



NAVAL ENLISTED RESERVE ASSOCIATION

WINDY CITY CHAPTER



May-June 2015 Edition
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<p><u>PRESIDENT</u> Edward Whiteside ewhiteside@yahoo.com</p> <p><u>VICE-PRESIDENT</u> Andy Anderson</p> <p><u>SECRETARY</u> Vicky Koehnke</p> <p><u>TREASURER</u> Eugene Koelker genokoelker@yahoo.com</p> <p><u>EXECUTIVE COUNSELOR</u> Paul Smurawski</p> <p><u>MASTER-AT-ARMS</u> Steve Devereaux</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>N.E.R.A. Preamble</u></p> <p>-The security and future of this great Republic, depend in part, on the maintenance of a strong and well trained Coast Guard, Marine Corps and Naval Reserve Forces.</p> <p>-These forces consist primarily of enlisted personnel.</p> <p>-It is essential to the strength, effectiveness, and direction of these forces, that the enlisted membership contain a nucleus of dedicated career personnel.</p> <p>-In the interest of National Defense.</p> <p>-A voluntary, nonprofit organization shall be formed, with active membership comprised exclusively of Enlisted Reservists.</p> <p>-Dedicated and pledged to promote and maintain, by concerted mutual effort, career service in the United States Coast Guard, United States Marine Corps, and the United States Navy Reserve.</p>
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President's desk...

Hello Windy City Chapter,

In the April newsletter I said that the weather was becoming more hospitable. It's still becoming hospitable, but seems to be taking it's time. This month I will have to miss the meeting as I will be out of town for work. I'm sure we'll still have a great meeting, but I will miss seeing everyone. There are two items we need to have on the agenda:

- The first is that we need to designate our chapter delegates for the National Conference in October.
- The second is that we need to plan our summer family picnic.

I would like to ask if we can hold it at the "Club House"/Nickelson residence. We always have a great time, in no small part because John and Darlene are such great hosts.

Thank you,
Edward Whiteside

Mark Your Calendar: June 9, 2015 Meeting!!!

Meetings are conducted at 2000 hours on the second Tuesday of even numbered months:

At the American Legion Post #888 in Northlake, IL

List of Attendees:

Ed Whiteside	Gene Koelker	Paul Smurawski	Andy Anderson	Vicki Koehnke
Alan Koehnke	John Nickelson	Darlene Nickelson	Larry Monroe	Steve Devereaux
Gene Huie	Kathy O'Cull	Tom O'Cull	Verna Koelker	Bob Garza

WCC will meet at the Northlake American Legion Post on the 2nd Tuesday of months posted.

August, October, December

The Post is located in Northlake on the South side of North Ave., west of Mannheim and East of Wolf rd.

Windy City Chapter meeting minutes-April 14, 2015

Meeting of the Windy City Chapter convened at 20:00. President, Vice President, Treasurer, Executive Council and Secretary present. A quorum exists.

February 2015 newsletter correction- regarding Navy Ball contact Master Chief Jeff Kirby at 847-688-4862 ext. 119. MX-Gene Koelker, 2X-John Nickelson.

Treasurer's Report: Accept the Treasure report as stated-MX-Darlene Nickelson, 2 X- John Nickelson.

Sunshine Fund: No activity took place.

Executive Council: In March, Master Chief of the reserves is retiring & at the present time no replacement has been named. Also need to plan a visit to go back to Great Lakes and to discuss with Command Master Chief regarding CPO matters, JSOQ & SOQ sponsorships. MX-John Nickelson, 2X-Alan Koehnke.

Webmaster: No activity to report.

Old Business:

-Regarding JSOQ & SOQ, Gene Koelker brought in a sample of a multi tool, with several different gadgets on it with the NERA logo stamped on it, for the chapter members to view, so in the future we might purchase as chapter to present as a gift to JSOQ, SOQ winners, a chapter recruiting tool and/or chapter member can purchase

-Windy City Chapter Life Member Jim Premeske health is the same-stable condition. Please keep Jim in your prayers and thoughts.

New Business:

-Received 5 white tickets from Joe Watsons chapter for the 2015 NERA National conference for 1 free night at 2015 NERA conference. Motion to purchase tickets the 5 tickets for the free night at the conference. MX-Gene Koelker, 2X-Paul Smurawski

-Windy City Chapter inventory of the NERA's NAVY Reserve 100 year Commemorative Coin is has been restocked with 18 coins, which Gene Koelker has 10 in his possession and the other 8 will be in possession with Vicki

Koehnke, Chapter Secretary. Just a reminder, cost of the coins are \$10.00.

Good of the Chapter-

-Gene Huie won 50/50 raffle.

Motion to adjourn @ 21:00 MX-Alan Koehnke, 2X Steve Devereaux.

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

The dates are: October 14 - 18, 2015

Go to: nera.org for more information.

