

## **FRA NewsBytes 02012019**

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#### **FRA Supports the Coast Guard**

Recently, the FRA's National President Bob Washington, National Executive Director Thomas Snee, and some National Headquarters Staff in conjunction with Branch 181, hosted a 'soup 'n sandwich' *appreciation and thank you* luncheon for Capital Region Coast Guard members and their families. Master Chief Petty Officer of the Coast Guard Jason Vanderhaden and his wife Amy also attended the lunch. Several children were in attendance and each received an FRA Coloring Book. The families also received a gift card and a 'heartfelt thanks' for their service. Many FRA Branches also made similar gestures of support during the government shutdown.

The partial shutdown has ended, at least for three weeks. While we welcome the Coast Guard personnel getting paid, FRA is pushing for a longer solution between legislators and the President and hope it can be obtained before the next funding deadline. While a temporary funding solution may be in place, it's important for legislators to remember that during the government shutdown, members of the Coast Guard safeguarded our waterways. They blocked attempts to smuggle illegal drugs and contraband into the country, all without pay. With the government re-opened, these workers will get now their back pay.

FRA supports the "Pay Our Coast Guard Act" (S.21/H.R.367) provides continuing appropriations to the U.S. Coast Guard for any period during which interim or full-year appropriations for the Coast Guard are not in effect.

This issue is posted on the [FRA Action Center](#) to provide Shipmates an opportunity to weigh in on this issue.

#### **Court Victory for Blue Water Navy Veterans**

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit in Washington DC has ruled in favor of Agent Orange/Blue Water Navy veterans in *Procopio vs. Wilkie* (No. 15-4082). The petitioner argued on behalf of Blue Water Veterans saying that Navy veteran, Mr. Procopio, who never stepped foot on land in Vietnam, was exposed to Agent Orange during his military service off the coast of the Republic of Vietnam. Due to this exposure, he developed medical conditions consistent with other veterans who served on land and were exposed to Agent Orange. Therefore, he should be entitled to a presumptive category and thereby eligible for benefits.

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) defended their position saying that according to current law and science there is not enough evidence to connect Procopio's ailments to his exposure and thereby justify giving this Blue Water veteran presumptive coverage. Both sides argued Congressional intent when it enacted the Agent Orange Act of 1991.

It is still unclear if the VA will appeal or address these issues in the *Gray v. Wilkie* case scheduled to be heard by The Supreme Court of the United States (SCOTUS) on February 25, 2019. That case, first reported in the 1/22/16 *NewsBytes*, will decide if the VA considered service in Vietnam as service on its land-mass or in its inland waterways, but not open deep-water coastal ports and harbors, is arbitrary and capricious. Please see the 1/18/19 *NewsBytes* for further details on this case.

The FRA is not waiting on the courts to prevail on this issue. Members are urged to weigh in on this issue on the [FRA Action Center](#).

### **Navy Secretary Denies Camp Lejeune Contaminated Water Claims**

Secretary of the Navy Richard Spencer recently announced the Navy would deny 4,400 claims from Marines, sailors and their families who say contaminated water at Camp Lejeune caused cancers and other serious illnesses. The Navy Secretary said that despite the Navy's acknowledgement there were harmful cleaning solvents and fuels that may have been connected to cancers found in Camp Lejeune personnel from 1953 to 1987, he decided to deny claims from those Lejeune lawsuits.

This denial of claims is not related to FRA-supported "Honoring America's Veterans and Caring for Camp Lejeune Families Act" (H.R.1627- P.L.112-154) that was signed into law by President Obama in August 2012. The enacted bill provides hospital care and medical services for certain illnesses and conditions for veterans and family members who were stationed at Camp LeJeune, N.C., during the period of contamination (1957-1987).

