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FRAtoday



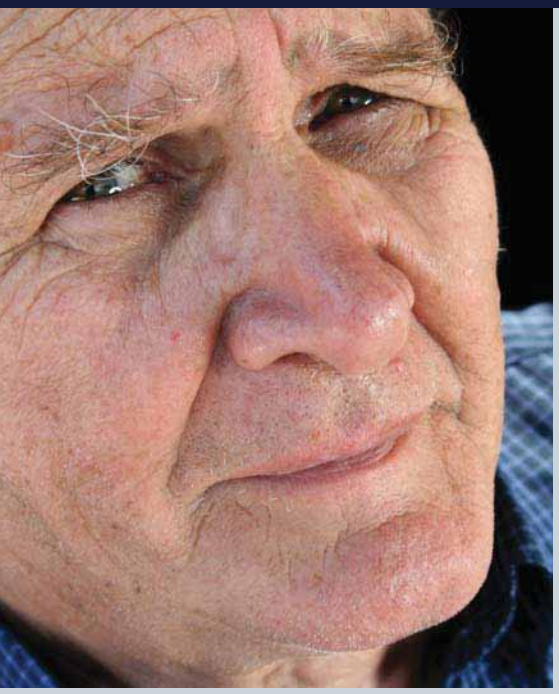
USMC Silent Drill Platoon

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Between 60 and 100 Marines start the four-month training program at the Silent Drill School (SDS) each November. Less than two dozen will meet the rigid standards to become members of the SDP.

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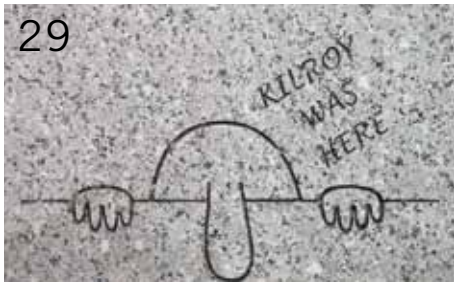
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LOYALTY, PROTECTION AND SERVICE

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 Silent Drill Platoon (SDP) has demonstrated their unique display of discipline, precision and espirit d'corps since 1948 — exemplifying the very tenets of the United States Marine Corps. U.S. Marine Corps photo by Pfc. Daniel Boothe.



Eileen Murphy

Help Recruit

RECENTLY AN EMAIL CAMPAIGN went to all shipmates for whom we have email addresses, asking for assistance with recruiting FRA members. FRA is the oldest and largest Association representing Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard enlisted personnel. The work we do is essential — and the larger we are, the louder we are all heard. We need your help to grow!

Shipmates who are recruited by other members are generally more active in the Association, are more likely to renew their memberships, and tend to recruit other shipmates as well. FRA NHQ understands this and has created a wonderful tool to help you recruit more FRA shipmates!



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- Offer a way for prospective members to request FREE items from FRA such as:
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  - *NewsBytes* (weekly legislative email update)
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FRA has many ways to win valuable recruiting awards. Show your support for FRA and be rewarded by having grown the Association, making new friends and receiving prestigious and valuable awards. To learn more about recruiting awards, please visit www.fra.org/awards.

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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VOLUME 91 NUMBER 11

Salute the NAVY MEN'S FLEECE JACKET

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BACK

FRONT

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Joe Barnes

A Leg Up on the Lame Duck

BEFORE THE 85TH NATIONAL Convention, FRA weighed in with House and Senate leaders regarding the pending FY 2013 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) in anticipation of the upcoming post-election "lame duck" session of Congress which convenes after Veterans Day. According to press reports only a short amount of debate time — perhaps only three days — may be allocated to the Senate version of the legislation when the Senate reconvenes on November 13 for an extremely jam-packed session. Normally Senate debate involves considering hundreds of amendments over at least a three-week time frame.

The Congressional calendar is much different this year due to partisan gridlock on Capitol Hill and the abbreviated election-year legislative calendar associated with the November 6 elections. And once the Senate finishes its NDAA, conference deliberations are expected to commence immediately to resolve differences between that bill and the House version of the legislation leaving little time to effectively weigh in with conferees.

The letter references priority issues for our members that include strong support for several high priority matters — including support for a less-costly pharmacy fee plan endorsed by the House, and opposition to establishing a special commission to review retired pay and perhaps other benefits, a proposal supported by the Senate Armed Services Committee. Among other issues, the Association strongly supports a 1.7% 2013 active duty pay hike and is very concerned about Navy end strength reductions.

FRA is also urging support for anticipated amendments to the Senate legislation addressing full concurrent receipt for all disabled military retirees and eliminating the SBP/DIC offset when the Senate bill is finally scheduled for floor debate and final approval by that body.

The Military Coalition has also finalized an extensive package that includes a cover letter and multi-page side-by-side matrix chart listing key personnel provisions addressed in House-passed, and Senate Armed Services Committee-approved NDAA for FY 2013. Coalition recommendations are also listed with each issue.

In addition to addressing support for the House pharmacy fee plan and strong opposition to the BRAC-like military retirement and compensation commission, the Coalition urges conferees to retain a provision of the House bill expressing a "Sense of Congress" recognizing the "unique and extraordinary demands inherent in a multi-decade service career (which) constitute a very large prepaid premium for their career health benefits."

Members of our Legislative Team will also join reps from the Coalition's other 33 member organizations for visits to members of Congress on Capitol Hill in late October distributing point papers urging support for the House pharmacy co-pay plan and opposition to the military retirement/compensation commission in advance of the lame duck session. This effort is similar to our leadership Hill visits in conjunction with the annual mid-year National Board of Directors meeting each spring.

MEETING WITH VA UNDER SECRETARY FOR BENEFITS

Along with several other TMC leaders, I had the opportunity to meet recently with retired USAF BGen Allison Hickey, the Department of Veterans Affairs Under Secretary for Benefits, and eight senior executive service leaders who oversee key VA programs. All attendees expressed a strong commitment to improving service to our Nation's veterans and the agenda included reports on significant efforts within the department to identify solutions and implement new processes to reduce the increasing VA claims backlog. These initiatives include expanding use of new technology and a recently announced three-part segmented process to speed the handling of similar claims. Other reports included benefits assistance services including the EBenefits program (www.eBenefits.va.org), pension, fiduciary and survivors support, administering GI Bill education benefits, veterans' training and employment initiatives, the new Transition Assistance Program (TAP), VA home loans, compensation services and VA / DoD collaboration efforts. Looking ahead, Secretary Hickey announced plans for subsequent quarterly meetings with TMC organizations to improve communications with these groups and expand awareness on VA programs and support.

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

Do TRICARE Fee Increases Offset COLAs?

I have been a FRA member since 2009 and am a big supporter of FRA. I try to promote the organization every chance I have.

I do have a nagging question that I hope you can help answer. I understand that my annual TRICARE Prime family enrollment fee will increase on October 1, 2012 to $538.56 as a result of the FY 2012 NDAA, but will the enrollment fees increase every year afterwards?

From what I have read in *FRA Today*, it sounds like there will be an annual increase in TRICARE Prime enrollment fees that will be capped at the same percentage increase as the retired annual Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA). Am I correct in this statement? If this is correct, can we have an article in a future *FRA Today* publication that clearly states retirees will no longer see a COLA because all future COLA increases will automatically go towards the annual increase in the TRICARE Prime enrollment fee?

Albert Succi

FRA Response: *You're correct that annual fees for retirees increased on October 1, 2012, and you're also correct that TRICARE Prime fees will be adjusted annually in the future by the amount of inflation as measured by the Consumer Price Index (CPI). This is the same index used to calculate annual cost of living adjustments (COLAs) for military retired pay and other inflation adjusted benefits.*

It is not, however, accurate to say that military retirees won't receive COLAs. The percentage increase in retired pay and TRICARE premiums will be the same, but that percentage is applied to different amounts. For example, let's assume your military retired pay is $18,000/year and you're paying $538.56/year for TRICARE Prime family coverage. If the CPI formula determines that both retired pay and healthcare premiums will increase by two percent, your retired pay would go up by $360/year, while your TRICARE premium would increase by $10.77/year.

FRA as a Resource

I filled in your readership survey, but have to add that my main FRA [source] is Newsbytes! Always read that and always forward to many of my military friends!

You all do one great job!! Thanks!!

FRA Response: *Thanks for that feedback. We're glad it's helpful to you. We will soon be changing NewsBytes' format a bit to make it even better.*

Please also let your friends know that if they would like, NewsBytes is available by phone at 1-800-372-1924 ext 112, and is updated weekly.

Make Your Voice Heard

I am one of many, many youngsters from the many … shall we say … "poor towns" across this great country. I was born and raised in a small coal mining town in Pennsylvania. There weren't many opportunities there and college was out of the question. I remember distinctly being told to join the Navy, stay 20 and you'll be taken care of with a pension and medical care.

After high school graduation in 1948, I went in town to see the CPO recruiter, who only came to town on Mondays. I signed up and stayed. The Navy was my opportunity. The Navy was my college. The Navy was my access to the world. I will always be grateful to the Navy, as will so many small "poor town" boys who did the same.

Medicare and TRICARE-for-Life are good; no complaints. These two medical benefits have never been 100 percent, nor will they ever be. But we must not let it deteriorate beyond a certain level.

FRA is making a good stand for us. They are the Washington connection for us. Let me ask you FRA members: When was the last time you wrote a congressman about protecting our earned benefits?

