

## COMMANDANT'S NATIONAL RETIREE COUNCIL MESSAGE FROM CO-CHAIRS

Greetings to all Coast Guard retirees from the Co-Chairs of the Commandant's National Retiree Council! In April 2010 we hosted our ninth annual meeting of the Council. You can access this year's Council report off this website. The [Regional Retiree Councils](#) continue to provide service to the many Coast Guard retirees who served ably and honorably to our nation throughout their active duty, reserve or civilian careers. [Commandant Instruction 1800.5 \(Series\)](#) describes the Commandant of the Coast Guard National Retiree Council Program. We are now eleven (11) regional councils strong. But we can do better. We are looking for retirees who are interested in starting up new regional councils in areas with a high retiree population, specifically Tampa, the Gulf Area, St. Louis and New England.

Ms. Lois Ensrud is no longer available to travel and she has become an emeriti member. Our new Annuitant Representative is Mrs. Lula Carpenter, wife of the late CAPT Lee Carpenter, USCG (Ret.). We all welcome Lula and look forward to her contributions.

CWO4 Fred Siegel, USCG (Ret.) of [Fred's Place](#) continues to chair our "virtual council. You can access additional information on the National Retiree Council from the site.

CGHQ's [National Retiree Help Desk \(NRHD\)](#) telephone/E-mail "HOTLINE" has handled hundreds of inquiries since standup in July 2006. All USCG retirees or their family members are encouraged to contact the NRHD by voicemail: 202-475-5381 or 1-866-664-6245 or by e-mail, [NRHDesk@gmail.com](mailto:NRHDesk@gmail.com), if they have questions or problems that are not otherwise being addressed or resolved. The NRHD team will make every effort to provide an answer or aid in getting you to the right person with the right answer.

Besides members of the Capital Area Council performing "watchstander" duties, as the NRHD has been set up to do this remotely, we also have members outside of the Capital Area that do so very effectively. In fact, all watchstanders do so remotely from their home or office. We certainly can use a few more members of the watchlist, therefore we are asking other retirees who have access to email to consider being one of those who "stand the watch." Please contact CAPT Bob Warakomsky, USCG (Ret.) through the NRHD if you are interested.

All too often navigating the healthcare system is daunting. We encourage you to visit the [TRICARE website](#). It is an exceptional healthcare information/access tool. Additionally, please make note of the Coast Guard's toll-free health benefits

advisor number, 1-800-9HBAHBA. Please do not attempt to tackle complex medical treatment and reimbursement issues on our own when expert help is readily available. The financial impacts could be severe, so consult with the professionals! Also, please see the [TRICARE Retiree Dental Program website](#) for information on what continues to be important preventative healthcare for excellent value. There is no waiting period if the member signs up within 120 days after retirement. This program is immediately available to “grey area” (RET-2) Reservists too. Delta Dental does not have a connection with DEERS so please be aware that changes to DEERS status, such as dependents, must be transmitted to Delta Dental too.

The Pay and Personnel Center (PPC), Topeka is implementing the next phase of the self-service “Global Pay” system. This is part of the service-wide move to a web-enabled pay and personnel records system—the Coast Guard state-of-the-art personnel system called “Direct Access.” Please see the July-September edition of the Retirees’ Newsletter for details.

As noted last year, sometimes RET-2 (“grey area”) Reserve retirees do not receive their required paperwork to place them in RET-1 status. Retirement eligible reservists must wait until age 60 to begin receiving retired pay. For those in the RET-2 category, PPC runs a report six (6) months out for those turning 60 and sends out a package on the process to begin receiving retired pay. The problem arises when these folks have moved and not provided PPC with their new address (could actually be decades between completing service and reaching age 60). Retirement eligible Reservists under the age of 60 need to remember to keep their mailing addresses up to date with PPC to help ensure they will begin to receive retired pay on time.

PSCS John Milkiewicz, USCGR (Ret) addressed the Council regarding the issue of the ‘RET-2’ transitioning process. Diverse issues surfaced due to a lack of understanding and knowledge by those responsible for managing the transition. The Council recommended that the entire process be reviewed. Standard operating procedures and training should be developed for the appropriate personnel that are charged with guiding Reservists through this process. A Reserve Transition Assistance Seminar (TAPS) should be considered. A well informed cadre will save the retirees’ time, effort, and possible loss of retirement pay.

There are ways you can get involved in today’s Coast Guard if you are so inclined and have the time. These include joining your Regional Retiree Council or starting one if it does not exist—see the “Eight Steps to Establishing a Regional Council” on Fred’s Place at the [Commandant’s National Retiree Council information page](#), joining the Coast Guard Auxiliary, and assisting the Work-Life Program. Today’s Coast Guard Auxiliary provides a broader range of support to Coast Guard missions. [America’s Volunteer Guardians](#) is strong and has

renewed focus and continues to offer an exceptional venue for retirees to continue to participate and give back to the Coast Guard.

Chapter 33 (Post 9/11 GI Bill) educational benefits is available to those who have served in the period post 11 September 2001. It is an exceptional benefit and a tremendous improvement over the previous Montgomery GI Bill. A unique feature is transferability to family members. However, this transferability may only be made while serving on active duty as it is a retention incentive (requires obligation of service). See [www.gibill.va.gov](http://www.gibill.va.gov) for complete information on the program. A GI Bill calculator is now available at <http://www.military.com/gi-bill-calculator>.

The CCGNRC program continues to mature with a cadre of highly dedicated retirees. We sincerely enjoy working with the Regional Council co-chairs in disseminating information important to retirees, ensuring your voices are heard by the Commandant and the Military Alliance/Coalition, and seeking support/nurturing Regional Council activities and involvement in the day to day Coast Guard. As Council Co-Chairs for the last number of years, we've seen the Council progress and grow in ways that are building nicely on the objectives set forth in the guiding Commandant Instruction—we remain focused on communication, connection and assistance to our retiree community and how retirees can bring value, or “make a difference,” for all of our Service's men and women, active duty and retired, Reserve, civilian and Auxiliary.

It is time to transition the Council to new leadership. To begin the process, RADM Ames will be relieved by RADM Ron Silva as Co-Chair of the Council effective 1 September 2010. We are delighted that Admiral Silva has agreed to serve the retiree community as he has a lot to offer to the Council. Ron is thrilled at the opportunity and looks forward to working with you over the next few years in this capacity.

Coast Guard For'er!

RADM Fred L. Ames, USCG (Ret.)

MCPOCG Vince Patton, USCG (Ret.)