



COAST GUARD NATIONAL RETIREE COUNCIL

"Coast Guard For'er"

Co-chairs
RADM Fred L. Ames, USCG Retired
MCPOCG Vincent W. Patton, USCG, Retired

13 July 2010

To: Commandant (G-C)
Via: Assistant Commandant for Human Resources (CG-1)
Subj: 2010 NATIONAL RETIREE COUNCIL MEETING REPORT

1. The Commandant of the Coast Guard National Retiree Council (CCGNRC) held its ninth annual meeting in accordance with COMDTINST 1800.5E from 26-29 April 2010 at Coast Guard Headquarters (Jemal Building). In addition to the Co-Chairs, nine (9) of the eleven (11) chartered regional Coast Guard Retiree Councils, CWO Fred Siegel of the Council-at-Large (Fred's Place), and the Civilian representative attended. Attendees are listed in the agenda, enclosure (1). Lois Ensrud is no longer available to travel and she has become an emeriti member. Our new Annuitant Representative will be Mrs. Lula Carpenter, wife of the late CAPT Lee Carpenter, USCG (Ret.).
2. This year, neither of the Co-Chairs was able to attend the other Services' retiree councils. There is an initiative to get all the Co-Chairs together to compare and contrast issues.
3. The Council had an ambitious agenda of briefings and discussions from staffs and organizations both within and external to the Coast Guard. This report serves two purposes—focusing on those issues of potential importance to retiree community and suggested issues for consideration by the Commandant and the Assistant Commandant for Human Resources.
4. The Council greatly appreciated the opportunity to hear from the Vice Commandant, Chief of Staff, Assistant Commandant for Human Resources, Commander, Personnel Service Center, and Director, Personnel Management. Understanding how full their agendas are, especially during the period of top leadership change, making time to address the Council was especially noteworthy and indicates the importance top leadership places on the retiree community.
5. The Council notes the continued exceptional support provided by the Military Coalition (www.themilitarycoalition.org), and especially the Military Officer Association of America (MOAA) and the Fleet Reserve Association (FRA) for this year's meeting. Besides the highly informative briefings, MOAA sponsored an annual lunch for the Council in the Commandant's Flag Mess on Wednesday and FRA hosted a reception for the Council at their Headquarters on Tuesday. The Council would like to thank VADM Currier and MCPOCG (then select) Michael Leavitt for joining us at the MOAA lunch. The Council greatly appreciates the continued support of Delta Dental in providing a comprehensive briefing as well as hosting our "welcome aboard" reception on Monday evening.
6. **Diversity Strategic Plan.** The Council received information from leadership concerning efforts to improve diverse representation throughout the Service, especially at the Coast Guard Academy. Through greater outreach and follow up this year, the Academy was able to substantially increase the number of high-qualified minority candidates during the

application process and hence improve the appointment rate. Average SATs for the Class of 2014 are the highest ever. Substantial progress is being made, but more needs to be done. The Council discussed this issue and how retirees might help contribute to recruiting success. Members felt that the regional retiree councils and the retiree community could be called on to assist in outreach to candidates or aid in reaching target institutions in their local areas. Flag leadership should communicate their commitment to diversity to the retiree community and ask us how we can help.

7. **Benefits.** The Council notes the continuing progress by the Military Coalition, working with the Administration and Congress, in obtaining important benefits for active duty and Reserve members, the retiree community, and their families. The Council continues to support those legislative initiatives that honor the men and women who serve everyday in harms way.
 - During the run up to the Healthcare legislation, there were numerous inaccurate messages about reductions in TRICARE benefits. MCPO-CG Vince Patton did his best in forwarding the true story, but the rumors were prolific. Although subsequent legislation put this issue to rest, we remain concerned with the message being sent by proposed increases in TRICARE enrollment fees and pharmacy co-pays. The Deficit Reduction Committee, commissioned by the White House, will likely consider such recommendations. The Council recognizes that changes may be necessary, given the substantial rise in healthcare costs and that enrollment fees haven't changed since TRICARE inception years ago. We continue to recommend that any changes be carefully vetted with thoughtful consideration of the long-term effects on the force.
 - The Council also is concerned over the 21% payment cut in Medicare/TRICARE payments that continue to loom. While Congress continues to pass stop-gap legislation that puts off the problem to a later date (currently 1 December 2010), allowing such reductions to go into effect would be devastating to the TRICARE program. Many providers of Medicare/TRICARE would simply stop seeing patients as their costs would no longer be covered.
8. **RET-2 Transitioning Process.** PSCS John Milkiewicz, USCGR (Ret) addressed the Council regarding the issue of the 'RET-2' transitioning process. This involves those Reservists who enter the 'gray area' retirement status, where they have met their service obligation for retirement, but have not reached the age of 60 to become eligible for retired pay. From his firsthand experience, transition for reservists was not comparable to that for active duty members. Diverse issues surfaced due to a lack of understanding and knowledge by those responsible for managing the transition (PowerPoint briefing available). It is highly 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.
9. **TRICARE.** The TRICARE website, www.tricare.osd.mil, is an exceptional healthcare information/access tool. Additionally, all Coast Guard members, especially retirees, should make note of the Coast Guard's toll-free health benefits advisor number, 1-800-9HBAHBA. All too often members are attempting to tackle complex issues on their own when expert help is readily available. As the Service goes through its realignment of