Bill Baxter

FRA Response: *Sharing your views with your elected officials is the foundation of FRA's grassroots advocacy and strengthens our collective voice on Capitol Hill. It's easy when you use FRA's online Action Center at www.fra.org, where you can find prewritten messages to lawmakers or you can craft your own. Shipmates can also stay connected with their elected officials using FRA's* Communicate With Your Elected Officials, *a useful guide to the 112th Congress. This free booklet includes a directory of all members of the House and Senate, as well as helpful tips on effectively expressing concerns to lawmakers. To request your free copy, send an e-mail to teresa@fra.org with your name, mailing address, rank and branch of service or call 1-800-FRA-1924.*

FRA Tradition Ends in the Southwest Region

Branch 77 (Tucson, Ariz.) has announced the discontinuation of the USS Arizona Memorial Service at the University of Arizona. The ceremony, held annually on or near December 7th, paid tribute to the shipmates lost when the USS Arizona (BB-39) was bombed at Pearl Harbor in 1941.

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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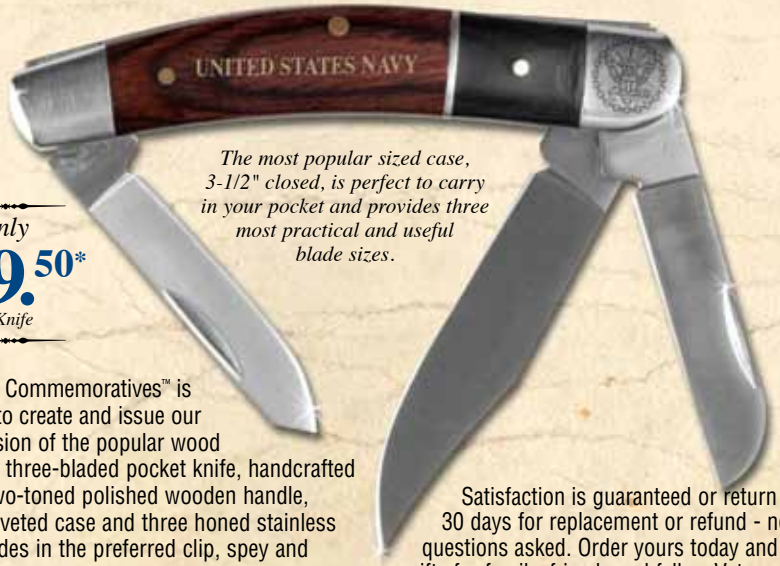
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John Davis

Busy Lame Duck Session

AS THIS ISSUE OF *FRA Today* reaches our shipmates, members of Congress are planning to return to Washington for a post-election lame duck session, which begins on November 13th. (Congress convening after an election and before the newly elected/reelected President and members of Congress are sworn into office in January is known as a "lame duck" session.) The agenda of must-pass legislation is lengthy and FRA is tracking a number of initiatives during this abbreviated session.

Delaying implementation of sequestration (automatic defense cuts) mandated by the 2011 Budget Control Act is a top FRA priority, along with halting a 27-percent reduction in reimbursement rates for doctors treating Medicare and TRICARE patients ("doc fix"), which are scheduled to take effect on January 1, 2013. Further, FRA is also advocating prompt passage of the Senate version of the FY 2013 Defense Authorization bill, so a conference committee can resolve differences between it and the House version that was passed on May 18th. Once approved by both chambers, the resulting conference report will be sent to the White House for the President's signature.

Congress passed a six-month continuing resolution (CR) that keeps the government operating at FY 2012 funding levels (with some exceptions) through March 27, 2013, so the unresolved spending bills can wait until the 113th Session of Congress convenes in January.

Members are urged to use the FRA Action Center at www.fra.org to contact their elected officials on these important issues.

TMC Honors Lawmakers, Congressional Staff

The Military Coalition (TMC) presented its annual Awards of Merit to Sen. Patty Murray (Wash.) and Rep. Howard "Buck" McKeon (Calif.) in a Capitol Hill ceremony in early October, honoring their respective efforts on behalf of the uniformed services community. TMC also presented Freedom Awards to Carrie Wofford and Jeanette James, congressional staff members, for their significant work on issues important to military personnel.

Sen. Murray chairs the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee and worked tirelessly on the Vow to Hire Heroes Act and to ensure the nation honors its commitments to veterans and their families. Rep. McKeon, who chairs the House Armed Services Committee, was recognized for taking the lead in addressing the potentially devastating effects of sequestration spending cuts to the Department of Defense and protecting military families and retirees from disproportional TRICARE fee hikes. Ms. Wofford is the senior counsel to the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee and was instrumental in efforts to halt predatory practices of some colleges with regard to veterans' GI-Bill benefits. Ms. James, who is the lead healthcare analyst for the House Armed Services Committee, worked closely with the Congressional Budget Office on a multi-year TRICARE-for-Life (TFL) pharmacy demonstration that will, if enacted, generate adequate savings to minimize pharmacy copays for TFL beneficiaries in 2013 and beyond.

FRA is a leading member of TMC, which is currently comprised of 34 military and veterans groups that work together to advance legislation beneficial to military personnel, veterans, families and survivors. Joe Barnes, FRA's national executive director, co-chairs the Coalition and a number of FRA staff members serve in TMC leadership positions.


Photo by Ryan Gallucci

House Armed Services Committee staff member Jeanette James accepts the 2012 TMC Freedom Award.

VETERANS ISSUES

FRA Meets with House Leaders

In separate meetings FRA and other military and veterans' organizations participated in roundtable discussions hosted by House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (Calif.) and House Veterans Affairs Committee (HVAC) Chairman Jeff Miller (Fla.) to discuss laws and policies that affect military personnel and veterans.

During the meeting with Rep. Pelosi, FRA asked legislators to step up efforts to reduce the backlog of unresolved disability claims at the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), exclude the Department of Defense (DoD) from sequestration (automatic budget cuts that take effect January 1, 2013) and enact legislation (H.R. 812, H.R. 3612) that would allow Vietnam veterans who served offshore (so-called "blue water" vets) to make disability claims for exposure to Agent Orange.

Lawmakers assured the group that veterans' benefits will not be impacted by sequestration, but they could not guarantee that TRICARE benefits would not be reduced or that enrollment fees would not be increased.

NED Joe Barnes attended the meeting of 22 military and veterans' organizations with Chairman Miller and other members of the HVAC that focused on priority veterans' concerns, including the urgent need to expand access to mental health providers and reduce the claims backlog. The impact of the six-month continuing resolution (CR, see page 8) on veterans' programs was also addressed and, fortunately, the advance funding for 2013 VA health care programs will not be affected. Other issues included the importance of increasing awareness of suicide prevention programs and sorely needed veterans' employment initiatives.

IG Condemns VA Conferences

Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Office of Inspector General (IG) released a report in early October indicating a lack of oversight by senior VA officials regarding two training conferences for VA employees in 2011. The investigation of conferences in Orlando, Fla., where more than 1,800 VA employees were in attendance, concluded that Assistant Secretary for Human Resources and Administration John Sepulveda, who recently resigned, "abdicated his oversight responsibilities resulting in numerous examples of excessive costs and unnecessary expenditures."

Rep. Jeff Miller (Fla.), chairman of the House Veterans Affairs Committee, and Chairwoman of the Senate VA Committee Patty Murray (Wash.) condemned the wasteful spending and called for better oversight. The VA announced it has taken immediate action to address the issues outlined in the IG report to strengthen oversight and improve accountability.

GAO: Disability System Needs Better Management

The Government Accountability Office (GAO) recently released a report (GAO-12-676) on the Integrated Disability Evaluation System (IDES), established by the Department of Defense (DoD) and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). The system has been gradually implemented since 2007 in an effort to accelerate the adjudication of benefit claims for injured service members.

Despite the goal of determining VA claims in 125 days with 98 percent accuracy by 2015, claims adjudication time has increased from an average of 283 days for active duty claims in FY 2008 to 394 days in FY 2011. Only 19 percent of active duty claims were adjudicated within 125 days or less in FY 2011. DoD and VA are working to streamline and improve IDES, but the report notes that it is too early to determine if these efforts are successful.

FRA has repeatedly expressed concern about the growing backlog of VA disability claims in congressional testimony, meetings with legislators and their staff, and interaction with DoD and VA leaders. Military personnel injured in service to their country deserve accurate, consistent and timely disability determinations.

Executive Order to Improve Mental Health for Vets, Troops and Families

President Obama signed an Executive Order aimed at reducing suicides and improving mental health services for veterans, active duty personnel and their families. The order requires the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to increase the capacity of its Veterans Crisis Hotline by 50 percent to ensure that veterans who present a danger to themselves or others are connected with a trained mental health professional within 24 hours. The order allows VA to refer veterans in need of immediate mental health care to the TRICARE network, directs the VA and the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to expand outreach efforts to service members and veterans, and fill all vacancies for mental health staff positions. The Departments of Defense (DoD) and VA are also required to establish an inter-agency task force to coordinate their efforts, and VA and HHS will establish at least 15 pilot programs involving community-based health providers to expand mental health services in areas not well served by VA.

As many as 18 veterans are committing suicide daily and long waits for mental health care services reported at some VA facilities across the country are a major concern for FRA, along with the growing backlog of unresolved VA disability claims.

