



THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE NAVY  
(MANPOWER AND RESERVE AFFAIRS)  
1000 NAVY PENTAGON  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20350-1000

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AUG 07 2018

From: Gregory J. Slavonic, Assistant Secretary of the Navy (Manpower and Reserve Affairs)  
To: Co-Chairs, Secretary of the Navy's Retiree Council  
Subj: SECRETARIAT RESPONSE TO THE 2017 SECRETARY OF THE NAVY'S RETIREE COUNCIL REPORT  
Ref: (a) SECNAVINST 5420.169J  
(b) 2017 Secretary of the Navy Retiree Council Report, dated October 30, 2017

1. The Secretary of the Navy's Retiree Council (hereafter referred to as "the Council") met at the Washington Navy Yard August 21-24, 2017, pursuant to reference (a). I have reviewed the Council's 2017 report reference (b) and am pleased to provide the following responses and actions regarding each issue.

**2. Issue 2017-01: Temporary Disability Retired List (TDRL) Process.**

a. Council's Issue Description: Reference (b) described the TDRL process as "protracted" and "complex" and that it "imposes a significant administrative burden and cost on the system and service member." While applauding the recent statutory change reducing maximum tenure on the TDRL from five years to three years, the Council identified several problems, namely:

*"...service members not receiving notifications, personal health challenges interfering with the service member's ability to comply with regulations, a cumbersome, outdated web-based tracking system at the Physical Evaluation Board (PEB), lack of a single web-based system connecting Service Headquarters, BUMED, and the PEB, multiple stakeholders and operational lines resulting in bureaucratic delays and communication / coordination challenges, and inadequate staffing."*

b. Council's Proposed Solution/Recommendation: In reference (b), the Council recommended that the Department of the Navy (DON):

*"(1) Analyze their processes to ascertain why [proportionately, Army and Air Force have a smaller percentage of personnel in the TDRL pipeline] to determine if there is an opportunity to improve the DON TDRL program.*

*"(2) Encourage DoD to coordinate with the VA to adapt and share a standardized history and physical examination template.*

*"(3) Increase collaboration among MMSR and PERS-95, the VA, and all military treatment facilities to conduct physical exams and share examination results in a timely manner in order to make fitness determinations. Encourage PERS-95 to obtain permissions and training for access to VA health records for Service members on TDRL.*

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*“(4) Adequately fund an updated, integrated web-based system to track TDRL service members from beginning to end. Include the multiple stakeholders and operational lines in the planning process, and ensure USN and USMC have consistent access to the system.*

*“(5) Ensure adequate resources/staffing - including sufficient numbers of Integrated Disability Evaluation System (IDES) attorneys and case managers - to expedite, and guide service members through, the TDRL process.*

*“(6) [Explore] whether potential avenues exist to realign the USN Wounded Warrior-Safe Harbor (NWW-SH) Program in a manner similar to the USMC Wounded Warrior.”*

c. Secretariat Response: The TDRL process can be complex and administratively challenging both for the Services and the Service member. As noted in reference (b), Section 525 of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2017 (FY17) reduced the maximum length of time members may spend on the TDRL from five years to three years for any member newly placed on the TDRL on or after January 1, 2017. This change is an important step in reducing the tenure that members may spend awaiting final determination and has been implemented by both the Navy and the Marine Corps. The Navy and Marine Corps are confident that the TDRL process is adequately manned and resourced, and functions as intended. Nevertheless, as noted in the table below the Secretariat concurs with a number of the issues highlighted by the Council and is, and will continue to, seek ways to improve and streamline the TDRL process. DON is continuing to work through the Office of DoD / VA Collaboration to improve information sharing with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and to utilize newer IT processes for tracking Service members in the TDRL review process. In response to the Council's specific recommendations, the Secretariat provides the following:

<p><i>(1) Analyze Army and Air Force processes to ascertain why they have a smaller percentage of personnel in the TDRL pipeline to determine if there is an opportunity to improve the DON TDRL program.</i></p>	<p>The DON is aware of how the Army, Air Force and Navy programs are structurally different. This said, improvements have been made to the DON TDRL program. Specifically, BUMED transitioned the TDRL process to a secure and protected web-based IT platform, automating and improving the existing process. The PEB is making a conscious effort to resolve issues via the first physical exam; in first quarter FY18 98% of members were adjudicated on the first exam. Existing quality control inspections show that the PEB is compliant with existing statute and policy.</p>
<p><i>(2) Encourage DoD to coordinate with the VA to adapt and share a standardized history and physical examination template.</i></p>	<p>Concur. The DoD Healthcare Management System Modernization (DHMSM) Program Management Office is overseeing the development and deployment of Military Health System (MHS) GENESIS designed to standardize, simplify and streamline various</p>

