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October 9, 2014

The Honorable Carl Levin
Chairman, Armed Services Committee
United States Senate
269 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Fax: 202-228-0036

The Honorable James M. Inhofe
Ranking Member, Armed Services Committee
United States Senate
205 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Fax: 202-228-0380

Dear Chairman Levin and Ranking Member Inhofe:

The Fleet Reserve Association (FRA) appreciates your efforts and those of the other Congressional members of the Armed Services Committees, and their respective staffs to protect benefits and programs for service members, military retirees, veterans, reservists and their families in the FY 2015 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). With an abridged post-election Congressional schedule, FRA wanted to provide its recommendations before the Senate and conference committee deliberations on the NDAA. A number of provisions appear in both versions of the Act that FRA supports, such as additional impact aid for public schools with significant military populations, requiring the Pentagon to report on the impact of reduced Prime Service Areas for TRICARE, improved data collection for suicide and sexual assault, and Ship Accountability for Agent Orange presumption (House-section 1090 and Senate-section 1062).

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

The Association believes that excluding Defense from Sequestration is of paramount importance for the national defense and will ultimately have a devastating



Levin/Inhofe ltr

October 9, 2014

Page 2

impact on the viability of the All-Volunteer Force. The recently released 2014 Navy Retention Study indicates low service-wide morale, perception of an increasingly high operational tempo, and poor work/life balance. FRA believes that continued (sequestration-driven) budget cuts will only (worsen) the low morale within the enlisted ranks of our armed services.

Active Duty Provisions

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

Retired Issues

FRA strongly supports section 621 of the Senate Committee approved bill that extends full COLA retirement benefits to all new service members from January 1, 2014 to January 1, 2016. The Association supports section 623 in the Senate legislation to allow reserve retirement rollover that extends 90 day credit to any two fiscal years. FRA also supports section 625 of the Senate bill that authorizes the option of SBP annuities paid into a special needs trust for disabled dependent children. FRA supports section 643 of the House bill to prohibit funding for closing stateside commissaries. FRA opposes Senate provision (section 702) because of excessive co-pay increases and opposes mail order provisions at least until the current TFL mail order program has experienced a complete year of review to determine if it is viable and a cost-savings. The Association

Levin/Inhofe ltr
October 9, 2014
Page 3

will be supporting Senate amendments that expand concurrent receipt (Senate amendments #3764, #3765, #3766, and # 3809).

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

Your consideration of these recommendations is appreciated.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Thomas J. Snee", written in a cursive style.

THOMAS J. SNEE
National Executive Director

TJS:jd:tw

cc: The Honorable Kirsten Gillibrand (202-228-0282)
The Honorable Lindsey Graham (202-224-3808)