support services delivery, the Council appreciates that adequate provision is being made to ensure that the Coast Guard health benefits advisory service remains available.

10. **TRICARE Retiree Dental Program.** See www.trdp.org. Some important items to note:

- Delta Dental does not have a connection with DEERS; changes to DEERS status, such as dependents, must be transmitted to Delta Dental too.
- This program is immediately available to “gray area” (RET-2) Reservists.
- There is no waiting period if the member signs up within 120 days after retirement.
- Delta Dental has included enhanced benefits under the new contract (began 1 October 2008).
- Program goals: Publicize the program and increase enrollee satisfaction by continual improvement of benefits.

11. **CGHQ’s National Retiree Help Desk (NRHD).** This continues to be an exceptional example of Coasties helping their own.

- LCDR Dave DuPont, USCG (Ret.) provided this year’s update. The help desk continues to provide retirees and their dependents and survivors an important service as a “gatekeeper” to Coast Guard or veteran-related information. Also noted is that the email address has changed to: NRHDesk@gmail.com. Members of the Capital Area Council have taken on this mission and perform most of the “watchstander” duties. The NRHD has been set up to do this remotely and we have members outside of the Capital Area that do so very effectively (in five states). In fact, all watchstanders do so remotely from their home or office. Watchstanders call into the voice hotline and access voice inquiries as well as remotely accessing the gmail account during their duty. Seven to eight inquiries per week include diverse topics of retired pay, establishment of new regional councils, RAS issues, perspective retirees, etc.
- Members of the Council were again tasked with soliciting volunteers to stand the watch from wherever they may live. Operative information is included as enclosure (2). The Council sincerely appreciates the continued assistance provided by the Headquarters Support Command to maintain this capability—their support has played a major role in the success of the program.

12. **DEERS/RAPIDS Update.** CWO Joey Brown, Compensation Branch. Current initiatives included the civilian retiree ID card (see last year’s report for complete information); Volunteers Network Access Card (3-year DoD pilot; CG working to include Auxiliarists); SSN reduction plan (eliminate unnecessary and unsecure use of SSNs (DEERs enrollment will replace SSNs with 10-digit Electronic Data Interchange – Person Identifier (EDI-PI) number); and the Defense Biometric Identification System (DBIDS is a physical access control system that is used by the DOD to manage personnel, property and installation access; retirees may be required to register in DBIDS if they access one of the DOD installations that use it).

13. **Coast Guard Modernization Update Brief.** CDR Andrea M. Palermo, Change Management Staff. This modernization effort, which is more comprehensive and larger in scale than past efforts, will result in a systematic alignment of organization, function and processes that will enable the Coast Guard to better focus use of scarce resources, improve organizational functions, and continue to sustain mission execution as the CG

responds to new maritime threats, commercial maritime growth, and increased recreational maritime activity. Outcome goals of CG Modernization:

- Make our support systems more responsive to our operators;
- Make our force structure more responsive to mission execution; and
- Make our CG more responsive to our nation.