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	<p>health care applications. DON will continue to work with OSD's Office of DOD and VA Collaboration to improve standardization.</p>
<p><i>(3) Increase collaboration among MMSR and PERS-95, the VA, and all military treatment facilities to conduct physical exams and share examination results in a timely manner in order to make fitness determinations. Encourage PERS-95 to obtain permissions and training for access to VA health records for Service members on TDRL.</i></p>	<p>Concur. Increased collaboration is essential. BUMED has improved its TDRL process and is actively enhancing its partnering with external organizations. PERS-95 is pursuing increased access to the Armed Forces Health Longitudinal Technology Application (AHLTA) for Senior Medical Officers and specific case managers. AHLTA gives healthcare providers access to data about beneficiaries' conditions, prescriptions, diagnostic tests and additional information essential to providing quality care. AHLTA and other legacy systems will be replaced during the implementation of DoD Healthcare Management System Modernization (DHMSM). Additionally, BUMED has initiated an online periodic physical exam (PPE) to expedite information sharing.</p>
<p><i>(4) Adequately fund an updated, integrated web-based system to track TDRL service members from beginning to end. Include the multiple stakeholders and operational lines in the planning process, and ensure USN and USMC have consistent access to the system.</i></p>	<p>Concur. The Navy has transitioned to the LIMDU SMART IT platform that provides a common operating picture and tracking/management allowing for real-time visibility and accountability of the Navy and USMC TDRL population. The application leverages electronic workflows which will improve coordination between Service HQ, BUMED, and PEB. MMSR-4 received live demo/training in November 2017 and is coordinating the demo/training with PEB/PERS-95.</p>
<p><i>(5) Ensure adequate resources/staffing - including sufficient numbers of Integrated Disability Evaluation System (IDES) attorneys and case managers - to expedite, and guide service members through, the TDRL process.</i></p>	<p>The TDRL process currently has adequate resources and manpower. This process has improved with the addition of LIMDU SMART and AHLTA use. PERS-95 uses Active Duty for Special Work (ADSW) personnel to meet its mission. The process will improve greatly with the completed implementation of the DHMSM.</p>

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*(6) Explore whether potential avenues exist to realign the USN Wounded Warrior-Safe Harbor (NWW-SH) Program in a manner similar to the USMC Wounded Warrior.*

Navy's personnel distribution structure does not support the establishment of a TDRL-specific unit similar to Marine Corps' Wounded Warrior Regiment. Individuals are placed in a limited duty status, medical hold status, or processed to the TDRL or permanent disability retired list. The NWW-SH is a voluntary program that helps service members focus on their recovery, while its team of experts resolves non-medical problems and prepares the member for transition back to active duty or civilian life.

**3. Issue 2017-02: Retirement Benefit Calculator for Reservists and Gray Area Retirees.**

a. Council's Issue Description: In reference (b), the Council noted that there are approximately 107,577 Navy reserve sailors and 102,676 Marines reservists and that retention of those members "depends in large measure on knowing and understanding their accrued retirement benefits well before they retired...that information is neither uniformly distributed nor proactively reinforced." The Council also noted that the Army has a reserve retired pay calculator, but which is not accessible to members of the Navy and Marine Corps.

b. Council's Proposed Solution/Recommendation: In reference (b), the Council recommended that "OPNAV (N170) coordinate with OPNAV (N095) and Marine Corps MMSR to develop reserve-oriented retirement materials that delineate benefits Reservists and gray area retirees and their families can expect."

c. Secretariat Response: Since reference (b) was issued, the Secretariat is pleased to share that several efforts have been undertaken that will largely satisfy this issue. Initially, the Navy deployed a retirement calculator on the Navy Standard Integrated Personnel System (NSIPS), under the Career Information Management section. This requires a Common Access Card (CAC), and provides some capability for current active and reserve sailors to calculate estimated retirement benefits. Further, the Office of the Secretary of Defense is developing a comprehensive DoD-wide retirement calculator that will be available on a public-facing website and accessible by current members, gray-area retirees, and retirees. This calculator will provide the desired capability to project future retired pay at any point in a member's career based on variables such as length of service and final estimated rank while taking into account future COLA. This calculator is being developed by Defense Media Activity to mirror many of the more advanced capabilities resident in the Blended Retirement System Comparison Calculator, which was deployed in 2017.

