



NAVAL ENLISTED
RESERVE ASSOCIATION
WINDY CITY CHAPTER



Jan-Feb 2015 Edition
P.O. Box 4562 Rockford, IL 61110
Volume 15, Edition 1

From the President's desk...

- PRESIDENT**
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- VICE-PRESIDENT**
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Paul Smurawski
- MASTER-AT-ARMS**
Steve Devereaux
- WEB MASTER**
Steve Devereaux

PRESIDENTS NOTES NOT AVAILABLE AT TIME OF THIS PRINT.

2/6/2015

WCC will meet at the Northlake American Legion Post on the 2nd Tuesday of even numbered months. Windy City Chapter is welcome to hold our meetings there every other month, at no cost to the chapter. ***The Post is located in Northlake on the South side of North Ave. (RT 64), West of Mannheim (RT 12/45) and East of Wolf RD.*** Butch, Kathleen, Ed, Paul, Anthony (Lewandowski) and Andy are all Nera members and members of this Post. Ed Whiteside is the Adjutant at the Post and has been for several years.

Mark Your Calendar: FEBRUARY 10, 2015 Meeting!!!

Meetings are conducted at 2000 hours on the second Tuesday of even numbered months:
At the American Legion Post in Northlake, IL

Windy City Chapter meeting minutes – December 2, 2014

List of Attendees:

- | | | | | | |
|-------------------|---------------|--------------|-----------------|--------------|-------------------------|
| Butch Michaelson | Ed Whiteside | Gene Koelker | Vicki Koehnke | Alan Koehnke | John Nickelson |
| Darlene Nickelson | Dennis Devitt | Larry Monroe | Steve Devereaux | Gene Huie | Kathy O'Cull Tom O'Cull |

At the time of the meeting, November / December newsletter was not available. A motion was made to defer the 10/14/2014 to the next scheduled meeting (Feb. 2015). MX-Ed Whiteside, 2X-Alan Koehnke.

Treasurer's Report:

A motion to accept the Treasures report as stated-
MX- Darlene Nickelson, 2 X- Larry Monroe.

Sunshine Fund: No activity to report.

Webmaster: No activity to report.

Old Business:

NERA challenge coins are available to purchase for
\$10.00 a piece. Contact Treasurer-Gene Koelker.

Elections:

The following officers were sworn in for the 2015-
2017 and they are as follows:

- President: Ed Whiteside
- Treasurer: Gene Koelker
- Secretary: Vicki Koehnke

The following officers: will be sworn in at a later
date. They are as follows:

- Vice President: Andy Anderson
- Executive Council: Paul Smurawski

Vicki Koehnke-Secretary, will be sending the above
list of 2015-2017 Officers to NERA Headquarters.

Sailor of the Year:

This topic will be tabled to the next meeting; our
Executive Council was not present at the Dec 2014
meeting.

Good of the Chapter-

-2014 Windy City Christmas Party will be held on
Saturday, January 10, 2015 at John & Darlene
Nickelson's House. **RSVP by DECEMBER
20, 2014** by contacting Darlene Nickelson at
(708)448-1300, email: bmcnick@sbcglobal.net, if you
will be attending and/or you cannot make the event,
plus if you will be bringing an appetizer or dessert to
share. The cost will be about \$10.00 but will have a
better cost once the caterer has been notified.

-Ed Whiteside won 50/50 raffle and Steve Devereaux
won the second out of 3 challenge coins.

New Business:

No new business to report.

-2015 Meeting dates:

- February 10, 2015
- April 14, 2015
- June 9, 2015
- August 11, 2015
- October 13, 2015
- December 1, 2015

-Life member, MA3 Richard Koehnke, passed his
Petty Office Third Class exam and will be frocked on
December 3, 2014 in Rota, Spain. Richard has also
been placed on the nomination list for Sailor of the
Quarter.

-Available to purchase are Girl Scout cookies, if
interested, please contact Ed Whiteside.
Motion to adjourn @ 20:47 X Gene Koelker, 2X Ed
Whiteside.

This year the Naval Enlisted Reserve Association
National Conference will be in Norfolk, VA.

The dates are: October 14 - 18, 2015

NERA's 58th Annual Conference

Join us at the:

Holiday Inn Norfolk Airport

1570 N. Military Hwy., Norfolk, VA 23502

To reserve a room:

Phone: (757) 213-2231

Fax: (757) 213-2232

Go to: nera.org for more information.

Navy Builds a New Class of Sea-Basing Ships



By [Kris Osborn](#) |

Thursday, January 29th, 2015 3:35 pm

Posted in [Naval](#), [Policy](#)

The Navy is making progress building a new class of ships configured for sea-basing and expeditionary missions as a way to help account for a shortage of amphibious assault ships and forward-position Marines, sailors, special operations forces, air assets and ship-to-shore connector vehicles, service officials said.

