

NAVY DEPARTMENT BRANCH 181
Thursday November 5, 2015, 1800

OPENING CEREMONIES: Meeting convened at 1800 hours.

Attendance: Stephen Tassin, President; Orin Hatton, Vice President (excused); PRPEC Chris Slawinski, Sec/Treasurer; PRPEC Robert Washington, Sr., Junior Past President; Al Thompson (BOD); NED Tom Snee (BOD); Michael Niblack; Honorary Shipmate James Short; GUESTS: Glenn Thompson; RPEC Penny Collins (Br. 24)

September Minutes distributed. Minutes stand approved. No October minutes, in lieu of regular meeting Branch celebrated Shipmate Al Thompson's 100th Birthday.

BOD Recommendations: None

REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES:

Americanism Essay Contest:

Deadline for essays is December 1, 2015.

Audit, Budget & Finance:

No report.

Hospitals, Welfare, and Rehabilitation:

Notification of the passing of the following Shipmates:

- Johnny H Reynolds 1127 Caldwell Blvd Apt 347 Nampa, ID 83651-1776 (208) 467-3029
- PNP Dan Spaulding

Legislative Service: President Obama signed into law the two-year budget deal and in response the House approved a new National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA-H.R. 1356) similar to the bill that was vetoed, a major difference being that it trims \$5 billion from various programs, dropping FY 2016 annual spending from \$612 billion to \$607 billion. The specific reductions were agreed to by House and Senate Armed Services Committees and House and Senate Appropriations Defense Subcommittees.

The newly enacted budget deal eliminates the \$38 billion cut in the FY 2016 Defense budget mandated by sequestration. FRA opposes these mindless, across-the-board cuts to the Defense budget, and we thank all Shipmates who used the FRA Action Center to weigh in on this issue. The agreement lifts the debt ceiling for the federal government until March 31, 2017, and eliminates a 52-percent Medicare premium increase for certain Medicare beneficiaries.

The new NDAA includes:

- •Creation of a new “blended” military retirement system for those who join the military after January 1, 2018;
- •Increased pharmacy co-pays for family members and retirees for prescriptions filled off base or by mail. These increases will range from \$2 to \$4 depending on whether drugs are brand-name or filled at retail outlets;

- An active duty pay increase of 1.3 percent, which is lower than the civilian wage increase of 2.3 percent;
- Authorizing Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) benefits for a second spouse, when the first divorced spouse is deceased;
- Reducing BAH rates by one percent each year until 2019;
- Continuing dual Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH) payments to service members married to other service members;
- Establishing victim's rights for sexual assault and domestic abuse; and
- Rejecting the Administration's request to reduce stateside commissary funding.

The FY 2016 Defense Authorization bill (H.R. 1356) was placed on the fast track since the fiscal year started October 1, 2015, and the government has remained open due to a Continuing Resolution that would have expired on December 11. Congress still has to pass all 12 appropriations bills for the remainder of the fiscal year.

The House Veterans Affairs Committee (HVAC) finally got the five Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) witnesses they demanded last month, but the witnesses did not provide any new information on the VA's relocation bonus scandal.

The controversy centers around two officials who refused to answer any committee questions on their alleged schemes to game the bonus program for personal gain, instead invoking their Fifth Amendment rights against self-incrimination. Three other VA officials also subpoenaed by HVAC described a flawed employee reassignment process but not a corrupt system, which several lawmakers have accused top VA officials of allowing to fester.

"If I could go back in time, I still would have made all the moves," said VA's acting Undersecretary for Benefits Danny Pummill. He blamed the "second and third order" problems of the bonus program on the VA moving too quickly to get the right people in posts that needed immediate improvements, to better help veterans.

The VA Office of the Inspector General investigation discovered that some senior VA executives misused interoffice moves to bump up their pay while reducing their job responsibilities, at a significant cost to taxpayers. The Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) spent more than \$1.5 million on 21 questionable senior executive reassignments over the past three fiscal years. The investigation was spurred by two specific cases. Philadelphia VA Regional Office Director Diana Rubens is blamed for receiving more than \$288,000 in moving expense compensation to switch from a job in nearby Washington, D.C., and St. Paul, Minnesota, VA Regional Office Director Kimberly Graves received nearly \$130,000 in a similar job switch scheme. Both officials were required to appear before HVAC, and both refused to answer any questions on the advice of their lawyers.

Central Liaison Committee:

CLC met Saturday, October 24, 2015, 1400, at Branch 67, Suitland, MD. Meeting was well attended.

Membership and Retention:

Current members as of October 31, 2015	<u>304</u>
Past Due	<u>4</u>
Members in Good Standing	<u>300</u> (+7.14 % / 280)

Installation/Holiday Brunch:

Next event is the Branch Christmas Brunch; Secretary will finalize the details with the Spates Community Club for the Christmas Dinner on December 12th. Cost is \$15 per person to help offset costs.

Treasurer's Report:
As of October 31, 2015

PCT	10/16/2015	Oct PCT	\$344.50
TOTAL INCOME			\$344.50
PREVIOUS			
BALANCE	(BUDGET - EXPENSES + INCOME)		\$9,555.87
TOTAL MONTHLY			
INCOME			\$344.50
TOTAL MONTHLY EXPENSES			\$585.17
ENDING BALANCE			\$9,315.20
		SURPLUS/(DEFICIT)	\$965.20
CASH IN THE			
BANK		As of 11/5/2015 (Online)	\$5,046.79
CHECKING BALANCE		As of 11/5/2015 (Online)	\$3,537.14
PCT. BUDGET EXPENDED	\$3,609.55		43%

Correspondence:

- November Membership Newsletter
- Special request for mailing labels
- Invoice for widow's subscriptions
- Membership Letter for Shipmate S. Tassin

Unfinished or Deferred Business:

None

New Business:

A motion was made by PRPEC Slawinski to place the name of Shipmate NED Tom Snee in nomination for a second term for the office of National Executive Director for the years of 2016 - 2019. Seconded and approved by unanimous consent.

A motion was made to increase the Membership line item by the amount of \$500 with the money coming from proceeds of the Regional Raffle prize winnings (\$594). Seconded and approved.

No other new business.

Good of the Order:

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

RPEC Penny Collins spoke to the assembly on her official travels and that Branch 181 was her third visit. President Tassin presented the Regional President with a small token of appreciation for her visit.

Time and Place:

The Next Branch Activity will be the Christmas Party at Spates Community Club, Fort Meyer at 1630 on Saturday, December 12, 2015/

Next Branch meeting will be Thursday, January 7, 2016 @ at 1800, at FRA National Headquarters, 125 N. West Street, Alexandria, VA. Guest speaker will be Rep. Rob Wittman. Branch and Unit members are invited.

Meeting adjourned at 1840 hours.

Stephen M. Tassin
FRA Branch 181 President

Christopher J. Slawinski
FRA Branch 181 Secretary/Treasurer

www.frabbranch181.org