

Statement for the Record

Reserve Officers Association and Reserve Enlisted Association

**for the Subcommittee on Military Personnel
House Armed Services Committee**

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“Serving Citizen Warriors through Advocacy and Education since 1922.”™



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The Reserve Officers and Reserve Enlisted Associations are member-supported organizations. Neither ROA nor REA have received grants, sub-grants, contracts, or subcontracts from the federal government in the past three years. All other activities and services of the associations are accomplished free of any direct federal funding.

The Reserve Officers Association of the United States (ROA) is a professional association representing our nation's seven uniformed services. Founded in 1922, ROA was formed as a permanent institution dedicated to National Defense, with a goal to teach America about the dangers of unpreparedness. Chartered by Congress in 1950, ROA's objective is to: "...support and promote the development and execution of a military policy for the United States that will provide adequate National Security." The mission of ROA is to advocate strong Reserve Components and national security, and to support Reservists and their families in their military and civilian lives.

The Reserve Enlisted Association is an advocate for the enlisted men and women of the United States Military Reserve Components in support of National Security and Homeland Defense, with emphasis on the readiness, training, and quality of life issues affecting their welfare and that of their families and survivors. REA is the only Joint Reserve association representing enlisted reservists – all ranks from all five branches of the military.

ROA and REA are members of The Military Coalition, where ROA co-chairs the Tax and Social Security Committee. Both are also members of the National Military and Veterans Alliance, and the Associations for America's Defense.



On behalf of our members, the Reserve Officers and the Reserve Enlisted Associations thank the committee for the opportunity to submit testimony on military personnel issues. ROA and REA applaud the ongoing efforts by Congress to address readiness, recruiting and retention as evidenced by incentives in several provisions included in the FY-2010 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA).

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Issues supported by the Reserve Officers and Reserve Enlisted Associations not covered by the TMC include:

Changes to retention policies to:

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

Education:

- Include 4-year reenlistment contracts to qualify for MGIB-SR.
- Extend MGIB-SR eligibility for 10 years beyond separation or transfer from a paid billet

Mobilization

- Permit Reservists the option of accumulating leave between active duty orders, as well as selling it back.

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, lodging and subsistence.
- Obtain professional pay for Reserve Component medical professionals, consistent with the Active Component.
- Simplify the Reserve duty order system without compromising drill compensation.

Health Care:

- Improve continuity of health care for all drilling Reservists and their families by:
 - Allowing gray-area retirees to buy-in to TRICARE by mid-2010.
 - Providing Continuing Health Benefit Plan to traditional Drilling Reservists who are beneficiaries of TRICARE Reserve Select but are separated from the Selected Reserve to provide COBRA protections.
 - Permitting active members in the Individual Ready Reserve (IRR) who qualify for a 20-year retirement to buy-into TRICARE.
 - Allowing demobilized Retirees and Reservists involuntarily returning to IRR to qualify for subsidized TRS coverage.
 - Providing TRS coverage to mobilization ready IRR members; levels of subsidy would vary for different levels of readiness.
 - Improving post deployment medical and mental health evaluations of returning Reserve Component members.
 - Providing an option for Reservists where DoD pays a stipend to employers.
- Extend military coverage for restorative dental care following deployment to 90 days.
- Encourage a discussion on health care costs between Congress, DoD and non-profits to include TRICARE fees.

READINESS DISCUSSION

Operational versus strategic missions for the Reserve Component: In an era of constrained budgets, a capable and sustainable Reserve and National Guard is a cost-effective element of national security. National security demands both a strategic and an operational reserve. The operational reserve requires a more significant investment of training and equipment resources, and places greater demands on its personnel as compared to the strategic reserve. Those serving in operational reserve units must be fully aware of the commitment required to maintain the expected level of readiness. A similar awareness and commitment is necessary for those responsible for providing resources to the operational reserve.

Planners also must recognize that few individuals can remain in the operational reserve for an entire career. There will be times when family, education, civilian career, and the other demands competing for their time and talents take priority. Such an approach requires the ability to move freely and without penalty between the operational and strategic elements of the Reserve Component as a continuum of service.