**4. Issue 2016-03: Absence of Retirement Guidance for Reserve Component**

a. Council's Issue Description: Reference (b) identified that "there is no transition course for RC members when they retire from drilling status, or upon reaching retirement age (normally

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60 years old). Members who retire from the RC prior to age 60 are termed “Gray Area” retirees, and there is no specific transitional course for these individuals. In contrast, the active component has a standardized transition course (T-GPS).”

b. Council’s Proposed Solution/Recommendation: In reference (b), the Council recommended that:

*“(1) ... Commander, Naval Reserve Force (COMNAVRESFOR)... develop a T-GPS [“Transition GPS”, i.e., transition assistance program] program tailored for RC members entering the Gray Area, acknowledging the differences between retiring RC and Active Component members. This could be a half to full day course taught in conjunction with the normal T-GPS class. There is a locally-developed course being implemented at NOSC Phoenix that might serve as an example.*

*“(2) In the alternative, NPC continue to refine efforts to consolidate and, if necessary, develop online resources providing guidance for RC members applying for retirement pay, TRICARE, and other benefits. It would be useful to include webinar/video-based classes easily understandable to RC members who have been away from the service for a number of years.*

*“(3) As RC retirement and other retiree-related guidance/training is provided/modified, distribute the information to Navy RAOs [Retired Activities Offices] so they are better able to assist RC members and their families.*

*“(4) Recommend NPC make contact with RC members up to six months before to retirement age to confirm data needed to process retirement pay.”*

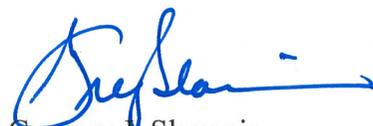
c. Secretariat Response: Improved training, education, and access to information for retiring sailors and Marines – active or reserve – is an imperative. DON concurs that there are a number of ways the Services can continue to improve resources for retiring reserve members entering the “gray area.” In response to the Council’s specific recommendations:

<p><i>(1) Ideally, Commander, Naval Reserve Force (COMNAVRESFOR) would develop a T-GPS program tailored for RC members entering the Gray Area, acknowledging the differences between retiring RC and Active Component members. This could be a half to full day course taught in conjunction with the normal T-GPS class. There is a locally-developed course being implemented at NOSC Phoenix that might serve as an example.</i></p>	<p>The existing T-GPS program is open and available to transitioning reserve members. The materials necessary to conduct a transition brief/course are also available online. Finally, local area transition coordinators are empowered to request retirement briefings for reserve retirees and can tailor those programs to suit reserve members entering the gray area. We will continue to further explore.</p>
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<p><i>(2) NPC continue to refine efforts to consolidate and, if necessary, develop online resources providing guidance for RC members applying for retirement pay, TRICARE, and other benefits. It would be useful to include webinar/video-based classes easily understandable to RC members who have been away from the service for a number of years.</i></p>	<p>Concur. PERS-91 is pursuing alternative training options, in conjunction with DFAS, for webinar and PowerPoint training that would be widely applicable to retiring reserve members.</p>
<p><i>(3) As RC retirement and other retiree-related guidance/training is provided/ modified, distribute the information to Navy RAOs so they are better able to assist RC members and their families.</i></p>	<p>Concur. In coordination with PERS-91, OPNAV 170C Retired Activities Office will provide additional training to RAOs concerning reserve retirement and other retiree-related information. The NPC reserve (non-regular) retirements webpage provides information concerning reserve retirements.</p>
<p><i>(4) Recommend NPC make contact with RC members up to six months before to retirement age to confirm data needed to process retirement pay.</i></p>	<p>Complete. Both the Navy and Marine Corps already require contact, including mailing the application for retired pay, at least six months prior to when a gray-area retiree reaches the age of eligibility for retired pay.</p>

5. Please convey my thanks to the entire Council for the ongoing diligence pursuing issues of significant impact to our retired Sailors and Marines. I ask that you continue this important mission and bring to my attention those issues most pressing for retirees. I welcome further discussion and look forward to your continued work in 2018!



Gregory J. Slavonic

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OPNAV N1  
MMSR-6