

**NAVY DEPARTMENT BRANCH 181
Thursday September 3, 2015, 1800**

OPENING CEREMONIES: Meeting convened at 1808 hours.

Attendance: Stephen Tassin, President; Orin Hatton, Vice President; PRPEC Chris Slawinski, Sec/Treasurer; PRPEC Robert Washington, Sr., Junior Past President; Al Thompson (BOD); NED Tom Snee (BOD)(excused); NEDE Joe Barnes (BOD); Honorary Shipmate James Short; GUESTS: Glenn Thompson; Al Thompson III.

August Minutes distributed. Minutes stand approved.

BOD Recommendations: None

REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES:

Americanism Essay Contest:

First essay received via mail, will provide to committee for consideration.

Audit, Budget & Finance:

No report.

Hospitals, Welfare, and Rehabilitation:

Notification of the passing of the following Shipmates: None this month

Legislative Service: President Obama sent a letter to House and Senate leaders to notify them that he will cap military pay raises at 1.3 percent next year as a way to reduce defense spending. In the letter, he called the reduction as “unfortunate but necessary.” The president noted that administration officials do not believe smaller pay increase (1.3 percent vs. 2.3 percent) will hinder recruitment and retention.

If it stands, the 1.3 percent raise will be the third consecutive year of increases that fall short of estimated private-sector wage growth, and will widen the gap between military and civilian salaries. For an E-4 with three years of service, the difference between the two potential pay raises would total about \$268 a year. A 1.3 percent raise would follow in the wake of 1 percent raises in both 2014 and 2015; the lowest annual military pay increases in the all-volunteer era that began in 1973.

The House version of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA-H.R. 1735) provides a 2.3 percent pay raise for troops—equal to a private-sector pay increase—but the Senate NDAA (S. 1376) accepted the Administration’s request for a lower 1.3 percent hike. FRA has urged legislators who are reconciling differences between the two bills to accept the House increase and to suspend the President’s authority to change the pay increase by regulation for one-year.

As it has for the past 15 years, FRA continues to fight hard to get Congress to reduce the gap between private sector and military pay and keep military pay raises at least in line with civilian pay growth.

In keeping with the commitment to improve transparency in the Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) processes, the VA recently released current patient access data and is highlighting notable access improvements.

The information includes the following:

1. The VA completed more than 61.5 million appointments between July 1, 2014 and July 31, 2015. This represents an increase of 2.36 million more appointments than were completed during the same time period in 2013–2014.
2. VA created over 2.7 million authorizations for veterans to receive care in the private sector between August 16, 2014 and August 15, 2015. This represents a 21 percent increase in authorizations compared to the period ranging from August 2013 to August 2014.
3. VA completed 97 percent of appointments in July 2015 within 30 days of the clinically indicated or veteran's preferred date; 92 percent within 14 days; 87 percent within 7 days; and 22 percent actually completed on the same day.
4. Between June 1, 2014, and August 15, 2015, the electronic wait list went from 56,000 appointments to 40,067, a 28 percent reduction

Since the passing of the Agent Orange Act in 1991, scientists and medical professionals have learned to understand the toxic wounds of war and how many diseases are connected with exposure to the Agent Orange herbicide. The Agent Orange Act is set to expire at the end of September 2015; should it do so, the VA would no longer be required to review the National Academy of Sciences' (NAS) report, denying thousands of veterans their right to compensation. However, Congressman Tim Walz (Minn.) has recently introduced the "Agent Orange Extension Act," (H.R. 3423), which will extend benefits from the Agent Orange Act for two years, giving the NAS enough time to finish its report and for the VA to review its findings.

Walz stated that it is imperative to make sure that Vietnam veterans who were exposed to Agent Orange receive the compensation and care they deserve. "I think sometimes we forget, especially folks who are a little younger, how big that deal was in 1991 when we finally added Agent Orange as a cause of these diseases, and I just don't want to let this slip away before we make sure we've covered it all." The NAS is expected to publish its final report on Agent Orange exposure by March of 2016. FRA is committed to seeing to that this extension legislation is enacted.

Central Liaison Committee:

The next CLC meeting will be Saturday, October 24, 2015, 1400, at Branch 67, Suitland, MD.

Membership and Retention:

Current members as of August 31, 2015	<u>299</u>	
Past Due	<u>6</u>	
Members in Good Standing	<u>293</u>	(+4/64 % / 280)

Installation/Holiday Brunch:

Work is in progress for the celebration of Shipmate Al Thompson's 100th birthday (October 6, 2015).

Next event is the Branch Christmas Brunch; Secretary will contact Spates Community Club to secure a room in early December.

Treasurer's Report:
As of August 31, 2015

PCT	8/18/2015	Aug PCT	\$277.75
TOTAL INCOME			\$277.75
PREVIOUS BALANCE	(BUDGET - EXPENSES + INCOME)		\$8,408.60
TOTAL MONTHLY INCOME			\$277.75
TOTAL MONTHLY EXPENSES			\$362.00
ENDING BALANCE			\$8,324.35
		SURPLUS/(DEFICIT)	(\$175.65)
CASH IN THE BANK	As of 9/2/2015 (Online)		\$3,375.86
CHECKING BALANCE	As of 9/2/2015 (Online)		\$1,866.29
PCT. BUDGET EXPENDED	\$2,771.90		33%

Correspondence:

- Chairman of B&F Committee, Proposed 2016 Budget
- FO Steve Cox Financial Statement June 30, 2015
- September Membership Newsletter
- Items for sale
- 88th National Convention Newsletter #3
- NED Memorandum 8-15, Resolutions for consideration
- Membership Letter for Shipmate S. Tassin
- Membership Letter for Shipmate S. Tassin

Unfinished or Deferred Business:

None

New Business:

A discussion was held on the National Resolutions for consideration at the 88th FRA National Convention in Spokane, WA (October 14 - 17, 2015). A motion was made to have the Branch delegates to go "uninstructed" and if need be, caucus to decide on any issue or candidate. Motion approved.

A motion was made to designate PRPEC Bob Washington as delegate chairman; motion approved.

A motion was made to authorize the Branch delegate chairman to add or delete delegates as required at the 88th FRA National convention; motion approved.

No other new business.

Good of the Order:

Shipmates and Protocol guests were given the right to speak on any topic.

NEDE Barnes informed the assembly that the 2015 -16 scholarship cycle for FRA Educational Foundation began on September 1, 2015. Several scholarships have not been awarded (Benn) due to no qualified applicants (\$2000 awarded to child of Navy Corpsman who served with USMC.) Applications and information can be found at www.fra.org/foundation

Time and Place:

Next Branch meeting will be Thursday, October 1, 2015 @ at 1800, at The American Legion Post 139, 3445 North Washington Blvd., Arlington, VA.

Meeting adjourned at 1840 hours.

Stephen M. Tassin
FRA Branch 181 President

Christopher J. Slawinski
FRA Branch 181 Secretary/Treasurer

www.frabranch181.org