CO's name pulled from O-6 Selectees list



(Photo: MCC Donnie W. Ryan/Navy)

The promotion of the former commanding officer of the destroyer William P. Lawrence, who was faulted in the 2013 deaths of two helicopter pilots, has been put on hold.

Navy Secretary Ray Mabus stopped Cmdr. Jana Vavasseur's promotion to captain pending the outcome of a review from his office, said Cmdr. Chris Servello, spokesman for the chief of naval personnel. "Cmdr. Vavasseur's name is being withheld from the promotion list sent to the U.S. Senate for

confirmation while the Secretary of the Navy's Office considers the report of the investigation into the helicopter accident that occurred while Vavasseur was in command of USS William P. Lawrence," Servello said in a statement.

"The Secretary of the Navy is charged with sending promotion nominations to the Senate for confirmation and in doing so he determines whether the officers recommended by the Navy's promotion board are qualified for promotion."

Vavasseur's role in the 2013 accident that claimed the lives of Lt. Cmdr. Landon Jones and Chief Warrant Officer 3 Jonathan Gibson is the subject of intense debate in the Navy, and her selection to command another ship in late 2014 sparked outrage from the pilots' widows.

Theresa Jones, wife of Landon, said news that Mabus would review the case was a welcome development.

"I think some sort of scrutiny at this point would be good, because there hasn't really been any of that so far," she said. "I think that taking a closer review is a step in the right direction, but I guess it all depends on what they do with it from there."

Jones and Gibson, assigned to San Diego-based Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron 6, were killed when their MH-60S Knighthawk was washed off the flight deck of William P. Lawrence by a wave while it was chocked and chained to the deck with its rotors spinning.

The investigation found that a combination of heavy seas and a turn made at top speed caused the wave to wash over the flight deck, and it faulted Vavasseur for failing to take proper caution with a helicopter on deck.

Pacific Fleet boss Adm. Harry Harris said in his endorsement of the 2014 investigation that Vavasseur had taken "unnecessary risks during routine, yet inherently dangerous, shipboard helicopter operations."

But Harris stopped short of taking action that would have prevented Vavasseur from screening for major command.

Servello told Navy Times in December that Vavasseur received a nonpunitive counseling letter and that such letters are typically not included in the package presented to a command screening panel. Vavasseur's selection for captain was announced in an April message, along with all the other line officers selected for O-6.

Her selection was a virtual lock, given that she had already screened for major command. But the results set off another round of criticism from some aviators and the widows of Jones and Gibson, frustrated by a perceived lack of consequences in the wake of the deadly accident.

A defense official familiar with the decision said that Mabus is acting in accordance with regulations that require him to review "any finding from an investigation that may call into question professional judgment."

The official went on to say that it was Harris's endorsement of the investigation that triggered the SECNAV review.

Vavasseur will remain eligible for consideration until she retires, the official who spoke on background said, but future boards will be informed that her name was pulled from a previous promotion list prior to rendering judgement on her promotion, as per Navy regulations.

More money, fights for VA in Senate budget plan



Senate appropriators approved plans for nearly a 3 percent increase in the Veterans Affairs Department's budget next year, slightly above what House lawmakers approved earlier this month and slightly below what White House officials had asked for. The move all but guarantees the department will see yet another money boost next year, despite tightening budget and spending caps on most other federal agencies.

Since the start of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, VA's budget has risen by almost \$100 billion, nearly triple the department's total spending in the late 1990s.

But the Senate plan also sets up a potentially contentious summer conference fight over next year's VA budget.

Hill conservatives want to curb some of that growth and have pushed for reductions in VA construction funding until high-profile problems with the program are resolved. VA officials insist the White House's

full budget request is critical to keep outreach and reform efforts on track.

The Senate Appropriations Committee approved a total VA budget of \$163.7 billion for fiscal 2016 operations, about \$500 million above the House plan and \$850 million below the Obama administration's request.

The differences in the plans all come in discretionary spending, which totals \$69.2 billion in the Senate version.

The House plan would trim hundreds of millions in requested spending from major and minor construction accounts, while the Senate's would trim about \$100 million in requests for nonrecurring maintenance at medical facilities.

Both plans call for \$255 million less than the White House wants for Veterans Health Administration budget accounts, cuts that VA leaders have decried as potentially taking away medical care from tens of thousands of veterans.

But Republican planners say those accounts are fully funded without the extra boost, and have accused VA officials of not doing enough to be responsible fiscal stewards in many areas, particularly construction and administrative spending.

Democrats in both chambers objected to those trims and broader Republican plans to keep mandatory spending caps on a host of federal agencies in fiscal 2016, which they argued has limited spending even on the uncapped VA accounts.

The Senate committee bill must still pass the full Senate before conference committee work can begin on a final deal

Free admission to more than 2,000 museums

More than 2,000 museums — showcases of fine arts, science, history, nature and more, including dozens of children's museums — are offering free admission to active-duty, National Guard and Reserve members and their families this summer.

