11/2001, the MSTs’ work has taken on a more significant meaning with regard to our nation’s security and safety. They are responsible for ensuring facilities and vessels meet provisions of the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) treaty and the International Ship and Port Facility Security (ISPS) code, a 2004 amendment to the SOLAS treaty. Both internationally-endorsed documents prescribe the minimum security requirements for ships, ports and governmental agencies. They also outline the responsibilities of governments, shipping companies, shipboard personnel and port/facility personnel to “detect security threats and take preventative measures against security incidents affecting ships or port facilities used in international trade.” MSTs also work to ensure compliance with provisions of the Maritime Transportation Security Act (MTSA), U.S. legislation enacted in 2002 that established a framework to improve protections for the nation’s ports, waterways and vessels against potential terrorist attacks.

Inspecting vessels and shoreside facilities are two major components of MST work and, although both require attention to detail and a thorough understanding of local, national and international laws and policy, there is a definite distinction between the two.

MSTs assigned to Port State Control duty conduct examinations of foreign ships that enter U.S. ports to ensure they are properly documented and safe to be operated in U.S. waters. The examinations also verify the captain and crew’s ability to perform their duties.

“We check documentation and examine the ship. We go to the bridge to check the navigation equipment. We make sure the steering mechanism is operating properly and go to the engine room to ensure there are no hazards that might hurt the crew. We make sure there are no cracks in the hull. We do lifesaving drills to ensure the crew has been trained and knows how to respond in the event of an emergency,” explains Gray. “At the core, we ensure there’s nothing that’s going to cause problems at sea or pose a threat in a U.S. port.”

“All oil, passenger and cargo vessels are inspected annually and are also spot-checked at irregular intervals to ensure safety standards are met. Port state control is a worldwide program,” adds James. “Each country is responsible for its own vessels and U.S. ships get similar inspections when they enter other countries’ ports.”

MSTs assigned to smaller duty stations may perform a variety of duties, while those assigned to a larger unit are likely to have a very specific set of responsibilities. “During my assignment to Sector Portland, Ore., I did vessel inspections for two years straight and it can get repetitious,” Gray says, “but that monotony is a sign that folks aboard those ships are doing what they’re supposed to do. And I tell my students that when they find a ship that’s not up to standards, it should remind them of their purpose.

“On some level, we represent the crew when we’re doing these inspections. Some students have asked why we’re working to protect foreigners, but really we’re also protecting our fellow Coast Guardsmen,” she continues. “It’s important for us to do our job properly so that Search and Rescue teams won’t have to be called out in the middle of the night or in bad weather to do theirs. We’re protecting our USCG crews from potential danger.”

Inspecting U.S.-flagged vessels is most often done by Coast Guard commissioned and warrant officers, but enlisted MSTs do examine some commercial vessels owned and registered in the United States.

“Some MSTs are qualified as Commercial Fishing Vessel Examiners and Towing Vessel Examiners,” explains James. “The Coast Guard sees exams and inspections differently, mostly because of the applicable laws and authorities. Under current U.S. law, fishing and towing vessels are not required to be inspected, but we offer courtesy exams to ensure they are maintained, operated and staffed to minimize injury or environmental impact.”
Such exams are voluntary, but it’s in an owner’s best interest to invite the Coast Guard to do them, James says. “Boats that meet the exam criteria display a decal, which can reduce the owner’s insurance premiums. It’s also a boon to business for a company to say their fleet is ‘USCG approved’ and the decal also reduces the likelihood they’ll be stopped for a random spot check.”

More senior MSTs can also qualify as inspectors of U.S. cargo ships and passenger vessels, but it’s a very narrow niche and only those who possess the technical aptitude and interest will do these types of inspections, says James. “There is a domestic inspections branch in every Coast Guard sector, but enlisted MSTs play a very small role in that type of duty.”

While MSTs work to ensure foreign cargo and cruise ships and other foreign-flagged vessels meet national and international safety and security requirements, MSTs are also responsible for ensuring waterfront facilities meet similar standards. They oversee safety and security at federally regulated facilities, such as oil terminals; storage facilities for petroleum, propane and other hazardous gases; cruise ship terminals and container terminals.