So far, the Navy has built and delivered two of five planned Mobile Landing Platforms, or MLPs — commercial oil ships re-engineered for military sea-basing and transport missions. In total, the service plans to build five MLPs with the last three termed Afloat Forward Staging Bases, or AFSBs — MLPs designed with a flight deck to support aviation operations.

“The delivery of MLPs 1 and 2 are complete. MLP 3 is under construction and will be the first AFSB variant,” said Lt. Kat Dransfield, Navy spokeswoman.

____ The MLP is a massive 80,000-ton, 785 foot-long commercial Alaska-class crude oil carrier configured to perform a range of military missions such as amphibious cargo on-load/off-load and logistics support. The MLP can reach speeds of 15 knots, has a draft of 29-feet and can carry a crew of 34.

The ship is engineered to ballast down and lower into the water, allowing three Landing Craft Air Cushion, or LCAC, lanes for amphibious loading and unloading and equipment transport such as vehicles and large land equipment and weapons. The MLP

has as much as 25,000 square feet of vehicle and equipment storage space on deck, Navy officials said explained.

“It’s a big ship. It has a huge amount of acreage on it. It looks like an oil tanker but it can ballast down. We’ve been splashing Navy hovercraft on it and bringing LCACs on it. We’ve also splashed amphibious assault vehicles off of it,” Vice Adm. Phillip Cullom, deputy chief of Naval operations for fleet readiness and logistics, said at the Surface Navy Association annual symposium, Arlington, Va.

The contract for MLP 4 has been awarded, and MLP 5 will be procured in fiscal year 2017, said Dransfield

US Lawmakers Expect Resistance to Granting Obama War Powers



Associated Press | Feb 06, 2015 | by Andrew Taylor and Nedra Pickler

WASHINGTON — Republican and Democratic leaders in Congress will face some resistance to a vote to authorize President Barack Obama's war against Islamic State militants despite international outrage over video of militants beheading their captives and [burning one alive](#).

War authorizations are among the most difficult issues to confront members of Congress. Several Democrats will be reluctant to approve new war powers unless there is a clear deadline or some way to pay for the military operation. Some Republicans, strong foes of the president, will object to giving Obama the authority.

Obama is poised in coming days to ask Congress for new authority to use U.S. military force against IS, the White House said Thursday. But the top House Republican warned it won't be easy to pass the measure. Speaker

John Boehner, R-Ohio, said it will be up to the president to rally support from lawmakers and the public.

"His actions are going to be an important part of trying for us to get the votes to actually pass an authorization," Boehner said Thursday. "This is not going to be an easy lift."

In the U.S. battle against IS, Obama has been relying on congressional authorizations that President George W. Bush used to justify military action after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks. Critics say the White House's use of post-9/11 congressional authorizations is a legal stretch at best.

Obama has insisted that he had the legal authority to send U.S. troops to train and assist Iraqi security forces, and to launch airstrikes since September against targets in Iraq and Syria. Now, the administration wants to get a new so-called Authorization for the Use of Military Force, or AUMF, with bipartisan support from Congress.

Panel Proposes Overhauling Military Retirement and Tricare

Jan 29, 2015 | by Brendan McGarry and Amy Bushatz



A blue-ribbon panel on military compensation and retirement recommended overhauling the decades-old [retirement system](#) for troops and the existing health care program for military families.

The long-awaited proposals, unveiled on Thursday after a nearly two-year study, include offering troops 401(k)-like retirement plans before they reach 20 years of service and replacing the existing [Tricare program](#) with a choice of commercial health insurance options.

The recommendations, 15 in total and influenced by surveys of troops and retirees, are sure to set off a massive political fight on Capitol Hill and beyond over the future of military compensation. Panel members said the efforts, if adopted by Congress, will give service members, retirees and their families more choice while saving \$12 billion a year in personnel costs by around 2040.

"We are unanimous in our belief that our recommendations strengthen the foundation of the all-volunteer force and ensure our national security, now and into the future," members said in a release.

Even so, they acknowledged that lawmakers may not embrace all, if any, of the ideas.

"We don't have a clue what Congress is going to do," Alphonso Maldon, the panel's chairman and a former assistant secretary of defense for force management and policy, said during a press conference in Arlington, Virginia, to discuss the findings. "It's my hope all of them will end up as legislation."

Retirement

Future service members could still opt to receive a version of the existing retirement plan, known as a defined-benefit, after two decades of service. However, the retirement pay -- a staple for more than a half-century -- would be reduced. The formula would be equal to 2 percent, rather than 2.5 percent, of the average basic pay for each year served.

With slightly lower annuities for careerists, the Defense Department could for the first time offer a 401(k)-like defined-contribution plan to the vast majority of troops, more than eight in 10, who leave before the 20-year mark and don't receive any retirement pay.