In related news, the 2012 National Strategy for Suicide Prevention report was recently released and details a national strategy for reducing the number of suicides that includes community-based approaches. The report, prepared by the U.S. Surgeon General and the National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention, specifies new ways to identify people at risk.

continued on page 10

VETERANS ISSUES

Warrior Family Symposium

Chairman of the House Veterans Affairs Committee Jeff Miller (Fla.) and retired Army General Eric Shinseki, Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), served as the two keynote speakers at the 2012 Warrior Family Symposium. This all-day event was hosted by the Military Officers Association of America (MOAA) and the National Defense Industry Association.

The symposium featured wounded warriors, family members and caregivers recounting their varied experiences, challenges, and triumphs on their road to recovery and transition. These first-hand accounts will hopefully lead to the further enhancement and refinement of programs and services that benefit wounded warriors and their families. Medical-disability benefits, care coordination, family-caregiver support, and the transition to civilian employment were also discussed.

The symposium, attended by FRA staff, demonstrated that more work needs to be done to ensure that the nation's wounded warriors receive the best treatment available in a timely manner. The goal of a truly seamless transition from DoD to VA healthcare programs is a top FRA priority along with ensuring adequate funding for DoD and VA resource sharing in delivering quality medical services to wounded or injured personnel.



Photo by Huntstock_Images/istockphoto.com

Veteran Job Corps Fails in Senate, Other Bills Advance



Photo by Ioan Nicolae/shutterstock.com

The Senate was two votes short of the 60 needed (i.e. cloture motion) to end debate and force a vote on the "Veterans Jobs Corps Act" (S. 3457) that would help put veterans back to work as police officers, firefighters, and other first responders. Sponsored by Senator Bill Nelson (Fla.), the bill sought to authorize veterans' training and hiring programs associated with restoring and protecting national, state and tribal forests, parks, coastal areas, wildlife refuges, and VA cemeteries.

The Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee (SVAC) did, however, approve several other measures to expand veterans' access to mental health care (S. 3340) and authorize a cost-of-living increase to disabled veterans and their survivors who collect benefits (S. 2259). Other SVAC-approved bills include:

- S. 3322, sponsored by Sen. Sherrod Brown (Ohio), seeks to clarify certain provisions in the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act (SCRA) and improve enforcement measures.
- S. 3313, sponsored by SVAC Chairwoman Patty Murray (Wash.), would increase Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) reproductive assistance programs to wounded veterans and their spouses.
- S. 2241, sponsored by SVAC Chairwoman Patty Murray (Wash.), would require the VA to provide information on the use of educational assistance to service members and veterans.
- S. 1707, sponsored by SVAC Ranking Member Richard Burr (N.C.), would require a judicial authority to determine whether a VA beneficiary poses a danger to himself or herself before being barred from owning a gun.

The House also approved legislation (H.R. 4057) that requires the VA to provide detailed information about the educational institutions a veteran is planning to attend with VA educational benefits. The FRA-supported measure, sponsored Rep. Gus Bilirakis (Fla.), also requires the VA to establish a registry for troops exposed to toxic chemicals from burn pits while deployed in Afghanistan and Iraq. Further the bill limits performance bonuses for VA employees beginning in FY 2013 through FY 2017. The bill now goes to the Senate for further consideration.

The House Financial Services Committee also approved the "Vulnerable Veterans Housing Act" (H.R. 6361) that would not count benefit payments made to veterans for in-home disability care as income when they apply for housing programs through the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The bill, sponsored by Rep. Cathy McMorris-Rogers (Wash.), will now be considered by the full House.

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RETIREE ISSUES

DoD Wants to Reprogram TRICARE Funds



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Despite efforts to significantly increase military retiree health care fees, Defense Comptroller Robert Hale has requested permission from Congress to allow the Department of Defense (DoD) to transfer $708 million from the 2012 TRICARE budget to pay for other programs. Rep. Joe Wilson (S.C.) chairman of the House Armed Services' Military Personnel Subcommittee, sent a letter cosigned by more than two dozen committee members to Defense Secretary Leon Panetta asking why DoD continues to ask for increases in TRICARE enrollment fees, if there is a "surplus" of $708 million in the fund and advised Panetta that, as subcommittee chairman, he will oppose the re-programming request.

Retirees and Annuitants Getting 1099-R by Mail

The Defense Finance and Accounting Services (DFAS) reminds beneficiaries to make sure the mailing address on file with DFAS is current, particularly if they wish to receive their end-of-the-year 1099-R by regular mail. If beneficiaries have moved in the past year or will be staying somewhere other than their primary residence when tax season begins, they should let DFAS know so tax documents can be sent to the right place.

Beneficiaries also have the option of receiving their tax statement weeks earlier if they elect to receive it electronically via myPay, DFAS's online portal. Find out how to switch to electronic 1099-R by visiting: www.dfas.mil/retiredmilitary/newsevents/newsletter/wanttoconvert.html

OMB Report on Sequestration

The White House Office of Management and Budget (OMB) released a report detailing the impact of the automatic budget cuts (sequestration) that will go into effect January 1, 2013, unless Congress takes action to stop them. The cuts are mandated by the 2011 Budget Control Act and the White House referred to them as "deeply destructive … to core government functions, but [we] will be forced to make these cuts unless Congress acts responsibly."

The nearly 400-page report confirms that "military personnel accounts" are exempt from sequestration cuts and clearly states that active duty/Reserve pay, military retired pay, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), and Medicare-eligible health care (TRICARE-for-Life) are exempt from the automatic cuts. The report cites potentially deep cuts ($3.27 billion) to the Defense Health Program, but does not detail the impact, if any, on TRICARE Prime and Standard.

The OMB report fulfills requirements of the "Sequestration Transparency Act of 2012" (P.L.-112-155) and includes a disclaimer that "the estimates are preliminary." If sequestration occurs, results could be different from OMB predictions. Rep. Howard "Buck" McKeon (Calif.), chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, criticized the report, stating that it shows a lack of planning and "failed to comply with both the letter and the spirit of the law."

TRICARE Prime Fee Hike

TRICARE Prime enrollment fees for retirees and their families increased to $269.28 for individual retirees and $538.56 for retirees and their family members, effective October 1, 2012. Survivors of active duty deceased sponsors, medically retired service members and their dependents are exempt from these increases and active duty service members and their families continue to have access to TRICARE Prime with no enrollment fee.

Prime beneficiaries who enrolled before October 1, 2011, did not incur the 13-percent fee increases imposed on new enrollees who joined the program after that date. The increases that took effect October 1, 2012, reflect the 13-percent increase that was levied on new enrollees last year, plus a 3.1-percent increase that is equal to the annual cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) for 2013. Specific changes include:

- Those who enrolled before October 1, 2011, were paying $230/year for individuals and $460/year for families.
- Those who enrolled on or after October 1, 2011, were paying $260/year for individuals and $520/year for families.
- After October 1, 2012, all Prime beneficiaries (except those exempted) will pay $269.28/year for individuals and $538.56/year for families.

Beneficiaries can opt to pay their enrollment fee monthly, quarterly or annually. To make changes, visit the TRICARE website at www.tricare.mil or call the representative for your TRICARE region:

- North Region/HealthNet Federal Services – 1-877-874-2273
- South Region/Humana Military Healthcare Services – 1-800-444-5445
- West Region/TriWest Healthcare Alliance – 1-888-874-9378

DFAS Requires Direct Deposit

The U.S. Treasury Department has mandated that the Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS) use only direct deposit when sending payments to retirees and annuitants beginning on March 1, 2013. Direct deposit eliminates the possibility of a lost or stolen check, reduces the opportunity for identity theft, and provides payment in a more timely and efficient manner. Although most beneficiaries already have direct deposit, DFAS urges the small number who are still using regular mail to set up direct deposit with their bank or financial institution now to avoid the last-minute rush in February. For more information, visit www.dfas.mil.

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ACTIVE DUTY/RESERVE ISSUES

House Passes New Stolen Valor Act



The House of Representatives overwhelmingly passed a modified "Stolen Valor Act" (H.R. 1775) in response to a U.S. Supreme Court decision (United States v. Alvarez) handed down in July. The court declared the original "Stolen Valor Act of 2005" unconstitutional, saying that false claims of military service and awards were protected as free speech. Rep. Joe Heck (Nev.) sponsored the current bill that establishes a more narrow focus than the 2005 law and would make it a crime to lie about having received decorations with the intent of obtaining "anything of value." Many scholars believe this more narrowly focused bill will pass constitutional review since its impact is limited to individuals who benefit from fictional accounts of military service.

Rep. Heck's bill was introduced last year and Senator Scott Brown (Mass.) has introduced the Senate companion bill (S. 1728). The House bill now awaits further consideration in the Senate. Senator James Webb (Va.) has also introduced similar legislation ("Military Service Integrity Act," S. 3372) and plans to offer the bill as a floor amendment to the Senate version of the FY 2013 Defense Authorization Act (S. 3254).

FVAP Hearing

The House Armed Services' Military Personnel Subcommittee recently conducted an oversight hearing on military absentee voting that included a status report on implementation of the 2009 Military Overseas Voting Empowerment Act (MOVE).

Subcommittee Chairman Joe Wilson (S.C.) referenced a recent Inspector General (IG) report that found a shortfall in DoD's MOVE-mandated requirements to establish Voting Assistance Offices (VAO) at military installations. A Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) post-2010 election report to Congress last September indicated there were 224 such installations, but Ambassador (Ret.) Kenneth P. Moorefield, Deputy DoD IG for Special Plans and Operations, testified that some major installations were omitted.