“Many of the products we use every day come into our country by water and come ashore at a port facility. Refined petroleum is an obvious example. There are specific operations and security plans for the transfer of these materials,” explains MSTC Jeff Dutcher, the Facility Compliance Branch Chief at the St. Petersburg, Fla., Prevention Office. “The vulnerabilities of the facility are examined and each facility must have a plan for meeting code and mitigating those vulnerabilities. If a facility isn’t in compliance with the security plan, it’s our job to intervene. For example, if they say they’re going to do a 100-percent ID check and they don’t, we cite them. Oil terminal personnel are required to test pipes annually to ensure they can withstand the pressures necessary to transfer the oil from the ship to the terminal. If those tests aren’t being run, that’s a violation. If we test and find leaks, those leaks must be repaired and retested before the terminal can resume operations. During my seven or eight years of doing facilities work, I’ve also done safety and security inspections on deep-draft vessels. It’s similar to doing facilities inspections, just on a moving platform.”

**Transferring Hazardous Materials**

Among the other duties MSTs shoulder is their responsibility to monitor the transfer of fuel, explosives and other hazardous material from ship to shore or vice versa. “By monitoring fuel transfers and periodically checking transfer protocols and procedures, we reduce the probability of an incident considerably,” explains Gray. MSTs help process the permits required to transport explosives from a vessel to a port facility or vice-versa, and also oversee the loading and unloading of those explosives.

“We also work with our Waterways personnel to authorize the launching of fireworks from a barge,” adds Lang, “and, although it’s not necessarily related to explosives, we’re also involved with granting permits for things like regattas and races on the water.”

**Environmental Protection and Pollution Response**

Preventing and responding to pollution incidents is also a significant part of an MST’s responsibility. MSTCS James joined the Coast Guard 22 years ago, with the express objective of becoming an MST. Following the 1989 Exxon-Valdez oil spill in Alaska, he’d seen Coast Guard personnel involved in the clean-up, wiping oil off rocks and wildlife, and knew that’s what he wanted to do.

“Keeping the environment safe is important to me,” says James, “and any oil spill makes for a bad day at work. But it’s very rewarding to me to know that I play a role in getting the environment cleaned up and back to the way it was before.”

Pollution response is a big part of the MST mission, but much of the actual clean-up work is now done by civilian contractors. Affectionately called “duck scrubbers” by other Coast Guard personnel, “MSTs don’t do much ‘scrubbing’ these days,” explains Dutcher. “We’re pollution responders. If someone reports a sheen on the water, we investigate to determine if it’s a petroleum spill, road runoff or wind sheen; a condition that occurs when the water current and wind are coming from opposite directions. It can look like a film on the water, but it’s really just a visual effect.”

“Our pollution response work is an integral part of public and environmental safety,” adds James. “Whenever there’s a pollution incident, from a boater overfilling his gas tanks to a major oil spill, we’re there to investigate why and see what can be done to prevent it from happening again. If there’s a vessel that’s sunk and it’s creating an environmental hazard, for example, we investigate to determine what happened, work to determine who is responsible and who will pay for the clean-up. We aren’t the people who collect the money for the clean-up, but we are the ones who would issue a ticket to the captain or owner, and we might also assist with any criminal case resulting from the incident. We also work to restore the environment to the way it was before the incident and focus on the safety aspects to prevent injury.”

“The first threat is to the environment, so we do our best to contain the problem until the response teams show up. MSTs are the front lines,” Dutcher says with pride, “and it’s our
job to make sure the waterfront gets put back together after events like hurricanes or the Deepwater Horizon oil spill.”

“It’s our job to secure the source and determine who the responsible party (RP) is,” continues Dutcher. “We might have the RP clean it up or we may hire a contractor to do it and give the RP the bill. There is also a National Pollution Fund Center that pays for clean-up efforts related to chemical and oil spills. MSTs oversee the clean-up, make sure appropriate materials are used and that the Coast Guard or the RP isn’t being overcharged. We also give guidance to the RP so that an adequate result is achieved. We determine when it’s ‘clean enough.’”

According to Dutcher, an MST’s knowledge of facilities is also relevant to oil recovery and clean-up efforts. “Facilities units often respond to pollution incidents, because we understand the capabilities of each facility. For example, we know if a facility has boom or other equipment that can be used as part of the response. In addition to overseeing the clean-up efforts, we also oversee the process to ensure the facility is back online as quickly as possible. Part of our investigation is to determine the cause of the spill; was it negligence, a training deficiency or an equipment failure? If, for example, it’s an equipment failure, it has to be working properly before operation can resume.”

Ben Franklin’s adage that “an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure” is also applicable to MST’s pollution control efforts. During his tour in Savannah, Ga., in the late 1990s, Lang participated in harbor patrols that substantially reduced pollution incidents.

