



Shipmate National Officers, Regional Officers, Past Regional Officers, Shipmates and guests:

I have just returned from the East Coast Mid-Year Meeting. It was great to see so many Shipmates from our region. I'm sorry not all Branches were able to send a representative. Start planning now to send your Branch delegate(s) to the East Coast Convention.

Packets for the East Coast Convention were handed out to those present at the Mid-Year. Besides hotel information, these packets includes ways for your Branch and Shipmates to support the region's convention. Please mark your calendars and make your hotel reservations; July 23-26 at the Hilton Garden Inn Richmond Innsbrook. Detailed information and web links are on the East Coast website; as information is received, the webpage will be updated.

**Before the Convention:**

Raffle Tickets - please return the stubs with a \$ donation.

Buy an Advertisement - we want to see photos of you and your Branch! You can purchase sizes between business card, 1/2 page or full page - color or black/white. Have fun with it!

Luncheons & Banquet Dinner - the cost of these meals also offsets the price of the room rentals throughout the week. The Welcome Aboard and Banquet includes a fabulous DJ!

**During the Convention:**

Daily 50/50 - there are usually multiple - \$1, \$5, \$20

Hospitality Room - hang out and socialize; there are usually drinks, snacks and games. The theme is America's Semiquincentennial (half of 500 years)!

As Regional President, I have attended all Branch meetings in the state of Maryland (4, 24, 67, 93, 181, 182, 212), they are all in fine working order!

Scheduled Regional President's visits to Branches:

- |                         |                          |                         |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| February 15, Branch 37. | February 16, Branch 166. | February 17, Branch 40. |
| March 9, Branch 301.    | March 10, Branch 208.    | March 11, Branch 99.    |
| March 17, Branch 123.   | March 18, Branch 41.     | March 19, Branch 219.   |

March 21, Branch 299.

TBA, Branch 172.

TBA, Branch 293.

TBA, Branch 309.

In January, I had the opportunity to attend a House Committee Veteran Affairs round table discussion about scams. Evil scammers target our young active military, elder veterans and everyone in-between. Now with A.I., there is more manipulation that can be used to gain trust from potential victims. Some of these professional criminals will befriend you for months before implementing their schemes. They will convince a person to invest in a new crypto-currency where there is a refundable 300% gain on the first transfer of funds; This transaction is real. Trust is established and the investor-victim transfers their life savings expecting the same results; Sadly they lose whatever they have invested. There have been cases where the victim convinces their family and friends to do the same because the return investment was so high and they believed it to be real.

Closer to home, many Shipmates have received an urgent e-mail from “ECRP, Valerie Toulotte” or another FRA Officer asking for a transfer of funds or photos of gift cards purchased from a local store. These scammers are able to access your names, titles, contact information, and relationships from our websites. Due to the urgency that these requests demand (the sender is too busy to talk, or traveling and doesn’t have access to phone or WiFi), please call or start a new e-mail to [RPEC@FRA.org](mailto:RPEC@FRA.org) if you are uncertain. **DO NOT SEND MONEY OR GIFT CARDS - THE FRA IS NOT ASKING!**

Via Zoom, on the last Monday of each month, all the Regional Presidents attend a meeting led by National President Rick Fetro. On **March 3rd**, National President Fetro will testify at the Capitol in Washington D.C. Shipmates and Auxiliary are invited to attend. Try to arrive around 9:30 in the Foyer of the **Dirksen Senate Office Building**. **Testimony is scheduled for 10am in room G50**. Please wear your FRA covers or order one from [KeystoneUniformCap.com](http://KeystoneUniformCap.com) (215)821-3434 pricing starts at \$31.95. You may also wear a ship/command ball cap.

The National Board of Director’s meeting is to be held on the week of April 22nd at the DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel Washington DC/Crystal City, 300 Army-Navy Drive in Arlington, VA. You are welcome to use the code FRA to book a room here if you choose to not commute multiple days.

This meeting is open to all Shipmates. It is encouraged to attend especially if you are thinking about becoming a regional officer. Speaking of Regional Officers - shipmates need to think about submitting a nomination resolution for Regional Vice President, Regional Treasurer 2027-2029, Regional Secretary 2029-2032.

The FRA National President and the National Board of Directors will visit **Capitol Hill on April 23rd** (invitation attached). Again, the Shipmates and Auxiliary are invited to go to the Capitol with us. Plan to arrive early at the DoubleTree - pre-booking a parking spot via SPOT-HERO is \$14.50. Pentagon City Metro Station (Blue Line/Yellow Line) is the closest at 3 blocks or .3 miles away. From the hotel, transportation will be provided so we stay as a group.

The following day, **April 24th**, the Auxiliary will hold a ceremony at the Mast of the Maine (which is just up the hill from the Tomb of the Unknown) in **Arlington National Cemetery**. The Mast of the Maine Memorial overlooks the remains of 230 service members who died when the battleship exploded off the coast of Cuba in February 1898. Of the 354 crew members, 266 were killed.

The Auxiliary starts the day with a 10 a.m. Tea Party hosted by the Auxiliary National President, Kelly Peña. Shipmates are invited! This is my first time attending the Tea, but I've participated in the wreath laying many years now. There is a bus that will depart the DoubleTree Crystal City at noon for the Mast of the Maine and the Tomb of the Unknown. If you can not attend the Tea, you may park at Arlington National Cemetery Visitor's Center (\$12) and walk from there. There is also a hop-on/hop-off Arlington Cemetery tour bus loop which takes 45 minutes, and costs \$11.50 for veterans. If you feel like walking, it is a 1.2 mile uphill walk and will take 30 minutes at a steady pace - don't forget you'll have to walk back.

The Auxiliary will also be hosting a hospitality room at the Double Tree at the end of each day on the 22nd, 23rd, and 24th of April.

I would love, love, LOVE to see you at the Capitol on April 23rd and the Mast of the Maine on April 24th! The more Shipmates (and Auxiliary) we have representing our organization(s) represents our strength and resolve. We need to take action and let your State Senators and Congress Members know what matters to our active duty Navy, Marines & Coast Guard. In addition, you are an expert at being a Veteran and your voice matters.

Nothing is free anymore. Everything costs money and things have only become more expensive over time. Income doesn't keep up with inflation, and we have to budget priorities. I hope you can make this a priority with me. If you do not show up for the FRA, who will?

In Loyalty, Protection, & Service,

Valerie Toulotte

[RPEC@FRA.org](mailto:RPEC@FRA.org) (301)852-1151

Regional President, East Coast

Past National Chaplain



*The Fleet Reserve Association*



*requests the honor of your presence at our*

## **Annual Capitol Hill Visit**

*Featuring the Presentation of*



## **The FRA PINNACLE AWARD**

*And Hill Advocacy on 2026 FRA Legislative Priorities.*

**Date: Thursday, April 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2026**

**Location: United States Capitol Hill**

**Attending: FRA Leadership & Members**

**RSVP : Please respond by April 10, 2026**

**Email: [NED@fra.org](mailto:NED@fra.org)**

**Phone: (703) 683-1400 ext 101**