Each service has its own force generation models and the services organize, train and equip their Reserve Components to a prescribed level of readiness prior to mobilization to limit post-mobilization training and to maximize operational deployment time. **ROA and REA urge Congress to continue to support and fund each service's authority to manage the readiness of its own reserve forces as one model does not fit all.**

End Strength and Preparedness: It is noted that the only active service component to suffer cuts in the FY-2011 proposed budget was the Coast Guard which will have a reduction of 1,100 personnel. The other active components appear to maintain their end strengths with inclusion of temporary increases for the Army and the Navy. It should be remembered that individuals cannot be brought quickly on to active duty on a temporary basis, but it is an accumulation of experience and training that is acquired over years that becomes an asset for the military.

Traditionally, it has been the Reserve Component that has provided the temporary surge to fill-in the active duty numbers. The end strengths included in the President's budget appear to maintain current numbers. **ROA and REA are concerned that the ongoing cuts to the Navy's Reserve will continue and this is a trend that needs to be reversed.** A new manpower study needs to be done and published by the Navy Reserve as well as the other service Reserve components to calculate the actual manning level: this study should be driven by readiness and not budgetary requirements.

With pending withdrawals from Iraq and Afghanistan, there is already talk within the beltway about future cuts to military end strength to help offset rising deficits. Without external threats, the USA has traditionally reduced the size of its armed forces. But since the 1990's the Pentagon has recommended proportional cuts be taken in the Reserve Component when taken in the Active force. This reasoning fails in many ways. It results in a hollowing out of the force and preparedness, undermines morale, and undercuts retention. National security is put at risk. There is a need to maintain a national position of readiness, and the Reserve component is a cost-effective solution of being prepared. **Should cuts be taken in the Active Component, the Reserve Component should grow in size to allow a place for readiness capability.**

PROPOSED LEGISLATION

Retirement - ROA and REA again thank the committee for passing the early retirement benefit in the Fiscal Year 2008 National Defense Authorization Act, as a good first step toward changing the retirement compensation for serving Guard and Reserve members, but... Guard and Reserve members feel that this change in law doesn't match the change in the roles and missions asked of the Reserve Component. Non-regular retirement compensation requires further updating.

1) **ROA and REA endorse S.831**, National Guard and Reserve Retired Pay Equity Act of 2009, which is a corrective measure to the Fiscal Year 2008 National Defense Authorization Act, including those Guard and Reserve members who have been mobilized since 9/11/2001. Over 600,000 were unfairly excluded. We realize the expense of this corrective measure scored by CBO is \$2.1 billion over ten years, but feel that offset dollars can be found.

ROA and REA agree that a retirement plan, at least for the Reserve Component, should be based on accrual of active and inactive duty. Early retirement should not be based on the type of service, but on the aggregate of duty. It shouldn't matter if a member's contributions were paid or non-paid; inactive duty, active duty for training, special works or for mobilization. Under a continuum of service, this approach would provide both the Active or Reserve Component members with an element of personal control to determine when they retire and will encourage increased frequency of service beyond 20 years within the Reserve.

2) An additional problem arises for O-4 officers who, after a break in service, have returned to the Reserve Component. After being encouraged to return a number of officers find they are not eligible for non-regular retirement. When reaching 20 years of commissioned service they find

they may have only 15 good federal years. Current policy allows these individuals to have only 24 years of commissioned time to earn 20 good federal years.

Additionally, facing an ongoing shortage of mid-grade officers (O-2 to O-3), Congress should reexamine the DOPMA and ROPMA laws to permit O-3s without prior enlisted service to be able to retire at 20 years of service. Many of badly needed skillsets that the services would like to retain are being discharged because of the structure of the current law.

ROA urges Congress to make changes in U.S. Code to allow O-3s and O-4s with 14 to 15 good federal years to remain on Active Duty or in the Reserve until they qualify for regular or non-regular retirement.