“MSTs may be assigned to a Coast Guard icebreaker,” says James. “There are only two icebreaking boats active in the fleet right now — USCGC Polar Star and USCGC Healy — and there are only about a dozen MSTs assigned to ice-breaking duty at any one time. It’s a very unique Coast Guard assignment.”

James served on USCGC Polar Sea from 2000 to 2003 and was one of the MSTs responsible for weather observation and providing weather briefs to the command and flight crews. Onboard MSTs also maintain the scientific computer network, and operate and maintain the winches needed to load and unload scientific equipment and other gear and materials. In addition to helping scientists, MSTs on icebreakers also stand watches and are responsible for Master-at-Arms duties.

“'We helped the scientists with their sub-bottom profiler, a type of very strong sonar that helps scientists understand the make-up and depth of the sea floor,” elaborates James, whose duties also included coordinating with the scientists in the Gulf of Alaska to replace hydrophones.
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“Hydrophones are underwater microphones anchored hundreds of meters beneath the ocean surface to record the songs of whales. This information helps scientists track the whales’ migration patterns and social interactions, and it was the Coast Guard’s job to retrieve these hydrophones so that the recorded data could be downloaded by scientists,” continues James. “There’s an acoustic trigger that releases the hydrophone from its mooring, allowing it to float to the surface where we could recover it. MSTs then deployed a new hydrophone and mooring so the research could continue.”

Coast Guard MSTs are also assigned to the International Ice Patrol (IIP). Established as part of the SOLAS conference shortly after the tragic sinking of the RMS Titanic in 1912, the IIP is tasked with monitoring iceberg danger near the Grand Banks of Newfoundland and providing iceberg limits to the maritime community. Today, 17 nations support the agreement, which is managed by the United States. The cost of the IIP is shared by participating nations, based on each country’s percentage of total tonnage that transits the patrol area during the ice season — usually February through July. With the exception of the World War years, the Ice Patrol has been in continuous operation since 1913 and, during this time, no vessel that has heeded the IIP’s warnings has ever collided with an iceberg.

Iceberg detection used to be limited to visual sightings from boats that patrolled the area, but today fixed-wing Coast Guard aircraft operated out of Elizabeth City, N.C., conduct the primary reconnaissance work for the Ice Patrol. They average five flight days every two weeks and these long-range surveillance flights usually span five to seven hours and cover more than 30,000 square miles of ocean at a time. MSTs serve as ice observers and forecasters on these flights and use special sensors and radars, as well as their own visual observations, to identify icebergs in the region. The information collected, along with ocean current and wind data, is entered into a specialized computer model that predicts the drift of observed icebergs. The predicted locations of these icebergs is then transmitted to mariners through a variety of channels, including SafetyNET, NAVTEX, SITOR, e-mail and the Internet.

**MSTs as War Fighters**

Because of its broad domestic responsibilities and its oversight by the Department of Homeland Security, some Americans don’t even realize the Coast Guard is a military service. But the truth is that the Coast Guard has been involved in every U.S. war, including our nation’s current operations in the Middle East.

“The Coast Guard is misunderstood by a lot of the American public. They may know about our Search-and-Rescue work, our Law Enforcement efforts or our work with Fisheries, but most don’t know that we inspect commercial vessels and facilities to make sure they don’t pose a threat to our country, our people or our environment,” says Lang. “For example, we currently have 10 or 12 MSTs assigned in Afghanistan and Kuwait on one-year assignments. They are assigned as a Redeployment Assistance and Inspection Detachment (RAID) Team, which is embedded with U.S. Army units and works to ensure that equipment and containers returning to the U.S. meet transportation regulations.”

RAID Teams are responsible for training Unit Movement Officers, inspecting all government-owned and -leased containers, verifying and inspecting hazardous materials and making sure containers are properly sealed for movement. They also perform U.S. Customs and Border Clearance Agent duties to check for contraband and ensure agricultural cleanliness. MSTs are assigned to DoD units in the U.S. to make sure containers being shipped to the Middle East are also in compliance with safety regulations and transportation law.

“MSTs know those regulations and help make sure the military service is in compliance and the containers can be shipped safely,” continues Lang. “RAID Team members often travel to forward operating bases and receive helicopter familiarity and tactics training, learn to drive HumVees and Mine-Resistant Ambush Protected vehicles (MRAPs), learn troop movement tactics and IED detection skills. This is just one way in which the Coast Guard is doing its work at the tip of the spear.”