### **FRA Recognizes Outstanding USN Performers**

FRA continued its long-standing tradition of recognizing superior performance by honoring the Navy's 2018 Recruiters of the Year (ROYs) including a special ceremony at the U.S. Navy Memorial, FRA hosted lunch on Capitol Hill and a coordinated a tour of the Capital. FRA's National President (NP) Bob Washington, National Vice President (NVP) Donna Jansky, National Executive Director Tom Snee, RPEC Randy Phlipp, RPREC Claire Purdy, LA FRA RPEC Cristina Dixon and members of FRA's Headquarters staff participated in these events honoring the Navy's 2018 Recruiters of the Year (ROYs). Congratulations to the following outstanding recruiters:

- AC Enlisted Recruiter of the Year, ICC (SW/AW/IW) Hilary A. Martin, Navy Recruiting District Richmond;
- RC Enlisted Recruiter of the Year, NC1(IW) Carmen I. Vega, Navy Recruiting District San Francisco;
- AC Officer Recruiter of the Year, CM1 Raymond Estrella, Navy Recruiting District San Diego;
- RC Officer Recruiter of the Year, NCC(SS) James A. Boswell, Navy Recruiting District Houston;
- Chaplain Program Recruiter of the Year, AWOCs(NAC/AW) Jason E. Vaught, Navy Recruiting District Dallas;
- Medical Officer Program Recruiter of the Year, NC1 Tyrone T. Thomas, Navy Recruiting District Richmond;
- Officer Nuclear Recruiter of the Year, LT Andrew Dzyuba, Navy Recruiting District Chicago;
- NSW/NSO Recruiter of the Year, IC1(SW/AW) Marco A. Paas, Navy Recruiting District Ohio;
- LPO of the Year, MM1(SW/AW) Jamain Gholston, Navy Recruiting District Atlanta;
- Discipline Director of the Year, NCC Andrew C. Moses, Navy Talent Acquisition Group Northern Plains;
- DLCPO of the Year, NCC(SW/AW) Sandra L. Kimball, Navy Recruiting District Miami;
- Classifier of the Year, ETV1(SS) Christopher Carr, Navy Recruiting District Ohio;
- Enlisted Nuclear Field Recruiter of the Year, CS2(SW) Davaile D. Durham, Navy Recruiting District San Francisco;
- NAVTALACGRU Sourcer and Sales of the Year, CE1 Caroline Ballard, Navy Talent Acquisition Group Rocky Mountain;
- NAVTALACGRU Assessor of the Year, EMN1(SW/AW) Megan P. Willis, Navy Talent Acquisition Group Portland;
- NAVTALACGRU Onboarder of the Year, NC1(SW) Nicholas J. Juliano, Navy Talent Acquisition Group Rocky Mountain;
- Support Person of the Year, PS2(SW) Julia Shkunda, Navy Talent Acquisition Group Northern Plains;
- NAVCRUITCOM NRD Gold "R" Award, Navy Recruiting District Miami; and
- NAVCRUITCOM NTAG Gold "R" Award, Navy Talent Acquisition Group Rocky Mountain.

The Association has been a supporter of this recognition program since its inception and is proud to continue the tradition of acknowledging excellence.

### **IB Report on VA MISSION Act Implementation**

The Association supports the Independent Budget (IB) recommendations that were recently released and co-authored by Disabled American Veterans (DAV), Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA) and Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW). The IB has served as a guide for funding the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) for 32 years.

The IB Veterans Service Organizations (VSO) determined that the implementation of the VA MISSION Act (P.L. 115-182) rises above every other policy priority for the next two years (116th Congress). They have chosen to deviate

from the longstanding practice of enumerating multiple critical issues for the upcoming session of congress and focus on the implementation of the VA MISSION Act.

The VA MISSION Act (S.2372) was signed into law by President Trump on June 6, 2018 (P. L.115-182). The FRA-supported bill will do the following:

- Expanding the VA Caregiver program to include all disabled veterans;
- Consolidating seven VA community care programs into one to improve access to care;
- Funding for the VA Choice program; and
- Auditing VA infrastructure.
- The expansion of the VA Caregiver program to include all disabled veterans (currently program is available only veterans who were seriously disabled on or after September 11, 2001.) is a major victory for FRA.