

Second Session of the 108th Congress

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The President of the United States, George Bush, with Captain and Mrs. Ike Puzon.

As the second session of the 108th Congress begins, the “new” Naval Reserve has arrived. The transformation of the Navy’s Reserve is on a track that ensures that the Navy takes full and total ownership of what the Navy and Congress used to consider through public law (which has not really changed) as the Naval Reserve Force. It is my desire and full intention fully to support and defend these changes when they truly are transformational and good for the service and our nation. I feel that we owe it to those who are trying to transform the Navy and the former Naval Reserve Force to give it all we have. And, our legislative effort will reflect that we are supporting the transformation.

In full support of this change, with the resolutions of the Naval Reserve Association as our guide, we continue to be strong advocates for those members of the “former” Naval Reserve Force – past, present, drilling Reservists, Ready Reserve members, and those who wear the uniform every day. It is our desire to focus on legislative effort in the following areas:

*** Retention and recruiting improvements for whatever happens to the force –**

- o Health care improvements, and continuation of TRICARE for Reserve/Guard.

- o Support retirement improvement for current drilling Reserve members.

- o Operations support improvements.
- o SBP improvements for retired members, surviving spouses, and those working towards retirement.

- o Relating to Improved Montgomery GI Bill Benefits: Congress is urged to improve the benefits of the Montgomery GI Bills by setting financial support to keep pace with the rising costs of education, not just the cost of living, and to offer an education contribution option to the members of the Reserve Component similar to active duty.

*** Force structure issues –**

- o Support for hearings on the Guard and Reserve usage and improvements.
- o Support for a Commission on Guard and Reserve for the 21st Century.
- o Review of the full integration of Reserve members and units.

*** Tax improvements –**

- o Support for the employers of Guard and Reserve members.
- o First time enlistment and second term reenlistment bonuses. Amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to exclude from gross income any enlistment, accession, reenlistment, or retention bonus paid to a member of the Armed Services.

*** Recalled Reservist remaining on Reserve promotion lists –**

- o Congress is urged to amend 10 USC 115(d) to exclude these and other Reserve Component officers for the duration of their recall from counting against active duty strength limitations should they be promoted off the RASL, while under voluntary recall under the provisions of 10 USC 641.

These are areas of our emphasis, with an overall eye on advocacy for those members who have served, those who are serving, and those who will serve in the Reserve Component of the Navy. The national military strategy can not be met without the use of current day Reserve Components. This is unlikely to change for the foreseeable future. Our concentration is on the members of the Reserve Force, no matter when they served, as well as active members, no matter what their official or unofficial name.

I invite our members to review past legislative efforts of the Naval Reserve Association and to provide us input on your focus. I, also, invite nonmembers to review current Navy policy and our resolutions, then to give me feedback on what you believe is the right emphasis.

Note: One member of the NRA believes that I erroneously reported the outcome of use of the Naval Reserve Force during the 1960’s, and that the mobilization of the Naval Reserve Force had failed. Please see his letter to the editor. I note that the writer points out that the mobilization of his unit was a success and formidable. I also note that overall policy towards use of the Naval Reserve Force still suffered from the “pools” of people during that time frame, where equipment exposure was limited. That policy appears to be very much a part of Navy current plans and policy. The overall issue: Did the Reserve Component members have access to train, and train on equipment?