**It’s All About Helping**

By all accounts, being a Coast Guard MST is demanding, yet rewarding work.

“The best part of my job in interacting with the public in a variety of ways,” says Dutcher with a smile. “I started out as a mechanic 25 years ago, but have spent the last 15 years as an MST. Every day is different and I get to work with people in the neighborhood and help my community. And I get to play a part in making the Coast Guard a respected member of this community.”

“I joined the Coast Guard because I wanted to help people,” says James. “It’s a primary part of the Coast Guard’s purpose. If there’s a stormy night or an oil spill, I have the opportunity to help. Making sure life preservers and life boats are available and ensuring vessels are safe is still part of lifesaving. If we can prevent accidents, we don’t have to go out on those stormy nights or clean up that oil spill. But we’re prepared to do just that if the situation calls for it. We’re here to help people.”

Lauren Armstrong is the Contributing Editor and Member of the FRA Auxiliary. She can be reached at lauren@fra.org.
Defending Freedom Forever

America’s Sailors have sacrificed throughout our nation’s history protecting freedom, liberty, and justice for all. Generation after generation of men and women have willingly placed country before self to ensure our treasured rights and defend our cherished nation. A legendary military leader once stated, “Wars may be fought with weapons, but they are won by men.”

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The right side features an American Sailor in his familiar white uniform. Beside him is the intimidating image of an American destroyer. Also featured is our stylized logo to the spirit of the American Sailor which features a globe of the earth in the center, framed with a sailor cap, anchor, and compass. Surrounding the logo, banners read, “Defending Freedom Around the World.” Next is the image of an impressive WWII-era aircraft carrier. Banners on the right side read, “American Freedom Tribute®” and “Freedom Is Never Free”.

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CANDIDATES FOR FRA NATIONAL OFFICE

Candidate for National President

NVP VIRGIL COURNEYA
Shipmate National Vice President Virgil Courneya has been nominated by Branch 274 (Reno, Nev.) to serve as FRA’s National President for the coming year. He has been a member of the FRA since 1982 and has held numerous leadership positions at the local, regional and national levels of the organization. His national leadership roles include his service as the Association’s West Coast Regional Vice President (2004–2005) and President (2005–2006).

Courneya enlisted in the United States Marine Corps in 1972 and his military career included assignments in California, Nevada, North Carolina and Hawaii, overseas duty in Japan and Marine Security duty in Bolivia. He achieved the rank of Master Gunnery Sergeant before retiring from the Marine Corps in 1996. Courneya holds a bachelor’s degree in Social and Criminal Justice and is currently employed as a letter carrier for the U.S. Postal Service.

Candidates for National Vice President

PRPNW JOHN IPPERT
Shipmates of Branch 46 (Honolulu, Hawaii) have nominated PRPNW John Ippert to serve as FRA’s National Vice President. A 25-year member of the FRA, Shipmate Ippert is also a Life Member and has served the Association at the local, regional and national levels. In addition to his position as a member of the branch Board of Directors, he has also served as chairman of the branch Membership and Retention Committee, chaplain, secretary (three years), vice-president and president (two terms). He is a past regional president for FRA’s Northwest Region (2006–2007) and currently chairs the region’s Americanism/Patriotism Committee, serves as regional chaplain and is a member of the Past Regional Presidents Advisory Committee. He has also served as a member of the regional Credentials Committee and regional secretary (two years). In addition to his national responsibilities as regional president, Ippert has also served on numerous national committees, was acting chaplain at the 2012 National Convention and is in his second year of a three-year term as a member of the Budget and Finance Committee. His efforts to strengthen the Association earned him the prestigious Frank J. McPherson Award in 2012 for exemplifying FRA’s three cardinal principles of Loyalty, Protection and Service.

Shipmate Ippert is a Vietnam veteran who joined the U.S. Navy in 1961 and retired as a master chief in 1986. He holds a bachelor’s degree in business administration from Washburn University and, following his military service, he served for four years as mayor of Mayetta, Kansas. Shipmate Ippert also retired from the U.S. Postal Service as a supervisor of maintenance operations.