FVAP reported that the number of states that e-mail blank ballots to absentee voters has increased from 13 in 2008 to 47 in this election cycle. The three states that do not provide this option do, however, offer voters the ability to download a blank ballot from a secure website. FVAP hosts a web portal that allows voters to obtain state-specific information on absentee voting rules and deadlines, sent e-mail messages to 1.4 million overseas voters and has provided 81 workshops for Voter Assistance Officers (VAO) at military installations and embassies.

FRA strongly supported the MOVE Act, which removed many obstacles to voting by mandating all absentee paper ballots be mailed at least 45 days in advance, making electronic ballots available for downloading, eliminating the requirement for absentee ballots to be notarized or witnessed, and expanding the acceptance of Federal Write-In Absentee Ballots. Unfortunately, 22 states still fail to comply with all four of these requirements and FRA continues to support all efforts that streamline the voting process for military and overseas voters. FRA urges all military personnel to vote regularly.

Stevens Becomes 13th MCPON

FRA congratulates FORCM Michael Stevens who recently became the 13th Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy (MCPON) during a change of watch ceremony where he relieved MCPON-12 Rick West, who retired after nearly 32 years of Navy service. Stevens, who previously served as the Fleet Master Chief for U.S. Fleet Forces Command, is a Montana native and joined the Navy in 1983.

The position of MCPON was created by legislation in 1966 that was strongly supported by FRA. MCPON is the senior enlisted member of the U.S. Navy and is appointed by the CNO to serve as an advisor to the highest positions in the Navy on issues impacting enlisted personnel.



U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Peter D. Lawlor

Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) Adm. Jonathan Greenert speaks at the change of office and retirement ceremony of Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy (MCPON) Rick West, the 12th MCPON, and incoming MCPON Michael Stevens, the 13th MCPON.

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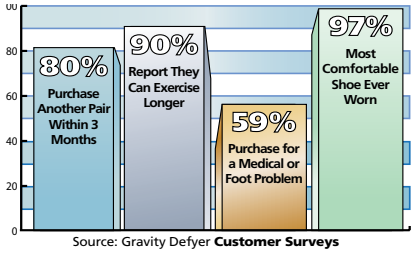


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Understanding the Legislative Process

Lawmakers in the 111th Congress introduced more than 10,600 bills, yet only about 300 were actually enacted into law. The process by which a bill becomes a law can be fraught with filibusters, funding challenges and a variety of other legislative hurdles. Here's a brief summary of the legislative process and how you can play an active role in it:

Ideas for new laws originate from many sources, but only a member of Congress can introduce legislation. Constituents, either as individuals or through organizations such as FRA, may ask or "petition" legislators to introduce a bill. FRA sends an annual legislative agenda to Capitol Hill and frequently meets with lawmakers and their staff to propose legislation that will benefit our members.

Once legislation is introduced, it is referred to the committee or committees with jurisdiction over the subject of the bill. A committee will usually pass the legislation on to a subcommittee, which is smaller and has a more narrow focus than the full committee.

The subcommittee can amend, or "mark-up," the legislation to make it more specific or address specific concerns. When the mark-up is complete, the final version of the bill is voted on by the subcommittee. If the bill fails to get a majority vote in subcommittee, it dies. If the measure is approved by the subcommittee, it is sent back to the full committee, or "reported out." The full committee may further amend the measure or vote on it as it was approved by the subcommittee.

During this process, committees and subcommittees conduct hearings to facilitate a full and open discussion about a pending bill. Witnesses with expertise on the subject at hand are invited to testify about the merits and shortcomings of a particular bill, either in person or in writing. FRA is regularly invited to share its views during hearings and in written statements presented to the committee or subcommittee holding the hearings. This discussion often results in improvements to a bill or in the eventual defeat of the measure if it's determined to be an unwise proposal.

If approved at the committee level, the bill is reported out to the House or Senate and is placed on the House or Senate calendar for debate by the full chamber. The House Rules Committee sets the parameters of the debate in that chamber, determining what, if any, floor amendments shall be considered and what length of time will be set aside for floor debate. The Senate has fewer restrictions on floor debate, but any senator can filibuster a bill indefinitely. A filibuster (endless debate on the bill) can be stopped by a cloture vote that requires 60 votes. When debate concludes, the bill is voted on by the full chamber.

Often similar bills move through the House and Senate at the same time. For example, the House and Senate usually have their own versions of the annual defense authorization legislation. After each chamber approves its respective version of the bill, a conference committee is appointed to reconcile the differences between the two bills.

Both chambers must approve identical legislation before it can be sent to the White House for final approval, so it is the conference committee's job to find common ground and draft a compromise measure, or "conference report," that is presented to the House and Senate for a final vote. If approved in both chambers, the bill is sent to the President, where he may do one of the following:

- Sign the bill into law;
- Veto the bill and send it back to Congress with suggested changes;
- Take no action while Congress is in session, in which case the bill will become law in 10 days; or
- Take no action and let the bill die after Congress has adjourned for the session (pocket veto).

If the President vetoes a bill, Congress may override his decision with a two-thirds vote in both chambers (67 votes in the Senate and 290 votes in the House).

GET INVOLVED

It's important for shipmates to remember there is no law protecting their military or veterans benefits. What Congress gives, Congress can take away. FRA was established in 1924 to protect military pay and benefits, and our mission hasn't changed. Today's FRA gives current and former Sea Service enlisted members a voice on Capitol Hill and, now more than ever, shipmates' voices need to be heard. Through our combined efforts, FRA and its members have spoken out to halt health care fee increases, increase pay, significantly improve health care and other benefits, and enhance a variety of quality-of-life programs

The legislative process is complex and heavily influenced by grassroots pressure from advocacy groups like FRA and individuals communicating with their respective members of Congress. There is strength in numbers and this combined approach is more likely to persuade members of Congress to see, and act on, our point of view.

FRA encourages all members to be as informed as possible about legislative initiatives that impact them. In addition to the "On & Off the Hill" section of *FRA Today,* the Association offers several ways shipmates can stay up to date on new bills being introduced and their progress toward enactment.

***NewsBytes*:** *NewsBytes* is FRA's weekly e-mail update that provides a snapshot of what's happening on Capitol Hill. It's distributed each Friday afternoon to subscribers, or shipmates can listen to a recorded version by calling 1-800-FRA-1924, ext. 112. To subscribe, please e-mail newsbytes@fra.org with "Subscribe" in the subject line and your name and address in the body. If you are a member of FRA, please include your member number as well.

continued on page 30


Penny Collins

Starting a New Branch

MANY FRA SHIPMATES JOIN a local branch to participate in projects and programs, and enjoy the fellowship and camaraderie of other members. But what if you wanted to join the FRA and there was no branch in your local community? There are thousands of FRA members-at-large who support the Association's mission and are not affiliated with a particular branch. These and other shipmates are encouraged to establish new branches in communities where none exist.

To start a new branch, a current FRA member must agree to organize the effort and the process begins by requesting a New Branch packet. These packets are available through me at penny@fra.org or by calling 1-800-FRA-1924, ext. 123. There must be interest from at least 25 persons who are eligible for Association membership through their current or previous enlisted service in the U.S. Navy, Marine Corps or Coast Guard. Ten should be new or reinstated members and the remainder may be current members in good standing, either as members of another branch or as MALs.

Members-at-large (MALs) enjoy many of the same benefits of FRA membership as branch members. They are represented in FRA's legislative efforts on behalf of all shipmates, receive *FRA Today* monthly and have access to all member services available through the Association website (www.fra.org) and our National Headquarters. They are not, however, eligible to hold office or vote at convention, and they don't enjoy the opportunities to participate in community service projects and social events traditionally associated with branch membership.

New branches formed in Crossville, Tenn., and Greenville, N.C., are great examples of successful efforts by dedicated shipmates. Shipmate Richard Martin was instrumental in starting Branch 294 in Crossville in 2009. He asked a lot of great questions about the process, including how to advertise the initial meeting, how to contact prospective members and invite them to attend, where to hold the meeting, and what to say about the FRA. Shipmate Martin placed an ad in a local paper announcing the meeting date and location; FRA National Headquarters provided a supply of materials to distribute to prospective members including brochures about the FRA and membership applications. He scheduled subsequent meetings and networked with friends, families and those who expressed initial interest to find more folks interested in joining the FRA. After all the requirements were met, the formal request to form a new branch was submitted to the National President and approved by the National Board of Directors. Crossville Branch 294 was established with 29 members and they currently have 47.

Creating a new FRA branch in a location where none exists breathes new life into the Association and generates a lot of enthusiasm from new prospects.

Past Regional President East Coast Joe Palmer followed similar steps in 2010 to establish Greenville Branch 301. The branch now has 39 members and is active in the local community.

"There are many different elements in starting a new branch," says Shipmate Joseph Smith, who is working to establish a new branch in McMinnville, Tenn. "The meeting place, day and time, refreshments, and most of all getting the word out to prospective members are key to the branch start. There are terms [and policies] to become familiar with, which are all important to getting the branch established." He is working to get the required number of members to start the branch so he can submit the application by the end of 2012.

Creating a new FRA branch in a location where none exists breathes new life into the Association and generates a lot of enthusiasm from new prospects. If you're interested in expanding FRA to new areas, please contact me at Penny@fra.org or 800-FRA-1924, ext.123.

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.