14. **USCG Fiscal Year 2011 Budget and Project Highlights.** LCDR Greg Matyas, Office of Budget and Programs. Continued recapitalization of aging assets and infrastructure is the Coast Guard's top priority in a tightening budget environment as part of the Administration's efforts to constrain Government spending. The FY 2011 budget focuses on recapitalization as vital to maintaining future surface, air, and shore asset capability. The budget redirects savings from efficiencies, consolidation initiatives, decommissionings, and capability reallocations to support highest priority acquisitions. Overall net change of operating expenses is an increase of \$87M and a decrease of 773 full time positions.
15. **Personnel Service Center (PSC).** RADML Dan Neptun, Commander. Initiatives include centralizing Reserve assignments, workforce shaping (to FY 2011 budget numbers), recruiting reservists, Concurrent Retirement & Disability Pay (still working issues with the VA), Post-9/11 Montgomery GI Bill transferability, and CG Exchange System growth.
16. **Pay and Personnel Center (PPC).** Ms. Debbie Farley, Chief, Retiree and Annuitant Services (RAS) Branch.
 - The Council remains concerned as to the level of resources available to support retirees. As part of the Most Effective Organization (MEO) competition, RAS staff shrank more than one-third.
 - The retiree records and pay system was the first to move to "Global Pay" effective 1 May 2008, as 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."
 - The Council notes that Retirees are now able to make a number of on-line changes to their profiles. The first two phases of Self-Service have been implemented and currently working on phase three. RAS has been receiving approximately 1000 phone calls/emails a month for resetting passwords, accounts being locked, etc.
 - State tax issues. When moving from one state to another and updating home mailing addresses, retirees must request a change for state tax as an address change does not automatically change or stop the state information that the tax is being paid to.
17. **"Gray Area" Retired Reservists.** Raised issue last year based on input from our NRHD handling several inquiries from RET-2 Reserve retirees on why they have not been receiving their required paperwork to place them in RET-1 status. In general, 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. A problem arises when these folks have moved and have not provided PPC with their new address. Currently, retirement eligible reservists under the age of 60 must remember to keep their mailing addresses up to date with PPC in order to ensure they begin receiving retired pay on time (or at all). This will continue to be an on-going challenge. The NRHD will continue to

have RET-2 retirees with these issues contact PPC. PSC response indicated that there may be success in sending out annual informational reminders to RET-2 members. RAS provided suggestions such as allowing Reservists' Self-Service on Direct Access to update addresses and phone numbers and running articles in the Reserve Magazine annually or biannually about keeping RAS updated on address changes. The Council concurs in these suggestions.

18. **DHS Headquarters Consolidation.** LT Matt Manofsky (SILC DET WASH PMB). Especially informative brief of the design and construction of the new USCG Headquarters at St. Elizabeths. The Council greatly appreciated the opportunity to get an inside look at this huge construction project.
19. **Social Media.** MCPO-CG Vince Patton. Overview of social media tools and how they can help the Council and the retiree community at large. These include quick and easy access of information dissemination, a simpler way to stay in touch as the users control what they want to see and how much, and low to no maintenance (minimizes administrative matters).
20. **Increasing the Number and Size of Regional Councils.**
 - As noted last two meetings, there are numerous areas of the U.S. with a sizeable retiree population and proximate Coast Guard units with no regional councils. A "one-pager" guide on how to establish and charter a council was developed three years ago and is posted on Fred's Place website (www.fredsplace.org) area of the Commandant's National Retiree Council. Fred's Place will be advertising for startup of new regional councils in Tampa, Gulf Area, St. Louis and New England.
 - The Capital Area Retiree Council has developed a welcome letter, enclosure (3), that is included in the military member retirement process for the National Capital region. This is an excellent initiative to make prospective retirees aware of the local regional council. As recommended last year, this letter is now also part of the retirement processing for all HQ's civilian retirees. We continue to recommend that other regional councils develop a similar letter for their local personnel offices.
 - We note that regional councils should strive to provide opportunities where their members can "make a difference." Volunteering to assist the Work-Life program, staffing a retiree's office at the local Coast Guard unit, and NRHD watchstanding are areas where we can make a contribution and will attract member involvement. Council activities should be driven by the desires, talents, skills and abilities of its members.
21. **Initiatives.** Our Council is focused on communication, connection and assistance to our retiree community and how retirees can bring value to the active/Reserve/civilian force. Two years ago we began reporting new initiatives that reflect this commitment.
 - Decedent affairs officers for the 13th Coast Guard District (Pacific Northwest Council). RADM Bert Kinghorn reported on their initiative to provide assistance to decedent affairs. He was pleased to report that this initiative is not necessary. The Coast Guard has made substantial improvements to the Decedent Affairs field response organization to a point where this assistance is not necessary. LT Terry Walsh was instrumental in drawing from best practices of the other services. The NW Council still stands ready to assist if necessary.

CCGNRC Report 2010

- Caregivers' Guide (Capital Area Council). Looking at reviving the development of a guide that would be a single source of critical entitlement information for caregivers (children, social workers, etc.) of aging Coast Guard retirees, dependents, and annuitants. It would link to those services provided by veterans and associated organizations.
- Including other retired service members in regional council activities (Northern California Council). This suggestion was wholeheartedly endorsed, especially in areas like Alameda where there is no other service presence. Noted that Retiree Days are excellent opportunities to reach out across Services. For example, the Greater Miami Council held a very successful retiree day with about 100 attendees. Noted that TRICARE and Delta Dental representatives are always willing to support retiree days.