PRPSE ROGER MITCHELL
Shipmate Roger Mitchell has been nominated by shipmates of Branch 188 (Tampa, Fla.) to serve as the Association’s National Vice President. A member of FRA since 1985 and a Life Member for more than 20 years, Mitchell has 21 years of experience as a branch president, presiding at Branch 188 and Branch 278 (Huntsville, Ala.). He has also chaired or served as a member of the Southeast Region’s Financial, Youth Activities, Membership and Public Relations Committees. He served with distinction as the Southeast Regional President in 2007–2008 and has also chaired the national Youth Activities Committee. Additionally, he has served on several standing and special committees, and was chairman for the 2010 National Convention in Spartanburg, S.C.

Mitchell served 22 years in the U.S. Navy, enlisting in 1959 and retiring as a CWO-4 in 1981. His military career included participation in the Cuban Missile Crisis blockade, service in Vietnam and involvement in several NASA recovery missions. He earned a bachelor’s degree in Management from Athens State University and worked for a variety of defense contractors for more than 20 years following his Navy career.

PRPNE WILLIAM STARKEY
Shipmates of Branch 57 (South Jersey, N.J.) have nominated PRPNE William “Bill” Starkey to serve as FRA’s National Vice President. Shipmate Starkey has been a member of the Association since 1994 and a Life Member for the past 10 years. He has been an active shipmate at the branch level, serving as treasurer, vice president, president and seven consecutive terms as secretary. He has also shouldered collateral duties as chairman of the Special Audit Committee (1994) and 10 consecutive years as branch parliamentarian. He has also served as regional vice president and president for two separate terms (1999–2001, 2002–2003), regional parliamentarian (2012–2013) and is a member of the Special Bylaws Committee for the merger of the Association’s Northeast and New England Regions. Starkey has served the FRA at the national level by chairing the National Convention Committee (2000) and as a member of the Time and Place and Constitution and By-Laws Committees. His parliamentary expertise also earned him a term as national parliamentarian in 2011–2012.
Invention of the Year!

Difficultly understanding conversations?
Now there’s a simple, invisible and affordable solution

Perfect Choice HD™ is the personal sound amplifier that’s like reading glasses for your ears™!

Over the years, I’ve had more and more trouble understanding what people are saying. I have to get them to repeat themselves over and over… it’s really embarrassing. I found myself avoiding parties and gatherings— even church, where my inability to understand people was a problem. Then a friend told me about Perfect Choice HD™. It’s a small personal sound amplification product that’s simple to use and virtually invisible. It’s like a whole new world’s been opened up to me.

There isn’t anything wrong with my hearing, it’s just that some sounds— conversations, the TV, birds chirping—aren’t loud enough.

Now, this small, battery operated amplifier let’s me turn up the volume when I need it. I can adjust the volume to the level that suits me. Best of all, no one knows I’m wearing it. The battery case sits behind my ear and the clear sound tube carries the amplified sound to the tiny sound bud that rests in my ear canal. It’s comfortable, it doesn’t fill up my ear and, even though it’s small, the controls are easy to use and the battery is simple to change.

“Reading glasses for your ears”

Affordable, Simple to use, Virtually impossible to see

### Why Perfect Choice HD is the best choice!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lightweight / Inconspicuous</th>
<th>Less than 1 ounce</th>
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<tr>
<td>Sound Quality</td>
<td>Excellent – Optimized for speech</td>
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<tr>
<td>Test and Fitting Required</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Free Batteries for Life</td>
<td>Yes, ask for details</td>
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<tr>
<td>One-on-One Personal Set Up</td>
<td>Free</td>
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<tr>
<td>Friendly Return Policy</td>
<td>60 Days</td>
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Top signs that you might benefit from Perfect Choice HD

- People complain that you have the TV or radio turned up too loud
- You ask people to repeat themselves
- You hear conversations but have trouble understanding the words
- Talking on the telephone has become difficult
- People tell you that you talk too loud
- You find yourself avoiding crowded situations like restaurants or parties

Now, thanks to the work of a doctor who leads a renowned hearing institute, you can experience this remarkable product for yourself with our exclusive home trial. If you are not totally satisfied with this product, simply return it within 60 days for a refund of the product purchase price. Call now— or you’ll never know what you’re missing.

“Reading glasses for your ears”

Call now and find out how you can get FREE Batteries for Life! Please mention promotional code 46956.