U.S. Marine Corps photo by Pfc. Daniel Boothe

Silent Drill Platoon

The Marine Corps Silent Drill Platoon marches onto the parade ground; the only sound is the cadence of their well-shined shoes in the lush grass. The 24 men, all with crisp dress blue uniforms and white leather gloves, flawlessly execute a series of close order drill maneuvers without a single verbal command. The Marines' movements become more intricate…and more dangerous…as they spin and toss their highly polished rifles and glistening bayonets in the air and to one another, depending on their brothers to execute the same elaborate routine with precision.

The Silent Drill Platoon (SDP) has demonstrated their unique display of discipline, precision and espirit d'corps since 1948 — exemplifying the very tenets of the United States Marine Corps.

Story by Lauren Armstrong

The SDP is one of six platoons at Marine Corps Barracks, the oldest post in the Corps, which is sometimes referred to as "8th and I" for its location within the District of Columbia. They are part of Company A, which provides support for Joint Services commitments at the Pentagon. While the other five platoons support ceremonies at the White House, weekly Evening Parades at the Barracks, Sunset Parades at the Marine Corps War Memorial near Arlington National Cemetery and a variety of other events in and around the nation's capital, the SDP is the only one that exhibits the rifle and drill expertise for which they are famous.

"We have 250 Marines in the six platoons of Company A, but only 38 are part of the SDP," explains Corporal Alec Mizner, Drill Master for the SDP. "And only 24 of those participate in each performance."

Every Marine is a Rifleman

Becoming a member of the elite Silent Drill Platoon starts in the Corps' Schools of Infantry, which are located at Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton (Calif.) and Camp Geiger, N.C. The Schools of Infantry teach entry-level Marines to become combat riflemen and, as students become Marine warriors, they are also considered for assignment to the SDP.

"First sergeants from Marine Corps Barracks visit the Schools of Infantry and screen Marines for duty with the SDP," explains Corporal Carlton Williams, a Rifle Inspector for the SDP. "Uniformity is key, so they look at height and appearance; all SDP members are between 5' 10" and 6' 2." They also look at the Marines' background and performance. If you make the initial cut, you go to 8th and I to train as a ceremonial marcher before attending Silent Drill School. Ceremonial marchers learn basic drill maneuvers and participate in funerals, events at the White House and other ceremonial events."

Silent Drill School

Between 60 and 100 Marines start the four-month training program at the Silent Drill School (SDS) each November. Less than two dozen will meet the rigid standards to become members of the SDP.

"We first learn to take care of our gear, how to prepare our uniforms and how to make our rifle stocks shine," explains Williams.

The SDP uses fully functional M1-Garand rifles, with fixed bayonets, that weigh 10-and-a-half pounds each. "The firing pins are removed for safety, but the weapons are very real and were originally used during World War II. We looked up the serial numbers this year to verify when they were issued and from what armories. It was very interesting," says Mizner, who adds that maintaining that "shine" is no small task.



The Silent Drill Platoon stands at parade rest. The tradition of the Silent Drill Platoon began in 1948 during the Sunset Parades.

U.S. Marine Corps photo courtesy of http://www.marines.com/photos

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The invention of the year is great news for your ears

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New Personal Sound Amplification Product is an affordable alternative

Over the years, technology has made the way we live easier, safer and more convenient. In many cases, it's even made many products more affordable… (remember how much the first VCR used to cost?). Unfortunately, the cost of hearing aids never seemed to come down. Now, a new alternative has been invented… it's called Perfect Choice HD™.

"Reading glasses for your ears"

Perfect Choice HD is NOT a hearing aid. Hearing aids can only be sold by an audiologist or a licensed hearing instrument specialist. In order to get a hearing aid, you had to go to the doctor's office for a battery of tests and numerous fitting appointments. Once they had you tested and fitted, you would have to pay as much as $5000 for the product. Now, thanks to the efforts of the doctor who leads a renowned hearing institute, there is Perfect Choice HD. It's designed to accurately amplify sounds and deliver them to your ear. Because we've developed an efficient production process, we can make a great product at an affordable price. The unit has been designed to have an easily accessible battery, but it is small and lightweight enough to hide behind your ear… only you'll know you have it on. It's comfortable and won't make you feel like you have something stuck in your ear. It provides high quality audio so sounds and conversations will be easier to hear and understand.

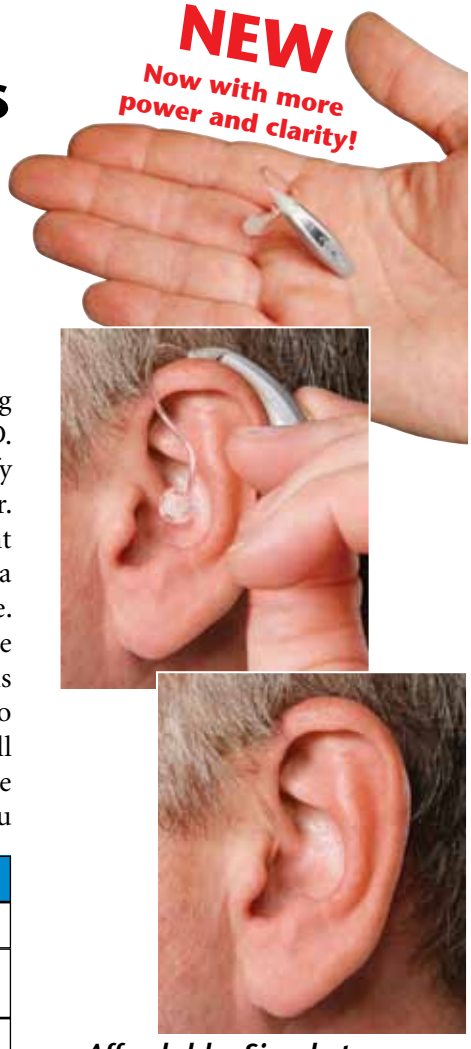
Perfect Choice HD feature comparison

	Perfect Choice HD	Others
Lightweight and Inconspicuous	YES	Some
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The United States Marine Corps Silent Drill Platoon form the bursting bomb during a performance at the U.S. Ambassador's residence in Paris, France.

U.S. Marine Corps photo courtesy of http://www.marines.com/photos

"After sanding the wooden stock down, we stain them with a walnut-color wood stain. After applying one coat of stain, we use Tru-Oil wood polish, applying coat after coat to the weapon. An additional coat is applied before each show. It not only makes the weapons shine, it also strengthens the wood and prevents it from cracking and breaking as easily."

Drill training takes up the bulk of the training days at SDS, often beginning early in the morning and extending well into the evening. The long days of persistence and focus can be grueling, but worth the effort, says Williams. "The Drill Master and Assistant Drill Master teach us the movements and we're critiqued to all look the same," he says. "By the time we're ready to do a performance, it's almost automatic. It becomes a matter of muscle memory and how each movement feels."

Along the way, there are "Cut Days," where Marines are eliminated from the class and return to duty as a ceremonial marcher. In late January or early February, the remaining candidates travel to Marine Corps Air Station Yuma, Ariz., for the final month of training. As the candidates approach the final weeks of training, the Drill Master calls for a surprise "Challenge Day," where all the Marines must perform the drill.

"The 24 who look and perform the best are selected to be members of the Silent Drill Platoon," says Williams, and even those who were on the SDP the previous year must compete for the coveted two dozen spots.

"Marines who've already attended SDS and are on the platoon go through a month-long school themselves," adds Mizner. "*Train the Trainer* prepares them to be team leaders and instructors during Silent Drill School. *Train the Trainer* is run by the Drill Master and he reviews slide drill critiques, how to teach and communicate effectively, and how to be effective leaders. The returning SDP members aren't guaranteed a spot on the 24; they have to compete on Challenge Day, like everyone else. However, it's very rare for them to not make the 24, because they already have a year's experience."

"The 24 are like the first string of a football team and perform in almost every show," continues Williams. "The others are 'supers,' who are trained to fill certain spots within the drill in case of illness or inability to perform. The supers are highly trained and capable to fill any voids that might arise in the lineup."

Practice Makes Perfect

By early March, the Silent Drill Platoon is ready to perform and launches its annual season with the National Installations Tour. Together with the U.S. Marine Drum and Bugle Corps and the Official Color Guard of the Marine Corps, the SDP spends the first several weeks of its show season performing at military installations around the country.

"Our season is March through November, but early March is the craziest time," says Williams. "The National Installation Tour often includes two performances a day, sometimes for three or four days in a row, with lots of travel."

After that, the show schedule is slightly less hectic, but with 90 to 100 shows a season, the training never stops.

"A usual training day consists of between three to six hours of drill," describes Williams. "And, since we're all

still infantry Marines, we also train in infantry tactics. We also help out the other platoons if they are shorthanded for a funeral or other ceremonial event. But drilling is our main mission, so that's our primary focus. And on the day of a show, we'll do 30 to 60 minutes of drill before the actual performance. We'll run through the routine once or twice, until the Drill Master says we're good."

"Our performances look perfect to the untrained eye. They're meant to and that's a good thing, but we rarely have a perfect performance," admits Mizner. "The shows get easier as the year progresses and the Marines' muscle memories get more finely tuned, but we always strive for that perfect show."

The Show

Months of training and practice go into perfecting the Silent Drill Platoon's calculated and carefully choreographed drill maneuvers that include a series of elaborate spins and tosses of the rifles. The Drill Master choreographs the routine, which changes each year.

"The movements are basic," says Mizner, "but the shapes and formations change from year to year. We develop a sequence that demonstrates our capabilities and then work to perfect it.