To do so, the Pentagon would automatically enroll troops into a Thrift Savings Plan, similar to other federal agencies, and provide matching contributions of up to 5 percent. Troops would be vested after just two years and could roll over the savings to a private-sector plan when they leave the military. They could elect out of the benefit, but would have to do so annually, officials said.

After 12 years, service members would be eligible for a lump-sum "continuation" payment equal to 2.5 months of basic pay for active-duty members, provided they agree to stay in the military for another four years. The payment is designed as a force-shaping tool to encourage service members to stay in the military, officials said.

Retiring troops could elect to receive their retirement pay in one of three ways: the standard monthly annuity, a lump-sum payment with a smaller monthly annuity, or a large cash payout with no monthly annuity. When eligible for Social Security benefits, those who chose the latter two options would receive the same monthly annuity as their peers who picked the standard option.

An E-7 retiring from active duty would have almost \$250,000 in retirement assets under the blended plan, including about \$161,000 in the defined-benefit value, \$39,000 in government contributions and \$31,000 in personal contributions to the Thrift Savings Plan (along

with investment returns), and \$17,000 in continuation pay, according to a chart in the commission's report. That compares to just slightly more than \$200,000 under the existing plan.

None of the proposals would affect the retirement pay of existing retirees or that slated for currently serving troops, though they would have the option to switch into the new retirement system.

Health care

The commission proposed doing away with the three Tricare plans for military families, reservists and working-age retirees, though none of its recommendations would affect Tricare for Life for elderly retirees.

The Tricare program has eroded in quality, become financially unsustainable and can't manage the rate at which beneficiaries use the service, according to the commission's report. "Since its creation, Tricare has deteriorated," it states. "The quality of Tricare benefits as experienced by service members and their families has decreased, and fiscal sustainability of the program has declined."

The new health care program, similar to the one for federal civilian employees, would allow recipients to choose from a list of commercial health care plans. It would be managed by the Office of Personnel Management rather than the Pentagon. Participating insurers would be required to include military treatment facilities as in their provider networks, with reduced co-pays and deductibles at military hospitals and clinics.

Even so, military families would have to pay co-pays at base facilities. As columnist Tom Philpott notes in a column on the panel's work, military families and working-age retirees "would have to pay five percent of health plan premiums," a share that would gradually increase to 20 percent of health care costs – until they're eligible for Medicare and Tricare for Life.

To cover the cost of most, if not all, out-of-pocket health care expenses, the panel would create a new Basic Allowance for Health Care, or BAHC. The benefit would be paid in part to the carrier and the family. It would be based on the costs of average medical, dental and vision plans available in a given location; and set at a level designed to cover health care costs or even afford a surplus, like with Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH). It could also be used to purchase health care through a spouse's employer.

In addition, the commission proposed expanding a current healthcare benefit for special needs family members known as ECHO to cover more services and mirror those covered by state Medicaid programs. Services would still be capped at \$36,000 a year, but more types of care would be covered, the panel recommended.

Commissaries

The commission also recommended combining the exchange and commissary systems under one "umbrella." As it stands now, the exchange, which receives some tax payer funding, mostly spent on shipping goods to rural and overseas locations, is operated by a trio of private companies across the services.

The companies sell goods at a profit and turn it back to base Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR) services. The Defense Commissary Agency (DeCA) receives a large amount of tax payer funding, sells groceries at cost plus a 5 percent surcharge, and is limited by law in what it can carry.

Under the MCRMC proposal, both agencies would combine. The new agency would sell food and essential groceries items at cost and other items now carried by the exchanges at a profit. And while it would continue to receive some tax payer money to operate and would continue to give some profit to MWR, it would also be more self-sufficient than the current DeCA model.

Expanding childcare service to military families is also highlighted as a priority in the report. Right now, officials wrote, on base childcare is difficult to access, has long waiting lists, outdated employee requirements and not enough workers thanks to hiring freezes. The Pentagon, they said, has no way of tracking the demand for care across the services.

The commission recommends establishing a mandatory waitlist tracking system to evaluate how quickly care is provided. They also suggested no longer subjecting child care facilities to hiring freezes while also building more care centers to increase availability.

The commission also recommends canceling the department's Family Subsistence Supplemental Allowance (FSSA) for stateside military families. That benefit, meant to be a cash replacement for food stamps, known as SNAP, was used by under 300 service members in 2013.

But families can receive a large payout under the SNAP program, the commission said. Doing away with FSSA will cancel out what they see as a duplicative program, they said.

Other family related recommendations included expanding Space-A travel to be available to families of service members deployed more than 30 days instead of 120, and establishing a national military child student identifier to track the educational progress of those students.

“Life is not measured by how many breaths we take,
But by the moments that take our breath away”