1-877-726-7516

1998 Ruffin Mill Road
Colonial Heights, VA 23834

Perfect Choice HD is not a hearing aid. If you believe you need a hearing aid, please consult a physician.
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</table>

Names in red indicate 50 year continuous members.
Enjoy A Bath Again... Safely and Affordably

The Designed for Seniors® Walk-In tub is luxurious, feature-packed and affordable

There is nothing like the simple pleasure of taking a warm bath. The cares of the day seem to fade away, along with the aches and pains of everyday life. Unfortunately for many aging Americans with mobility issues, slipping into a bath can result in slipping onto the floor. The fear of falling has made the simple act of bathing and its therapeutic benefits a thing of the past... until now.

firstSTREET, the leader in products Designed for Seniors® has partnered with Jacuzzi®, the company that perfected hydrotherapy. Together, they’ve created a walk-in tub that offers more than just safe bathing, peace-of-mind and independence, it can actually help you feel better.

Unlike traditional bathtubs, our Designed for Seniors® Walk-In Tub features a leak-proof door that allows you to simply step into the tub rather than stepping precariously over the side. It features a state-of-the-art acrylic surface, a raised seat, and the controls are within easy reach. No other Walk-In Tub features the patented Jacuzzi® PointPro™ jet system. These high-volume, low-pressure pumps feature a perfectly balanced water to air ratio to massage thoroughly yet gently. Some swirl, some spiral, some deliver large volumes of water and others target specific pressure points. They are all arranged in precise locations designed to deliver a therapeutic massage, yet they are fully adjustable so that your bathing experience can be completely unique.

Why spend another day wishing you could enjoy the luxury and pain-relieving benefits of a safe, comfortable bath. Call now and you’ll get an unsurpassed limited lifetime warranty. Knowledgeable product experts are standing by to help you learn more about this product. Call Today!

SEE THE DIFFERENCE
Laboratory tests clearly show how Jacuzzi® jets outperform other manufacturers’ jet systems, producing a deeper and wider plume of revitalizing bubbles. Best of all, it doesn’t cost you a penny more!

What To Look For in a Walk-In Tub:

Five major considerations to help make an informed decision before buying a Walk-In Tub:

- **Quality** - A walk-in tub is a major investment. You want to find a quality tub that will last for decades. Look for one that’s 100% leak-proof, mold-resistant, full metal frame construction and one that’s American made.

- **Warranty** - Ask for a lifetime “no leak guarantee” The best tubs offer a lifetime warranty on both the tub and the operating system.

- **Pain Relieving Therapy** - Find a tub that has both water and air jet therapy to soak away your aches and pains preferably with a perfectly balanced water to air mix.

- **Comfort** - Insist on ergonomic design, easy-to-reach controls.

- **Endorsements** - Only consider tubs that are ETL or UL listed. Also look for a tub tested to IAPMO (International Assoc. of Plumbing and Mechanical Officials) standards and that’s USPC (Universal Spa Plumbing Code) Certified.

**Designed For Seniors® Walk-In Tub**

For information call: 

**1-888-959-8723**

Call now Toll-Free and mention your special promotion code 50296.

Third-party financing available with approved credit.

Aging in the Home Remodelers Inc. is neither a broker nor a lender.

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Corpsmen (AAoNHC)  
September 11–15, 2013, Seattle, WA.  
Contact Awtrey Peace, 850-626-1125, pawtrey78@yahoo.com.

Escort Carrier (CVE’s) Sailors & Airmen Association, Inc. and Marine & Naval Air Squadrons, Escorting Destroyers (DD’s) and Destroyer Escorts (DE’s), LHA, LHD, LCS (L)-61, etc.  
October 18–23, 2013, New Castle, DE.  
Contact George Manik, 50 North Island Road, Bayville, NJ 08721-3578, 732-269-0866, georgejmanik@gmail.com.

Marine Corps Air Transport Association  
September 25–28, 2013, Havelock, NC.  
Contact MGYSGT C.J. McQueen, uSMC (Ret.), 252-447-8551, scottie@ec.rr.com.

USS Chenoango (CVE-28)  
September 3–6, 2013, Colorado Springs, CO.  
Contact Larry Lippert, 989-463-1819.

USS Coral Sea (CVA-43) Assoc.  
October 9–13, 2013, Omaha, NE.  
Contact John Ranson, 52 Woodland Pl., Ft. Thomas, KY 41075-1605, 859-250-3727, jrsr3843@fuse.net.

USS Diachenko (APD/LPR-123)  
January 16–18, 2015, Las Vegas, NV.  
Contact Walt De Felice, 6302 Lake Athabaska Place, San Diego, CA 92119, 619-592-2189, warla@att.net.

USS Enterprise (CVAN/CVN-65)  
September 4–8, 2013, Denver, CO.  
Contact Robin Spelman, 5315 High St W., Portsmouth, VA 23703, 757-619-1899, robincspelman@gmail.com.

