The Reserve Officers Association's Legislative Agenda for 2009

ROA's 2009 Legislative Priorities

- Reset the whole force to include fully funding equipment and training for the National Guard and Reserves.
- Provide adequate resources and authorities to support the current recruiting and retention requirements of the Reserves and National Guard.
- Support warriors, families, and survivors.
- Assure that the Reserve and National Guard continue in a key national defense role, both at home and abroad.

Issues to Help FUND, EQUIP, AND TRAIN

- Advocate for timely, adequate funding to maintain national defense during the Global War on Terrorism.
- Advocate for both the Reserve and Reservists, protecting the mission and contributions being made by Guard and Reserve members.
- Support Active and Reserve end-strengths that support mission requirements.
- Regenerate the Reserve Components with field-compatible equipment.
- Fully fund Military Pay Appropriation to guarantee a minimum of 48 drills and two weeks of training.
- Sustain authorization and appropriation to the National Guard and Reserve Equipment Account (NGREA) to permit flexibility for Reserve chiefs in support of mission and readiness needs.
- Optimize funding for additional training, preparation, and operational support.
- Keep Active and Reserve personnel and operation & maintenance funding separate.

Issues to DEFINE the Reserve Component

- Work with Congress and Department of Defense (DoD) to implement recommendations of the Commission on the National Guard and Reserve:
  - Analyze proposed plans of action;
  - Support requested studies;
  - Suggest alternatives when necessary.

Issues to Assist RECRUITING AND RETENTION

Access:

- Monitor access of military recruiters to institutions of higher education, providing the same access as other employers.

Changes to Retention Policies:

- Permit service limitations beyond the current Reserve Officers Personnel Management Act (ROPMA).
- Support incentives for affiliation, reenlistment, retention, and continuation in the Reserve Components.

Mobilization:

- Oversee the Department of Army's policy to place Reservists' on Permanent Change of Station (PCS) orders for mobilizations over a year in length.
- Provide differential pay for deployed federal employees.

Pay and Compensation:

- Reimburse a Reserve Component member for expenses incurred in connection with round-trip travel in excess of 100 miles to an inactive training location, including mileage traveled and lodging and subsistence.
- Obtain professional pay for Reserve Component medical professionals, consistent with the Active Component.
- Eliminate the 1/30th rule for Aviation Career Incentive Pay, Career Enlisted Flyers Incentive Pay, Diving Special-Duty Pay, and Hazardous-Duty Incentive Pay.
- Simplify the Reserve duty order system without compromising drill compensation.
- Protect and improve legislation restricting payday loans.

Education:

- Include U.S. Public Health Service and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Corps members in the new GI Bill.
- Increase Montgomery GI Bill–Selected Reserve (MGIB–SR) to 47 percent of MGIB–Active.
- Include four-year reenlistment contracts to qualify for MGIB–SR.
- Enact Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA) and Servicemembers Civil Relief Act (SCRA) protections for mobilized Guard and Reserve students, granting academic leave of absences, protecting academic standing, and tuition and fee refund guarantees.
- Adjust interest rates on federal student loans of mobilized Reservists when the market rate drops below 6 percent.

Employer Support:

- Enact tax credits for health care and differential pay expenses for deployed Reserve Component employees.
- Provide tax credits to offset costs for temporary replacements of deployed Reserve Component employees.
- Support tax credits to employers who hire servicemembers who have served in the Global War on Terrorism.

Employee Support:

- Permit delays or exemptions while mobilized of regularly scheduled mandatory continuing education and licensing/certification/promotion exams.
- Support establishment of a law center dedicated to USERRA /SCRA problems of deployed Active and Reserve servicemembers.

Health Care:

- Improve continuity of health care for all drilling Reservists and their families by:
  - Monitoring the implementation of DoD paying a stipend toward employer's health care for dependents.
  - Allowing gray-area retirees to buy-in to Tricare.
  - Allowing demobilized retirees and Reservists involuntarily returning to Individual Ready Reserve (IRR) to qualify for subsidized Tricare Reserve Select (TRS) coverage.
  - Providing TRS coverage to mobilization-ready IRR members; levels of subsidy vary for different levels of readiness.
- Fund restorative dental care prior to mobilization.
- Extend military coverage for restorative dental care following deployment.
- Evaluate the Post-Deployment Medical Evaluation process.

Spouse Support:

- Repeal the partial Survivor Benefits Plan's Dependency Indemnity Clause offset.
- Provide employment protection and provide family leave for spouses and family caregivers of mobilized Guard and Reserve for a period of time prior to or following the deployment of the military member.

Deferred Benefits and Retirement:

- Extend current early retirement legislation retroactively to Sept. 11, 2001.
- Continue to promote better legislation on reducing the Reserve Component retirement age.
- Permit mobilized retirees with less than two years of activated service to earn additional retirement points.
- Modify U.S. Code that requires repayment of separation bonuses if an individual has earned a Uniformed Service retirement annuity.
- Continue to protect and sustain existing retirement benefits for currently retired.

Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act and Servicemembers' Civil Relief Act:

- Enact USERRA/SCRA protections for mobilized Guard and Reserve students.
- Improve SCRA to protect deployed members from creditors who willfully violate SCRA.
- Fix USERRA/SCRA to protect health-care coverage of returning servicemembers and families for pre-existing conditions, and for continuation of prior group or individual insurance.
- Enact USERRA protections for employees who require regularly scheduled mandatory continuing education and licensing/certification and make necessary changes to USERRA to strengthen employment and reemployment protections.
- Exempt Reserve Component members from federal law enforcement retirement application age restrictions when deployment intervenes in completing the application to buy back retirement eligibility.
- Amend the SCRA to prohibit a court from modifying any previous judgment that would change the custody arrangements for a child of a servicemember deployed in support of a contingency operation.
- Encourage federal agencies to abide by USERRA/SCRA standards.

Veterans Affairs (VA):

- Calculate years of service for disability retired pay under Section 12732 of USC Title 10 for Reserve Component members wounded or injured in combat.
- Extend veterans preference to those Reserve Component members serving more than 180 days.
- Permit Guard and Reserve members with 20 years of good service to qualify for veteran status.
- Make permanent Reserve Component VA Home Loan Guarantees expiring in September 2009.
- Seek equity between Active Component and Reserve Component programs on VA Home Loan fees.
- Support burial eligibility for deceased gray-area retirees at Arlington National Cemetery.
- Continue to seek timely and comprehensive implementation of concurrent receipt for servicemembers with disabilities receiving retired pay and VA disability compensation.

Voting:

- Ensure that every deployed servicemember has an opportunity to vote by:
  - Working with the Federal Voting Assistance Program.
  - Supporting electronic voting.
- Ensure that every military absentee ballot is counted.

Service-Specific Issues:

The Army, Naval Services, and Air Force Affairs Directors provide service-specific legislative agendas. Contact them by calling 1-800-809-9448.

On the Web: ROA resolutions, position papers, and white papers supporting these initiatives are available at www.roa.org/advocate. Or contact CAPT Marshall Hanson, director of legislation and military policy, at mhanson@roa.org or 800-809-9448 ext. 713.