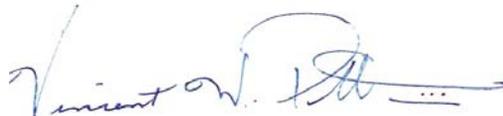
22. Summary.

- The CCGNRC program continues to mature with a cadre of highly dedicated retirees. 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. Members come ready to participate in ways to improve connections to the retiree community and "make a difference" for all of our Service's men and women, active duty and retired, Reserve, civilian and Auxiliary.
- We again note significant value is being provided to those Coast Guard units and surrounding retiree communities where there is "enlightened leadership" at the commands. Retirees who are willing to volunteer their time, skills, knowledge and expertise to the Coast Guard community leverage the commands' workforce. Those supportive commanders and commanding officers truly understand that for a minor investment in space, resources, and time, and a good dose of respect, pays substantial dividends. The Council salutes their insight and will continue to encourage others to step forward.

23. The Council would like to thank Mr. Curt Odom, Mr. John Byczek, and especially Mr. Clifford Samuel and CWO Joey Brown for their diligent work in setting up the meeting and support throughout the proceedings. BZ!



Fred L. Ames



Vincent W. Patton

Enclosures:

- (1) CCGNRC 2010 Agenda
- (2) National Retirees Help Desk
- (3) Capital Area Coast Guard Retiree Welcome Letter

Enclosure (1)

Commandant of the Coast Guard

National Retiree Council

Annual Meeting 2010



Jemal Building, 8th Floor, Room 08-1419

Monday, 26 April: Travel Day – Members arrive at Virginian Suites Hotel

1830 – Welcome Aboard Reception
Sponsored by Delta Dental
Hospitality Suite – Hotel

ATTENDEES

RADM Fred Ames
MCPOCG Vince Patton
RADM Bert Kinghorn
CAPT Bud Schneeweis
Ms. Susan Baicar
SCPO Mike White
CAPT Bill Wilkins
MCPO John Heaphy
BMCS Tommy Dutton
CAPT Ken Harrison
MCPO Bobby Wester
MCPO Adrian Rymer
CDR Geoffrey Kline
CWO Fred Siegel

CCGNRC Co-Chair
CCGNRC Co-Chair
Pacific Northwest (D13)
Capital Area/MOAA
Civilian (Ret.)
Capital Area
North Coast (D9)
East Central Florida
Hawaii
Greater Miami
First Coast (Jacksonville, FL)
Yorktown
Northern California (D11)
Council-at-Large

Commandant of the Coast Guard

National Retiree Council

Annual Meeting 2010



Jemal Building, 8th Floor, Room 08-1419

- Tuesday, 27 April:** 0730 – Depart Hotel
0815 – Pick up Badges in Lobby of Jemal Building
0830 – Welcome & Introductions
 Review Agenda/2009 Report
 → *RADM Ames/MCPOCG Patton*
0915 – Welcome Aboard
 → *Mr. Curtis Odom (CG-12)*
1015 – Administration & Logistics
 → *Mr. Cliff Samuel*
1030 – Coast Guard Modernization Brief
 → *CDR Andrea Palermo (CG-095)*
1100 – Delta Dental/Retiree Dental Program
 → *Mr. Tom McDavid*
1200 – Lunch
1300 – Retiree Healthcare Update
 → *CAPT Mark Freese (CG-11)*
1400 – CG PSC standup and operations
 → *RDML Dan Neptun*
1530 – 2011 Budget Brief
 → *LCDR Greg Matyas (CG-821)*

1730-1930 – FRA hosted reception

Commandant of the Coast Guard

National Retiree Council

Annual Meeting 2010



Jemal Building, 8th Floor, Room 08-1419

Wednesday, 28 April: 0745 – Depart Hotel
0830 – Review/Preps for Day
→ *RADM Ames/MCPOCG Patton*
0900 – PPC (RAS)
→ *Ms. Debbie Farley*
1045 – The Military Coalition (TMC) Briefings
→ *John Davis/FRA & Phil Odom/MOAA*
1200 – MOAA Luncheon in Flag Mess
1300 – Meet with Chief of Staff in Flag Mess
1400 – Return to Jemal Building
1430 - Update CGHQ Move to St. Elizabeth Campus
→ *LT Matt Manofsky (SILC DET WASH PMB)*

