



Coast Guard Flag Voice 03

Recruiting

The Commandant has stated that recruiting is absolutely critical to the Coast Guard's future. I have stated that as Assistant Commandant for Human Resources, my single most important priority is recruiting the workforce of tomorrow. If we don't find (and retain) the very best people our country has to offer, then as an organization we are not going anywhere.

In keeping with this focus, we briefed the Commandant today on the status of our workforce (active duty, Reserve and civilian) and our efforts to "fill the workforce." In summary, we've made little progress to increase our active duty numbers. With an increase in billets by about 340, the gap to full strength is predicted to be even wider at the end of this FY (-832 starting and -986 ending). On the Reserve side, if you include those Reservists on active duty, we've just held our own at about -656 (since the 157 on active duty are not counted, we actually show a decrease in full strength). The positive picture is on the civilian side, our recruiting efforts have helped to close the gap to 96% (-141), 1% under the historic "natural" lapse rate).

The reasons for this are manifold. A multitude of new recruiting and retention initiatives were undertaken for all of our workforce components, and overall retention remains fairly strong and consistent with historic values. For instance, of those qualified for reenlistment on the active duty side, the first term reenlistment rate is 65% and subsequent is 88%. However, our challenge, especially with a substantially smaller recruiting force (downsized in 94/95), has been steadily becoming greater with the booming economy. The propensity for today's youth to enlist in the Armed Forces is at an all time low, and the propensity for the CG in particular is even lower (7% vs. 30% for DoD). Competition from the other services is at unprecedented levels. The substantial propensity difference has much to do with our inability to get our message out to the "market" and generate interest in what we feel to be a great story -- "jobs that matter!" This "interest" gets turned into what the recruiting folks call "leads" for follow up by our recruiters.

I am working with the Commandant and Chief of Staff to increase our recruiting capabilities, and put in place a multi-year plan to get us back to strength. Simply, filling the workforce won't happen overnight, no matter how much we may wish it. In fact, if we don't do something about it now, the gaps are predicted to grow much larger. Recruiting is more of an art than a science, and it is taking an ever increasing amount of resources to be successful. We have a number of additional initiatives to be rolled out.

One of the most important involves all of you -- our entire Coast Guard workforce - active duty, Reserve, civilian and Auxiliary. This initiative -- "Every Coastie a Recruiter" -- is an effort to leverage

our units and workforces to be our recruiter multipliers. I will be asking that every unit assign a member to a collateral duty as "unit recruiter," and become the point of contact with the recruiting organization. We need to get you the tools (information, advertising material) so you can understand our needs, programs and processes to help us contact the quality youth that we need.

Please get in touch with your local recruiter and find out how you can help. Prominently display recruiting materials and encourage contact with recruiting during open houses, visiting youth groups, port visits and any special events that your unit either attends or hosts where the public is invited. Many potential recruiting opportunities, where an on-site recruiter could make a big difference, go lost because our recruiters don't know about them. And these are only suggestions, as I know there are many great ideas out there. We need your help, and in turn this helps you in getting your vacant billets filled.

Please call 1-800-GET-USCG today to get started!

Regards, FL Ames

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