

FRA NAVY DEPARTMENT BRANCH 181
Thursday February 4, 2016, 1800

OPENING CEREMONIES: Meeting convened at 1801 hours.

Attendance: Stephen Tassin, President; Orin Hatton, Vice President; PRPEC Chris Slawinski, Sec/Treasurer; PRPEC Robert Washington, Sr., Junior Past President (excused); NEDE Joe Barnes (BOD); NED Tom Snee (BOD); Al Thompson (BOD) (excused); John Davis (BOD); Brian Condon; Honorary Shipmate James Short; GUESTS: Glenn Thompson

November and January Minutes distributed. (December Branch held Christmas Dinner) Minutes stand approved.

BOD Recommendations: None

REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES:

Americanism Essay Contest:

Three finalist were submitted to the Region for consideration..

Audit, Budget & Finance:

No report.

Hospitals, Welfare, and Rehabilitation:

Notification of the passing of the following Shipmates: None to report.

Legislative Service: The Administration's FY 2017 budget request is scheduled to be released on Tuesday, February 9, 2016. It has been leaked that the annual active duty pay increase will only be 1.6 percent. This will make 2017 the fourth year in a row that the military pay increase has not kept pace with the civilian pay increase as measured by the Employment Cost Index (ECI). The ECI increase for FY 2017 is 2.1 percent. FRA strongly supports a pay increase that is at least equal to the ECI. Pay and allowances remain the top retention choice for active duty military personnel since the beginning of the All-Volunteer Force. In 1999, it was determined that there was a 13.5-percent gap between military and private sector pay, and Congress made a commitment at that time to gradually close that gap. FRA believes that Congress should hold fast to that commitment. The gap was reduced to 2.4 percent, but is now widening again. Adequate pay increases are needed to, at least in part, offset the extraordinary demands and sacrifices expected in a military career.

According to Politico, the FY 2017 Defense budget will shrink to 2.5 percent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). FRA advocates for a Defense Budget that is at least five percent of the GDP to ensure adequate funding for both personnel and weapons programs.

The House recently passed the Coast Guard Authorization bill (H.R. 4188) for FY 2016 and FY 2017, sponsored by Rep. Duncan Hunter (Calif.). The bill now goes to the president to be signed into law. The bill includes:

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- Authorizing 43,000 personnel end strength;
- Eliminating the Senior Enlisted Continuation Boards;
- Requiring the president to submit to Congress a Coast Guard manpower requirement plan;
- Authorizing a Coast Guard annual capital investment plan;
- Limiting the Department of Homeland Security Secretary's authority to close Coast Guard facilities;
- Establishing a master's degree in maritime operations offered by the Coast Guard;
- Requiring the Coast Guard to offer at least once each year a training course for flag officers and other employees on the workings of Congress; and
- Mandating that maternity leave will be similar to Navy regulation.

FRA supports annual authorization legislation for the Coast Guard to enable Congress to provide adequate oversight over the Coast Guard's 11 statutory missions. Coast Guard parity with DoD personnel programs remains a high priority for the Association.

The House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, Subcommittee on Health, recently conducted an oversight hearing on the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) mandate to consolidate all of its existing non-VA care, or care in the community, programs (currently 7 separate programs) under a single choice program. Under the choice consolidation plan VA submitted to Congress last October, veterans' eligibility for non-VA hospital care and medical services will continue to be dictated by VA wait times, geographic access to care and availability of VA services, while eligibility for VA emergency care will be expanded but require cost-sharing for emergency treatment and urgent care.

The purpose of the Subcommittee hearing was to examine proposed eligibility guidelines for care under VA's choice consolidation plan and assess to determine whether they are sufficient to increase health care access and improve services for veterans.

Rep. Corrine Brown (Fla.), Ranking Member of the House Veterans Affairs Committee (HVAC), recently issued a statement marking the 8th anniversary of the signing of the Wounded Warrior Provisions contained in the National Defense Authorization Act of FY 2008, saying "I salute the Wounded Warriors Act on its 8th anniversary and our returning heroes who benefit."

In February 2007, a series of Washington Post articles about conditions at Walter Reed Army Medical Center highlighted the challenges our veterans face, which this law was designed to address and fix. Specifically, provisions in the 2008 NDAA expanded concurrent receipt for both Combat-Related Special Compensation for Chapter 61 retirees and of military retired pay and disability compensation for Individual Unemployable rated less than 100 percent retroactively to Jan. 1, 2005. Other major provisions improved diagnosis and treatment of traumatic brain injury and Post Traumatic Stress Injuries, and created a joint Department of Defense/Department of Veterans Affairs committee to work on creating a seamless transition. In retrospect, the "Wounded Warrior" provisions made major improvements, but many of them still remain a work in progress. In Rep. Brown's statement, she pledged to continue to work with DoD and VA to make sure our wounded warriors get the best medical care available.

Central Liaison Committee:

CLC met Saturday, January 30, 2016, 1400, at Branch 24, Annapolis, MD. Meeting was well attended. It was discussed about new policy to prohibit busses from entering Arlington National Cemetery.

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Membership and Retention:

Current members as of January 31, 2016	<u>301</u>
Past Due	<u>4</u>
Members in Good Standing	<u>297</u> (<u>+6.07 % / 280</u>)

Installation/Holiday Brunch:

We will need to begin to make reservations for the Installation banquet in May. Secretary will work with Branch President on venue.

Treasurer's Report:

As of January 31, 2016:

TOTAL INCOME	\$204.75
PREVIOUS BALANCE (BUDGET - EXPENSES + INCOME)	\$9,082.87
TOTAL MONTHLY INCOME	\$204.75
TOTAL MONTHLY EXPENSES	\$281.36
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ENDING BALANCE	\$9,006.26
SURPLUS/(DEFICIT)	\$656.26
CASH IN THE BANK	As of 2/4/16 (Online)
CHECKING BALANCE	\$3,935.73
	As of 2/4/16 (Online)
	\$2,425.96
PCT. BUDGET EXPENDED	\$4,568.24
	55%

Correspondence:

- Membership Newsletter for February 2016
- Acknowledgement letter for submission of NED Snee Nomination Resolution
- Admin letter from Finance Officer
- 3rd Quarter Membership report (we are number 1 in Group III)
- NED Memorandum 3-16, Nominating Resolution for NED Snee
- NED Memorandum 4-16, Nominating Resolution for NP, NVP Larson (Motion passed to defer to BOD for consideration)

Unfinished or Deferred Business:

ECR Mid-Year Feb 20, 2016, Holiday Inn 2000 Staple Mill Road, Richmond, VA... Anyone who needs to make hotel reservations today is deadline for discount.

New Business:

A motion was made by PRPEC Slawinski to make a \$100 donation to LAFRA Unit 181, if needed, to help offset expenses for Pilgrimage transportation. Seconded and approved. No other new business.

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Good of the Order:

Shipmates and Protocol guests were given the right to speak on any topic.

Time and Place:

Next Branch meeting will be Thursday, March 3, 2016 @ at 1800, at The American Legion Post 139, 3445 North Washington Blvd., Arlington, VA.

Meeting adjourned at 1841 hours.

Stephen M. Tassin
FRA Branch 181 President

Christopher J. Slawinski
FRA Branch 181 Secretary/Treasurer