Commandant of the Coast Guard

National Retiree Council

Annual Meeting 2010



Jemal Building, 8th Floor, Room 08-1419

Thursday, 29 April: 0745 – Depart Hotel
0830 – Review/Preps for Day
→ *RADM Ames/MCPOCG Patton*
0900 – Travel Claims/Admin/Surveys
→ *CWO Joey Brown*
0930 – National Retiree Help Desk
→ *LCDR Dave DuPont, USCG (Ret.)*
0945 – Gray Area Reserve Retirement Process
→ *SCPO John Milkiewicz, USCGR (Ret.)*
1045 – Social Media
→ *MCPOCG Vince Patton, USCG (Ret.)*
1130 – Lunch
1230 – Open Mic; Individual Council Reports (cont.)
1330 – Decedent Affairs Officers D13 (Pacific NW Council)
→ TBD
1400 – Develop topic list for report
1500 – Closing Remarks
→ *RADM Ames/MCPOCG Patton*

Friday, 30 April: Travel Day; Have a Safe Trip Home

Enclosure (2)

National Retirees Help Desk

Background

Under the auspices of the Commandant of the Coast Guard National Retiree Council (CCGRNC) program, the **National Retiree Help Desk** serves as the United States Coast Guard Headquarters single point of contact in CG-1 to keep open a positive line of communications between the Coast Guard and the Coast Guard military retiree community in an effort to ensure the resources and capabilities of each are used to help resolve the needs of the other.

Voicemail: 202-475-5381 or 1-866-664-6245

General E-Mail Address: NRHDesk@gmail.com

Discussion

The National Retiree Help Desk (NRHD) has been in operation since July 2006 and is staffed by members of the Capital Area Coast Guard Retiree Council and other remote retiree volunteers.

The NRHD serves as a Headquarters point of contact for retirees needing assistance to determine to whom or where they should direct their inquiries. This has already proven to be a valuable communication channel between the active duty Coast Guard and the retiree community. In times of significant organizational change along with ever-changing benefits and retiree support programs, a well functioning NRHD is essential. The NRHD is not meant to curtail direct contact between retirees and the Coast Guard if the contact information is already known.

Watchstanding procedures, frequently asked questions (FAQs), a list of links with key programs and other resource material have been developed. Watchstanders are given a briefing on responsibilities; primarily they answer phone and e-mail inquiries. They are not expected to be an expert on Coast Guard programs and retiree-related information (benefits, healthcare, etc.), but rather as watchstanders they assist in directing the inquirer to the right source. The FAQs file is a good information source for the watchstander. Care is taken to minimize watchstanding duties. Watchstanders monitor the voicemail and e-mail account and respond in an appropriate and timely manner.

Volunteers Needed!

Volunteers stand the Help Desk “watch” for one week starting on Monday and ending on the following Sunday. It is not a “live” watch in the sense that the watchstander does not answer a telephone immediately, nor is the watchstander on line to perform a “chat” or instant messaging function. Instead, watchstanders are asked to periodically check the NRC Help Desk voicemail and e-mail accounts, to research answers to inquiries, and reply by phone or e-mail. Training with an experienced watchstander, along with resource materials, are available to all new volunteers. Serving as a NRC Help Desk volunteer does not take a lot of time, but it will allow you to help CG veterans and their families in need. For more information about volunteering, contact—

CAPT Bob Warakomsky (USCG, ret.) at bopakom@verizon.net or LCDR David Du Pont (USCG, ret.) at David.A.DuPont@uscg.mil.

Enclosure (3)



SERVICE CONTINUES

Capital Area Coast Guard Retiree Council
U.S. Coast Guard Headquarters (HSC)
2100 Second St. S.W
Washington, DC 20593

Congratulations on Your Retirement!

On behalf of all the Council members and the USCG DC area retirees welcome to the USCG DC area retiree family.

The Capital Area Coast Guard Retiree Council congratulates you on your well earned retirement and wishes you well in future.

USCG military, **both active duty and Reserve**, and civilian retirees are represented on the Council.

The Council:

- Meets quarterly at HQ
- Monitors issues of interest to USCG retirees, military, **both active duty and Reserve**, and civilian
- Maintains a Capital Area Coast Guard Retiree Council Website
<http://www.uscg.mil/ccs/carc>
- Provides timely notice of issues of interest to Capital Area Coast Guard Retiree via the Council "Google" e mail list and posts them on the Council web site.
- Issues a quarterly Newsletter
- Participates actively in the National Coast Guard Retiree Council Annual Meetings
- Sponsors an Annual Holiday Party

We hope you elect to be included on the Council e mail list and take an active interest in your Council.

To get added to the mail list you should contact Susan Baicar at susanbaicar2@mac.com. Please provide the following:

Name/Rank:

Address(s):

Phone Number:

Email:

Spouse name:

Thank you! Your Capital Area Coast Guard Retiree Council