USS Norris (DDE/DD-859)  
September 19–22, 2013, Lancaster, PA.  
Contact Bert Johnson, 6882 King Arthur Dr., Myrtle Beach, SC 29588, 843-650-2078, Suncruiser62@yahoo.com.

USS Observation Island (AG-154)  
January 14–15, 2014, Cocoa Beach, FL.  
Contact Dave Campbell, obsisland154@outlook.com.

VFMA-115 Reunion Association  
November 7–10, 2013, Beaufort, SC.  
Contact Van Mccarty, 601-483-6984, vanmac@bellsouth.net.

VP-5  
October 17–20, 2013, Orange Park, FL.  
Contact Nick Mulich, 6440 Harlow Blvd., Jacksonville, FL 32210, 904-333-2890, nicknjax@gmail.com.

WAVES National, Women of the Sea Services  
November 1–3, 2013, Ocean City, NJ.  
Contact Jeanne Lemasters, 1723 S. Bancroft St., Philadelphia, PA 19145-2204, 215-582-3390, YNC4404@aol.com.

Looking for…

USS Rushmore (LSD-47) Shipmates  
Retirees who served on USS Rushmore (LSD-47), please contact HTC (DV)  
McQueen, USMC (Ret.), 252-447-8551, scottie@ec.rr.com.

Sailors Who Joined the Navy on the Buddy Plan  
Six high school buddies joined the Navy under the Buddy Plan in June of 1956, served together and have stayed in touch ever since. Are there any other Sailors who joined under the Buddy Plan? Please contact Jack E. Steptoe, USN (Ret.) at the5steptoes@windstream.net.

Lt. Melanie White  
She was stationed at NSGA Charleston, 1982–83.  
Contact Jack Harden, USN (Ret.), at 843-209-0453 or jackrmcss@gmail.com.

USS Badger (DD-126) Crew from 1919 to 1946  
I would like to communicate with officers who stood OOD, JOOD underway and QM’s, BM’s, SM’s and SN who stood bridge watches (helm, e.o.t., etc.) aboard the Destroyer USS Badger DD-126 from 1919 to 1946. I am looking for photographs or descriptions of the pilot house and the after main deck emergency steering station. Please contact QMCS John Trail, USN (Ret.), at 4811 106th St. NE, Marysville, Washington 98270, craftmastere8@comcast.net or 360-348-1102.

Richard “Dick” Schultz  
Stationed with me at NVSSUPPACT Saigon and retired as CM1 or CMC. Last known duty location was in Las Cruces, NM.  
Contact Chuck Riley at seabeechuck@verizon.net or 302-798-4016.

USS Alstede (AF-48) Cruise Book from 1966 to 1968  
Contact Lester “Jake” Humphrey at 4089 Jones Hollow Rd., Lobelville, TN 37097 or 931-593-3960.

Karl Kahze (wife, Noni)  
Last known duty station was Oceana Naval Air Station, attached to Fighter Squadron 84 onboard USS Franklin Delano Roosevelt (CVA-42). Please contact Guadalupe Rios at 1300 Dartmouth Circle, Virginia Beach, VA 23464-4606 or 757-313-5374.
We were there when you landed on the northern coast of France.
We were there when you returned to the Philippine shore.
We were there when you fought in Korea and Vietnam.
We were there when you rolled across the deserts of Iraq.
We were there then. We will always be there.

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**BRANCH 136 MINNEAPOLIS, MINN.**

Shipmate Gene Jarnagin (far r) presents a $6,259 check to Veterans on the Lake Resort director, Mike Neubarth. Shipmates (l to r) Sam Mongiat and Donn Steffenson also helped with the fundraising effort and are among the many shipmates who’ve volunteered more than 3,000 hours to maintaining and improving the handicap-accessible resort. Visit www.veteransonthelakeresort.com for more information.

**BRANCH 269 GOOSE CREEK, S.C.**

FS3 Kamrin Singletary, USCG, was recently inducted into the FRA by his grandfather Larry Cox.

**BRANCH 162 NEW ORLEANS, LA.**

Zhane Gustavis received a $25 gift card for being the most improved student at the Mt. Zion Baptist Church tutoring program. Shown (l to r) are Shipmate Frank Payne Jr., tutor and Branch Youth Activities chairman; James Tillman, tutor; Ms. Gustavis and Rev. Noily Paul Jr.