Education

1) *Montgomery "GI" Bill-Selected Reserve (MGIB-SR)*: To assist in recruiting efforts for the Marine Corps Reserve and the other uniformed services, **ROA and REA urge Congress to reduce the obligation period to qualify for MGIB-SR** (Section 1606) from six years in the Selected Reserve to four years in the Selected Reserve plus four years in the Individual Ready Reserve, thereby remaining a mobilization asset for eight years.

2) *Extending MGIB-SR eligibility beyond Selected Reserve Status*: Because of funding constraints, no Reserve Component member will be guaranteed a full career without some period in a non-pay status. BRAC realignments are also restructuring the RC force and reducing available paid billets. Whether attached to a volunteer unit or as an individual mobilization augmentee, this status represents periods of drilling without pay. **MGIB-SR eligibility should extend for 10 years beyond separation or transfer from a paid billet.**

Leadership

U.S. Code Title 10, sections 3038 and 8038, both state that the Army and Air Force Reserve Chiefs may only be selected from general officers from that component's reserve, yet the Navy and the Marine Corps can select its reserve leadership from either active or reserve flag officers. (U.S. Code Title 10, section 5143 only requires the President to appoint the Chief of Navy Reserve from flag officers of the Navy, and section 5144 only requires the President to appoint the Commander, Marine Forces Reserve, from general officers of the Marine Corps.) The Reserve Chief of a service's reserve should have an understanding of both the citizen warriors who are reporting to him or her, and the system through which the report. **ROA urges the Congress to change sections 5143 and 5144 of US Code Title 10 to only permit appointments from the service's Reserve Component.**

HEALTH CARE DISCUSSION

1) **ROA and REA hold concerns over the implementation of TRICARE for gray area retirees.** Rear Admiral Christine S. Hunter has shared that enrollment could be as early as July or as late as November 2010, and that it might be regionally rolled out. DoD wants to treat Reserve gray area retirees as a separate health care risk group which will likely drive up the cost of health care premiums as well. **ROA and REA hope that the committee will ask hard questions at a future hearing about the process, as individuals in the health care industry question the length of time and the approach being taken.**

2) Sustaining Reserve Health care. ROA and REA were disappointed to learn that the *Continued Health Care Benefit Plan* is only allowed to members of the Selected Reserve if they have had a tour of active duty within the previous 18 months by DoD. This is denying COBRA protections for traditional Reservists who haven't be activated, and even overlooks the Secretary of Defense's directive to mobilize National Guard and Reserve members one year out of six, which would be a dwell time of 60 months between call-ups. There is little cost as the beneficiary pays a premium of 102 percent of TRICARE Cost.

A continuity of health care is needed if a continuum of service is to be seriously considered. Just as an active force needs to be provided military health, the Reserve Component needs to have a seamless health protection during different duty statuses. As discharged active service members have the benefit of the Continuing Health Care Benefit Plan, those Guard and Reserve members who have signed up for TRICARE Reserve Select need to have protections when they leave the Selected Reserve.

ROA and REA encourage Congress to work with the Pentagon to open up Reserve Component member access to the Continued Health Care Benefit Plan to any TRICARE Reserve Select beneficiary separating from the Selected Reserve under conditions that are not punitive in nature.

3) Dental Readiness. Currently, dental readiness has one of the largest impacts on mobilization. The action by Congress in the FY-2010 NDAA was a good step forward, but still more needs to be done. Because there are inadequate dental assets at Military Treatment Facilities for active members, active families, and reservists, **ROA and REA further recommend that dental restoration be included as part of the six months TAMP period following demobilization.** DoD should cover full costs for restoration, but it could be tied into the TRICARE Dental program for cost and quality assurance.

CONCLUSION

ROA and REA reiterate our profound gratitude for the progress achieved by this committee by providing parity on pay and compensation between the Active and Reserve Components, with the sub-committee also understanding the difference in service between the two components.

ROA and REA look forward to working with the personnel sub-committee where we can present solutions to these and other issues, and offers our support in anyway.



ROA and testimony, position papers, and resolutions can be found at www.roa.org/advocacy.