"As Drill Master, the toughest part of my job is November through February," he continues. "I work to create the routine and we try it out to see what works and what doesn't. It evolves until we get it just right. My job is supervisory after that. We drill daily, like a football team. We videotape each drill and I take notes. The Marines get immediate feedback. It's a constant process."

According to Mizner, the Drill Master is chosen by the previous Drill Master and almost always serves as the Assistant Drill Master first. "As Assistant Drill Master, you choreograph a 12-man show that is performed by a smaller team in locations where there simply isn't enough room for the full 24-man complement. The assistant also oversees the Friday Night Parade shows at 8th and I. As Assistant, you're being evaluated to see if you have what it takes to be the Drill Master."

Each 15-minute performance concludes with a rifle inspection, performed by a Rifle Inspector and a member of the Rifle Inspection Team. Williams, who is one of two Rifle Inspectors on this year's SDP and was

Want the Silent Drill Platoon to Perform at Your Event?

Civilian organizations that want to sponsor a Silent Drill Platoon performance must meet a variety of requirements. For starters, the event at which the SDP will perform must be patriotic in nature and sponsoring organizations cannot be affiliated with a partisan political agenda or ideological movement. The sponsor must also ensure the performance site is slightly larger than an NBA/NCAA basketball regulation court, with at least 20 feet of overhead space to accommodate the tossed rifles. Indoor facilities must also have a smooth surface that's able to withstand repeated striking of the metal rifle butt plates.

Outdoor sports fields are usually acceptable and spectators must be at least 10 feet away from the performance area. Any facility fees (lighting, heating, security, publicity, custodial services, public address system) are also the sponsor's responsibility.

It's the sponsoring organization's responsibility to provide local transportation, lodging and meals for the 39-member team while they are in town for the event. If government transportation isn't available, they may also be asked to cover commercial transportation costs from Washington, D.C., for the SDP and their gear.

To learn more about requesting the Silent Drill Platoon at your next event, please visit **www.marines.mil/community/Pages/ArchiveSilentDrillResponsbilities.aspx** or contact the Public Affairs Office at Marine Barracks, 8th & I St SE, Washington, DC 20390-5000 or 202-433-4173.

a member of the Inspection Team last season, explains the development of each position.

"Three members of the SDP are selected to serve one-year assignments as part of an Inspection Team. Their selection is based on appearance and performance and it's done through a Challenge Day, similar to the selection at Silent Drill School, only this time, the Marines are graded by Rifle Inspectors," says Williams. "A member of the Inspection Team is selected during each show to perform a series of solo movements."

A member of the current year's Inspection Team will be tapped to serve as a Rifle Inspector the following year. "It's a Rifle Inspector's job to train the Inspection Team for the upcoming year and, before the season ends, it's also his job to train the next Rifle Inspector," Williams says. "Right now we have two Inspection Teams and two Rifle Inspectors, so we're currently training six Marines on the Rifle Inspection sequence."

Assignment to the Silent Drill Platoon is usually a two-year tour, but special duties lengthen the tour for some.

"Marines compete to be members of the prestigious 24-man platoon and serve their first year. We have a total of



The Silent Drill Platoon exemplifies Marine Corps discipline and skill. Through intense practice they learn the precise rifle drill performed for audiences across America.

U.S. Marine Corps photo courtesy of http://www.marines.com/photos



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The Silent Drill Platoon exemplifies Marine Corps discipline and skill. Through intense practice they learn the precise rifle drill performed for audiences across America.

U.S. Marine Corps photo by Cpl. Christopher A. Green

38 Marines, which includes supers that are trained to fill certain spots in the drill sequence, the Drill Master and Assistant Drill Master, Rifle Inspectors and Inspection Team members," Mizner elaborates. "During the second year, they can try out to be members of the Inspection Team. Some stay for a third year to serve as Drill Master or Rifle Inspectors."

Always Evolving

"There's no part of this job I dislike, but I didn't join the Marine Corps to be in the SDP," says Williams, who is approaching the end of his SDP tour. "I'm excited to get back to doing what I joined the Corps to do — be an infantry Marine."

Corporal Williams' perspective isn't unique and, just as the SDP routine changes year to year, so does the Marine Corps and the SDP's role in it. "In the three years I've been affiliated with the SDP, I've seen changes and I think they're for the better," says Mizner. "As the Corps changes, the SDP evolves, too. Every time we get a new platoon sergeant or commander, it changes the way we do business a bit."

"As the Corps starts transitioning away from combat operations in Afghanistan, it will change how we operate as well. Most Marines are proud of what they do here in the SDP, but they're anxious to complete their tour as quickly as possible so they can get back to doing more infantry-oriented duty," adds Mizner. "As we become more of a peacetime Marine Corps, I don't think we'll see quite the same type of push to rotate out. I expect it will change the dynamics somewhat."

What it Means

The Silent Drill Platoon represents the United States Marine Corps in shows around the country and around the world. They perform at White House events, in USMC recruiting commercials and at hometown baseball games and county fairs. They are truly the face of the Marine Corps.

Mizner and Williams both agree that the best part of their job is meeting the folks who come to see them perform, and they both enjoy being able to interact with audience members after the shows.

"The small-town events mean the most to me," elaborates Williams, "when we have a group of veterans in the audience. The people really seem to appreciate the show and the impact of what we're doing really hits home. Doing shows in D.C. is important, but the smaller shows are more meaningful to me. We meet all kinds of people from the young kid who wants to join the Marine Corps to parents whose son is currently deployed to the grieving loved one who lost their Marine spouse or brother in combat. It can be really bittersweet. And that's when it hits me — the powerful effect we have on people.

"I think most Marines would think it was cool to be a member of the Silent Drill Platoon and it's an honor to be a part of this; to represent the entire Marine Corps," Williams continues. "The public can't see the deployed Marines or those who are working stateside in behind-the-scenes capacities. The SDP might be the only Marines they ever see, so it's important for us to demonstrate the discipline and esprit d'corps that exemplify the values of the Marine Corps."

"We get the personal thanks and gratitude that Marines serving overseas don't get," adds Mizner. "We often say, 'Don't thank us. Thank those who are serving in harm's way.'"

"It might be more appropriate to say we're faceless Marines, because many people see us as *their* Marine — their son who's serving in Afghanistan or their late husband who was a Marine," says Mizner. "It's a unique privilege to be the face of the U.S. Marine Corps. I love the Corps and I love this job."



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

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87	$155
88	$147
89	$138

Age	Amount
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46	$421
47	$418
48	$415
49	$413
50	$410
51	$407
52	$403
53	$400
54	$396

Kilroy was Here

HE WAS EVERYWHERE DURING World War II. He was part of every combat and occupation operation from Toyko to Berlin. He appeared on buttons to promote the sale of War Bonds and it's said he left his mark atop Mount Everest and even in the dust on the moon. Kilroy was here … and there and everywhere … and it seemed he was always there first. And you could be sure he'd be there when the troops left.

But just who was this Kilroy fellow and how did he become such an icon for Allied forces?

The most prevailing (and most believable) explanation is that the original Kilroy was a worker at the Fore River Shipyard in Halifax, Mass., responsible for counting the number of rivets each riveter placed during his/her shift. Riveters were paid per rivet and James Kilroy would put a chalk checkmark beside the rivets as he counted to ensure they weren't counted twice. The riveters figured out that they could erase the check marks and, when the next inspector came through and checked the now-unmarked rivets, they would get paid twice for the same rivet. When Mr. Kilroy figured out what was happening, he added "Kilroy was here" in large letters next to his marks and the cheating stopped.

Many of Kilroy's marks were in places that would normally be painted before the ships left the yard, but because the war demanded the ships be ready for combat as quickly as possible, many left the shipyard with the inspection marks still in place. The service members who saw the marks had no idea of their origins, but for whatever reason, the mysterious trademark made an impression and they began to recreate it all over Europe and throughout the Pacific. They had no idea who Kilroy was, but they knew he'd been there before them.

Somewhere along the way, the sketch of a large-nosed fellow peering over a wall got added to the graffiti. Many sources agree the cartoon image, known as Chad, was created by British cartoonist George Edward Chatterton, but like the wording itself, there's no definitive proof. As the image and graffiti spread throughout the word, the little chap sometimes sported a single hair (or several) or sometimes had none at all.



Engraving of Kilroy on the WWII Memorial.

Servicemen began recreating it wherever they went, insisting it was there when they arrived. Underwater demolition teams, who believed themselves to be the first GIs to arrive on enemy-held terrain, swore they saw Japanese soldiers painting over the image on their equipment. One consistently held legend says that it appeared in an outhouse that was built for the exclusive use of Roosevelt, Stalin and Churchill when they met at the Potsdam Conference in 1945. The story goes that Stalin was the first to use the facility and, when he emerged, he asked (in Russian), "Who is Kilroy?" It's also rumored that Adolf Hitler was gravely concerned about Kilroy's ability to infiltrate secure areas and ordered a detail to actively search for and kill this super-spy.

The belief that James Kilroy was the original was strengthened when the American Transit Association sponsored a nationwide contest to find the real Kilroy in 1946. Of the dozens of men who claimed to be the original Kilroy, only James appeared with any sort of proof. He brought along officials from the shipyard to verify his story and won a real, full-sized trolley car as his prize. The trolley was delivered to his front yard, where it became a playhouse for his nine children.