**BRANCH 146 JOHNsville, PA.**

Shipmates presented FRA medals to Navy Jr. ROTC cadets for their participation in the FRA Essay Contest. Pictured (l to R) are Shipmate Joe Millman; Cadet Sean Gregory, 12th Grade winner; Cadet Lance Kokonos, 10th Grade winner; LCDR Robert Hayman, Senior Naval Instructor; and Cadet Daniel Kelly, 11th Grade winner.

**Correction**

A photo in the June News From the Branches section was incorrectly attributed to Branch 238 in Plover, Wisc. Shipmates from Branch 221 in Peoria, Ill., presented PRPNW John Ippert with a photo of the USS New Jersey (BB-62).
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.
A Message from Regional President North Central Teresa Norton

IT IS A REAL blessing to belong to an organization such as ours. We enjoy fellowship with each other and reach out to each other, to those in need, especially veterans, in order to make this world a better place. It has been both an honor and a humbling experience to be President of the North Central Region of the Auxiliary of the Fleet Reserve Association.

The North Central Region continues to work diligently at upholding the principles of our organization. We have units donating time, money and energy in their communities and abroad to help the underprivileged in many ways. They also take the time to check in on our shut-in members and see what their needs may be. This has maintained a climate of Loyalty, Protection, and Service.

The list of projects that units are involved in is lengthy. It includes: volunteering at veterans’ homes, nursing homes and hospitals; helping to deliver Meals on Wheels, making quilts for the Ronald McDonald House, donating to homeless and battered women's shelters, putting together backpacks for needy school children, packing toiletry bags for the homeless, sending manufacturer coupons to military families overseas, buying and wrapping presents to give at Christmas parties they throw for children's homes, donating items to St. Jude's Hospital, giving to and performing deeds for various charities. New and creative ideas for projects are created every year. We are having a wonderful time!

Our National President’s Project, “America's VetDogs” provides a wonderful way to show gratitude to our community of disabled veterans. Please continue to support this awesome cause.

By the time this article is printed, our Midyear Conference and Regional Convention will be history. I trust all who attended had a good time. I can speak for us all in the North Central Region when I say that we cherish the time we spend with our fellow Shipmates and Auxiliary members at convention and any time! Thank you all for coming! We'll see you at National in Chattanooga!
ATTENTION:  
U.S. NAVY VETERANS

MESOTHELIOMA  
COMPENSATION CLAIMS  
FILING DEADLINE

U.S. Navy veterans have been exposed to asbestos onboard ships and many have developed mesothelioma lung cancer as a result. Millions of dollars in compensation are available for those who have been diagnosed with mesothelioma lung cancer and their loved ones. Thousands of US Navy veterans have already received compensation. Strict time deadlines may bar late claims. If you or a loved one has been diagnosed with mesothelioma then you need to call now for a free consultation and Claims Information & Evaluation Package.

CALL NOW TOLL FREE!

1-888-310-2138

NAVY VETERANS MESOTHELIOMA CLAIMS HOTLINE

Sponsored by Quinn Law Firm. Nationwide representation of US NAVY Veterans and their families in mesothelioma claims. In home appointments are available nationwide by appointment only. Fees, costs, and expenses are charged only against any recovery that is made. No recovery – no fee. We do not sue the U.S. or Navy. Principal office Fort Worth, TX
MESOTHELIOMA
ASBESTOS LUNG CANCER
AND RETIRED SAILORS

Many sailors were exposed to asbestos onboard ships in the U.S. Navy. This asbestos exposure often causes lung cancer much later in life. Mesothelioma is a particular form of lung cancer that is only caused by exposure to asbestos.

FREE INITIAL LEGAL CONSULTATION
If you or a loved one has been diagnosed with MESOTHELIOMA OR ASBESTOS LUNG CANCER, please call us immediately to find out about the compensation you may be entitled to recover.
We provide retired sailors and their families with a free no obligation initial legal consultation with an experienced lawyer.
We represent clients from all 50 states.

NO RISK TO CLIENTS
Our clients are never at risk of paying any fees, costs or expenses out of pocket. All legal fees, court costs and other expenses are paid by the client only out of any judgment or settlement in the case.

DON’T LOSE YOUR RIGHTS!
Your legal claims must be filed within the time period allowed by law or you and your family members will lose all of your rights to recover against the corporations that are responsible for your injuries. CALL NOW!

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LeRoy Riddell
1935 - 2008
U.S. Navy Retired
Member of VFW, DAV, American Legion and the Fleet Reserve
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