From Washington, D.C.'s Phillips Collection to the University of Hawaii's Lyon Arboretum, museums across the country are participating in sixth year of the Blue Star Museums program, which runs from Memorial Day, May 25, through Labor Day, Sept. 7. Military ID card holders and up to five family members can visit the participating museums free of charge. Blue Star Museums is a collaboration among museums across the country, the National

Endowment for the Arts, Blue Star Families and the Defense Department.

Last summer, more than 700,000 troops and family members visited museums in the program.

"The response has been so far beyond anything we ever imagined it to be," said Kathy Roth-Douquet, CEO of Blue Star Families, according to an announcement of an event at the Phillips Collection launching this year's program. "Museum-going enhances resilience, it broadens your perspective, it opens your mind to beauty and ideas and things that you might not have known before."

The [participating museums](#) are in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and American Samoa. Not every museum in the nation participates, but more are expected to join through the summer. Museums new to the program this year include the Museum of Contemporary Art in Jacksonville, Florida; the Duluth Children's Museum in Minnesota; the Space Station Museum in Novato, California; and the Lyon Arboretum at the University of Hawaii at Manoa. The Lyon Arboretum, for example, normally requests a \$5 donation per person for admission.



Marine Sgt. Jimmy Ochan and his son William enjoy their visit to the Phillips Collection at the 2015 launch event for Blue Star Museums.

(Photo: James Kegley)

Visitors can find a list of participating museums in their area at www.arts.gov/bluestarmuseums. It links to a map where you can click on a state and find the list of museums, with links to websites where information is available. You can also see the admission prices, and how much you're saving. For example, the military admission price at the San Diego Museum of Art is normally \$9.

"The gift that you give us through Blue Star Museums and the additional exposure and education and experience that our military families gain is valuable

for the whole country and the world because we share that as we go along," said Ellyn Dunford, wife of Marine Corps Commandant Gen. Joseph Dunford, at the launch event.

Commissary price increases in Senate bill

Lawmakers have taken a first step toward increasing prices in commissaries as well as privatizing the commissary system, in legislation approved by the Senate Armed Services Committee.

A proposal included in the committee's draft version of the 2016 defense authorization bill would strike the current law that requires commissaries to sell all items at cost and replace it with a provision that would require defense officials to mark up prices to pay for the operating expenses of the commissary system.

Today, the commissary system's annual \$1.4 billion budget covers those operating expenses precisely so commissary items can be sold at cost. That gives patrons average overall savings of about 30 percent compared to civilian stores outside installation gates, according to commissary officials.

The armed services committee also has agreed to the Defense Department's fiscal 2016 budget request for commissaries, a total of \$1.15 billion, which would be a \$322 million cut from this year's budget. That cut would force reductions in operating days and hours in most commissaries. DoD has floated a three-year plan to slash the commissary agency budget by \$1 billion. The proposal also would require DoD to develop a plan due by March 1 to privatize the Defense Commissary Agency, wholly or in part, and assess the potential costs and benefits of such a move. DoD would have to test its privatization plan in at least five commissaries chosen from the commissary agency's largest U.S. markets.

That two-year privatization pilot program would start "as soon as practicable" after the plan is submitted to the House and Senate Armed Services committees, according to the bill.

Defense officials would consult with "major grocery retailers" in the continental U.S. in crafting the plan, which would have to "ensure the provision of high quality grocery goods and products, discount savings to patrons, and high levels of customer satisfaction while achieving savings for the Department of Defense." However, the provision does not cite a specific level of savings for customers.

DoD also expand the test to allow commissary customers in the catchment areas where stores in the pilot programs are located to order and buy groceries online for home delivery.

Sen. Jim Inhofe, R-Okla., said he fought hard against the provision as the committee drafted its bill and plans to introduce an amendment on the Senate floor to reverse it when the legislation comes up for consideration by the full chamber.

Inhofe called the provision one of his "greatest disappointments" with the draft bill, adding that it ignores recommendations of the the Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission in January.

Joyce Raezer, executive director of the National Military Family Association, noted that the compensation commission also had reviewed the option of privatizing commissaries, but found that companies, including Wal-Mart, were uninterested.

The legislation also specifically calls for spreading the cost of shipping commissary items overseas to all customers worldwide so that overseas customers would not bear the brunt of that change. Joseph Jeu, DeCA's director, has said such a move would boost prices by 2 percent or less.

Under current law, commissary overseas shipping costs are funded with taxpayer dollars, so that patrons overseas pay the same prices as shoppers in the U.S. The Senate committee bill now goes to the full chamber for a vote. The House version of the annual defense bill has no similar provision, so if the commissary provisions remain in the final Senate bill, the issue will be discussed when House and Senate lawmakers meet later this year to reconcile their respective bills.

“Mistakes are stepping stones to success”