"Kilroy was here" became a touchstone for WWII GIs as they traveled the globe to defend freedom. Everyone, it seemed, knew Kilroy, considered him a friend and was happy to take him to new places. He was such an icon of the Greatest Generation that he is immortalized twice at the World War II Memorial in Washington, D.C.

Kilroy continued to support U.S. troops through the Korean and Vietnam conflicts, and he's more recently left his mark in Afghanistan and Iraq. Kilroy is, indeed, here, there and everywhere.



USS Ethan Allen (SSBN-608)
September 19–22, 2013, Bremerton, Wash. Contact Dennis E. Anderson, 6757 McCormick Woods Drive, Port Orchard, WA 98367-7612, 360-895-8791, dander@wavecable.com.

USS Lapon (SSN-661)
June 20–23, 2013, Tucson, Ariz. Contact Raymond Zieverink, 3003 Lakeland Dr., Rock Hill, SC 29730, 803-324-1414, RaymondZieverink@Belk.com.

USS Rasher (SS-269)
April 3–8, 2013, New Orleans, La. Contact Richard Moore, 9177 Davenport Road, Gloucester, VA 23061, 804-815-0730, drifterpilot@cox.net.

USS Wahoo (SS-565)
May 2–4, 2013, Groton, Conn. Contact Tom Young, 1 Pine Knoll Drive, Atkinson, NH 03811, 603-362-5781, tank@tomandshirleyyoung.com.

VX-6/VXE-6
June 12–16, 2013, Erlanger, Ky. Contact Joe Hollern, VX-6/VXE-6 Association, P.O. Box 1228, Westerville, OH 43086, 614-906-6289, jhollern@wowway.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 16

FRA's Action Center: It's easy to share your views with your elected officials using FRA's Action Center at www.fra.org. The website offers pre-written e-mail messages (or users can draft their own) that address specific legislative issues that can be sent to members of Congress or local media outlets with the click of a button. The Action Center also allows users to see which bills their legislators are supporting.

Making Waves: When you use the Action Center to weigh in on a particular issue, FRA works hard to keep you posted on the progress of that initiative. When legislative proposals threaten existing benefits, FRA sends *Making Waves* to those shipmates via e-mail, inviting them to reiterate their concerns to their elected officials.

It's vitally important for FRA shipmates to be informed about legislative proposals that affect them and share their opinions on these proposals with their elected officials. Communicating concerns to your representative and senators is at the heart of FRA's grassroots lobbying efforts and has a direct influence on the Association's ability to effectively represent shipmates and their families on Capitol Hill.

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.

FRA gives voice to Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard personnel on Capitol Hill. You have the important mission of defending our country, FRA's mission is defending you.

Worried about losing your voice?

Visit www.fra.org to read our 2012 Legislative Agenda and see all the ways we are making sure your needs are met. We are proud to serve you, and will make sure your voice is heard.

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Chicago Doctor Invents Affordable Hearing Aid

Outperforms Many Higher Priced Hearing Aids

Reported by J. Page

CHICAGO: A local board-certified Ear, Nose, Throat (ENT) physician, Dr. S. Cherukuri, has just shaken up the hearing aid industry with the invention of a medical-grade, affordable hearing aid. **This revolutionary hearing aid is designed to help millions of people with hearing loss who cannot afford—or do not wish to pay—the much higher cost of traditional hearing aids.**

"Perhaps the best quality-to-price ratio in the hearing aid industry" – Dr. Babu, M.D. Board Certified ENT Physician

Dr. Cherukuri knew that untreated hearing loss could lead to depression, social isolation, anxiety, and symptoms consistent with Alzheimer's dementia. **He could not understand why the cost for hearing aids was so high when the prices on so many consumer electronics like TVs, DVD players, cell phones and digital cameras had fallen.**

Since Medicare and most private insurance do not cover the costs of hearing aids, which traditionally run between $2000-$6000 for a pair, many of the doctor's patients could not afford the expense. Dr. Cherukuri's goal was to find a reasonable solution that would help with the most common types of hearing loss at an affordable price, not unlike the **"one-size-fits-most" reading glasses** available at drug stores.

He evaluated numerous hearing devices and sound amplifiers, including those seen on television. Without fail, almost all of these were found to amplify bass/low frequencies (below 1000 Hz) and not useful in amplifying the frequencies related to the human voice.

Inspiration from a surprising source

The doctor's inspiration to defeat the powers-that-be that kept inexpensive hearing aids out of the hands of the public actually came from a new cell phone he had just purchased. **"I felt that if someone could devise an affordable device like an iPhone® for about $200 that could do all sorts of things, I could create a hearing aid at a similar price."**

- **Designed By A Board Certified Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT) Doctor**
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Affordable Hearing Aid With Superb Performance

The high cost of hearing aids is a result of layers of middlemen and expensive unneccesary features. Dr. Cherukuri concluded that it would be possible to develop a medical grade hearing aid without sacrificing the quality of components. The result is the MDHearingAid PRO®, starting well under $200. **It has been declared to be the best low-cost hearing aid that amplifies the range of sounds associated with the human voice without overly amplifying background noise.**

Tested By Leading Doctors and Audiologists

The MDHearingAid PRO® has been rigorously tested by leading ENT physicians and audiologists who have unanimously agreed that the **sound quality and output in many cases exceeds more expensive hearing aids.**

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"I have been wearing hearing aids for over 25 years and these are the best behind-the-ear aids I have tried. ***Their sound quality rivals that of my $3,000 custom pair of Phonak Xtra digital ITE"*** —Gerald Levy

"I have a $2,000 Resound Live hearing aid in my left ear and the MDHearingAid PRO® in the right ear. ***I am not able to notice a significant difference in sound quality between the two hearing aids."*** — Dr. May, ENT Physician

"We ordered two hearing aids for my mother on Sunday, and the following Wednesday they were in our mailbox! Unbelievable! Now for the best part—they work so great, my mother says she hasn't heard so good for many years, even with her $2,000 digital! ***It was so great to see the joy on her face.*** *She is 90 years young again."* —Al Peterson

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TAPS In Memoriam

NAME	BRANCH
Adkins, Thomas J, YNCS, USN	MAL
Armitage, Hobart L, CDR, USNR	319
Arnhold, Joseph, AMSC, USN	146
Baglioni, Francis X, LT, USN	006
Baker, Arthur George, PO2, USN	365
Barker, Christopher C, CPO, USN	MAL
Bates, George C, RMC, USN	282
Beatty, Willis D, YNC, USN	099
Berner, Leo, LCDR, USN	MAL
Blair, Eugene E, ABEC, USN	041
Blanton, Melvin, HMC, USN	101
Brabston, John E, BMC, USN	110
Breeland, C, BMC, USN	MAL
Brizendine, Hugh R, MMC, USN	161
Brown, James R, EMC, USN	029
Browning, William B, ADJ1/C, USN	042
Brubaker, John, HMC, USN	MAL
Bruckler, Alfred, FTGC, USN	MAL
Bullin, Robert E, GMGC, USN	254
Carey, Leon E, MMC, USN	306
Carlson, John Arnold	009
Carter, Seaborn S, QMC, USN	386
Chenard, Joseph H, PMC, USN	009
Coates, Don G, AMSC, USN	MAL
Craft, James A, HTC, USN	050
Crane, Stephen H, CDR, USN	022
Crosby, Steven, YNCS, USN	MAL
Cunningham, Victor L, AMC, USN	061
Daulman, Clifford Ralph	MAL
Davidovich, Walter L, SCPO, USN	070
Davis, Jerry L, USN	024
Dennison, Joseph E, PNCM, USN	MAL
Deubner, Donald L, GYSGT, USMC	175
Dickerson, Thomas D, HMC, USN	MAL
Dill, Harold D, LI1, USN	MAL
Dilworth, Albert W, MSGT, USMC	006
Dobbins, William E, ADCS, USN	061
Downs, Dennie L, AMEC, USN	MAL
Duran, Alfredo S, AT1, USN	101
Edmunds, George T, YNC, USN	099
Ehrlich, Walter L, SGTMAJ, USMC	275
Ellershaw, Joseph M, BRCS, USN	001
Evans, John A., ENC(SS), USN	020
Fisher, Marion L, MM1, USN	298
Fleischman, Francis F, DM1, USN	MAL
Gannon, Edward G, RMCM, USN	090
Gibbs, Thomas C., SSGT, USMC	060
Goins, Paul Trenton, AGCM, USN	112
Greene, Paul G, ADRC, USN	022
Griffith, Howard Earl, RM1, USN	MAL
Hirni, Leroy H, ADRC, USN	097
Howard, Melvin R, SKC, USN	001
Howell, John G, SCPO, USN	MAL
Hunsinger, Glenn R, HMC(SS), USN	285
Jenkins, Roy F, ENC, USN	181
Johnson, Kennard H, ADRC, USN	MAL
Kelley, Alfred S, LCDR, USN	MAL
Kelly, John P, MMCM, USN	MAL
Kleinpeter, Albert S, ICCM, USN	311
Lacour, Robert E, QM1, USN	222
Land, Leggette, HTC, USN	159
Large, Russell, AQC, USN	MAL
Lebreux, Albert A, CPO, USN	099
Loden, Richard L, LCDR, USN	104
Lumbardy, Melvin C, YN1, USN	130
Maring, Edward B, BTCS, USN	060
Monteforte, Carmine F, ADRC, USN	268
Morrill, John P, MMC(SS), USN	MAL
Nesset, A O, CSC, USN	126
Nichols, Stanley C, CS1, USN	147
Orr, Rodney G, CDR, USN	MAL
Pagel, Edward W, ADR1, USN	230
Pearson, Fred C, MM1, USN	147
Pefferkorn, Donald, LT, USN	371
Pernites, Vicente S, MSC, USN	099
Peterson, Forrest P, ADRC, USN	MAL
Polk, Thomas A, LCDR, USN	115
Pratt, Charles, QM1, USN	MAL
Quick, Francis E, POC, USN	022
Rainey, Robert E, DSC, USN	295
Rexroat, Ralph E, SK1, USN	MAL
Rhoten, Norman E, MS1, USN	276
Rickard, Donald E, HM2, USN	061
Ringhoffer, Joe, CWO3, USN	MAL
Robinson, Leon R, PH1, USN	MAL
Rorex, Roy G, MSGT, USMC	MAL
Rosatti, Albert D, HMC, USN	MAL
Ross, David C, SCPO, USN	290
Routon, Kenneth R, PO1, USN	MAL
Rudzinski, Anthony W, CDR, USN	182
Rushing, Jesse L, QMCM, USN	086
Rylant, George N, EMCS, USN	272
Schnering, Philip, LT, USN	MAL
Schofer, Allen P, MMCM, USN	027
Scott, John W, LT, USCG	MAL
Settell, Donald D, AOCM, USN	022
Shirley, Bobby W, SKC, USN	112
Smith, Vern C, MMCM, USN	379
Stephens, Charles E, CEC, USN	MAL



NAME	BRANCH
Swaffar, Raymond L, MSCM, USN	261
Thomas, Gilbert W, AXCS, USN	MAL
Thompson, Gene E, YN1, USN	MAL
Thrune, Raphael J, SKCS, USN	136
Tobin, Billy J, AOCM, USN	009
Turner, Gene G, UTC, USN	145
Walton, Lavern E, PO1, USN	MAL
Williams, Harvey, SH1, USN	050
Wilson, Grant H, AE1, USN	MAL
Winter, Donald H, ENC, USN	070
Wood, Stacy B C, LT, USN	001
Woodward, Daniel B, CWO4, USN	009
Yodock, Ronald O, AMSC, USN	027
Zabel, Melvin E, BM1, USN	137

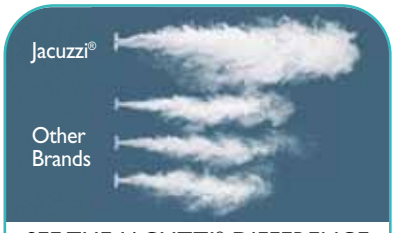
Names in **red** indicate 50 year continuous members.

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- **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.
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BRANCH 115 LEHIGH VALLEY, PA.

The branch's installation of officers was well attended as (l to r) President Paul Geissinger, Vice President David Hoffman, Secretary Donald Bear and Treasurer Larry Roth are sworn in.



BRANCH 186 HERNANDO, FLA.

Shipmates (l to r) Bob Woods, H.L. Zell and Branch President Tim Donovan pose with Uncle Sam during the Honor Flight Reunion held on Flag Day.



BRANCH 104 TACOMA, WASH.

Newly-elected Branch President Mark Thompson is congratulated by RPNW Pete Lazzaretti during a recent installation ceremony.



BRANCH 20 GROTON, CONN.

(L to R) Branch Secretary Billye Serabian and President Rick Aiken were on hand as Shipmate Ernest V. Plantz accepted his Life Membership materials from National President Jeffrey Gilmartin. Shipmate Plantz is 90+ years young, active in several military organizations and gives presentations about his three-and-a-half years as a POW during the Vietnam War. He was overwhelmed by his shipmates' presentation that included a plaque made by a member of the branch.

BRANCH 57 SOUTH JERSEY, N.J.

The branch was well-represented in this year's Americanism Essay Contest, with (l to r) Namankita Rana (9th grade regional winner, 2nd place). Justin Thomas (7th grade national winner) and Chloe Patrick (10th grade national winner). Congratulations!





BRANCH 22 PENSACOLA, FLA.

Branch 22 President Bob Hall (left) was the master of ceremonies for the annual Memorial Day Program onboard NAS Pensacola. Shipmate Hall poses with Auxiliary RVPSE Babe Kilgore (center) and U. S. Congressman Jeff Miller following the ceremony.



BRANCH 182 BETHESDA, MD.

Shipmate Robert J. Bellflower (center) has been a member of FRA for 40 years and, although he maintains his affiliation with his original branch in Maryland, he currently resides near Pensacola, Fla. Thanks to the coordination of shipmates in both areas, Bellflower received his 40-year membership certificate from then-National Vice President Mark Kilgore (left) and Branch 22 President Bob Hall (right).

BRANCH 267 ST. LOUIS, MO.

Then-RVPNC John Partin (left) and Shipmate Ed Rousan present an FRA Certificate of Appreciation to Tiffany Shelton at Office Max for the promotional poster she designed and produced for the first Mid-America All-Veteran's Picnic.



BRANCH 316 SPRINGFIELD, MO.

Branch President Nolan Moody showed the FRA colors during the Springfield July 4th Parade.





BRANCH 126 JACKSONVILLE, FLA.

Branch President James Thomas (left) presented a Silver Anchor Recruiting Certificate with hat device to Branch Vice President Jack Elrod for recruiting 50 new Shipmates. Bravo Zulu, Shipmate!!

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 the Jr. Past National President

I AM SO PROUD to have been able to represent the Ladies Auxiliary for the past year. Throughout the year there is a sense of pride that becomes indescribable. I would never want to trade this experience for anything.

November 11, 2011, I had the distinct honor of laying the wreath with Jeffrey A. Gilmartin, FRA National President, at the *Tomb of the Unknowns* at Arlington National Cemetery on Veteran's Day.

On December 7, 2011, it was my honor to represent the LA FRA along with Jeffrey A. Gilmartin, FRA National President, at the *USS Arizona* during the Pearl Harbor Memorial Service in Honolulu, Hawaii. It was a moving experience that will forever live in my memory. A special thank you to Branch and Unit 46 for making the arrangements and for the hospitality they showed us.

January 25, 2012, I, along with NVP Diane Hoover, NFS Karen Smith, National Parliamentarian Doreen Huylebroeck and National Marshall Karen Snee, had the distinct honor of representing the LA FRA at the Recruiter of the Year held at the Navy Memorial. There were numerous outstanding sailors there. A special thank you to NED Joe Barnes for making the arrangements and for the honor bestowed upon us.

Our annual Pilgrimage to the *Mast of the Maine* and the *Tomb of the Unknowns* at Arlington National Cemetery was held on April 28, 2012, and was well attended. The honor of laying a wreath at the *Mast of the USS Maine* and at the *Tomb of the Unknowns* will remain with me forever. It was a very impressive ceremony. I wish to thank Debra Washington, Pilgrimage Chairman, for all the work she did and the Auxiliary members for attending the National President's Tea.

In July I attended the West Coast Regional Convention in Carson City, Nev. (July 19–22) and the East Coast Regional Convention in Greenville, N.C. (July 26–29). In August I attended the Southwest Regional Convention in Winterhaven, Calif. (August 8–12), the South Central Regional Convention in Fort Worth, Texas (August 15–19) and the Southeast Regional Convention in Charleston, S.C. (August 23–26). I also attended the New England Regional Convention in Groton, Conn. (September 7–8), the Northwest Regional Convention in Everett, Wash. (September 14–15) and the National Convention in Reno, Nev. (October 14–21).

I would like to remind all Auxiliary members to visit the FRA website at www.fra.org. Please visit the Action Center and review the actions and concerns before Congress and please take the time to send a message to your elected officials. You are welcome to use one of the prewritten letters or compose your own. Some of the bills include: STOP Drastic TRICARE Fee Increases; A bill to limit certain TRICARE fee Increases; Support Servicemember Family Protection Act; and Support the Protecting the Health Care of Veterans Act. Every email that Congress receives from the FRA Action Center counts as the voice of seven voters. You may visit the Association's website often for regular updates.

I wish to thank all of the members of the Auxiliary and the staff at National Headquarters for this most memorable year. The friendships that are made will be everlasting. Please continue to support the future National Presidents in all their undertakings.



GINI C. LARSON
Jr. Past National President



Southeast Regional Convention, Longevity Awards – Presented by SERP Primitiva (Babe) Kilgore to (l to r) PRPSE Donna Mefford (20 yrs), PRPSE Eileen Ligay (35 yrs) and PRPSE Anita Sadowski (25 yrs). All are from Unit 30, Brunswick, Ga.



Southeast Region Newly Elected Officers SE Treasurer Margaret Horvath (Unit 290), SE Regional President Primitiva (Babe) Kilgore (Unit 22), SE Regional Vice President Ann Lyons (Unit 147), SE Regional Treasurer Bob Huscher (Branch 186), SE Regional President Robbie Robbins (Branch 91) and SE Regional Vice President Fred Hill (Branch 291).

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We represent clients from all 50 states.

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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.

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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!**

"These guys sure helped me out after I got diagnosed"

LeRoy Riddell
1935 - 2008
U.S. Navy Retired
Member VFW, DAV, American Legion and the Fleet Reserve
Former National President of the Retired Enlisted Association and client of The Johnson Law Firm.



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* *Past successes cannot be an assurance of future successes since each case is decided on its own merits.*

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