

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE REGIONAL PRESIDENT, EAST COAST REGIONAL CONVENTION, GLEN ALLEN, VIRGINIA

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

It has been a true privilege and honor to serve with my fellow Shipmates, and Auxiliary members as the East Coast Regional President during the association year 2025 - 2026.

I would like to thank the Past Regional Presidents for being available, non-judgmental, and extremely helpful while navigating this elected position. Our Regional Treasurer Phillip Stone, and Regional Secretary Thomas Rauch are great communicators, highly organized, and professional. Without them, I would be lost. If Shipmate Paula Falu is elected as your next Regional President, I hope I can be as helpful to her as my peers have been to me.

During my term in office I attended many Branch meetings. Regretfully, I was not able to visit Branches: 172 Yorktown, VA; 293 Elizabeth City, NC; 309 Newark, DE; 299 Wilmington, NC; and 123 Morgantown, NC (now surrendered). I hope to get the opportunity to visit you before my term has officially ended.

There is a weird transition period between the region and national conventions where the incumbent regional president is required to carry on all the duties even though a new regional president has been elected. So when I was elected on June 12, 2025 by you, I was not installed or authorized to wear the gray hat until November 7, 2025. Five months went by where I did not have the privilege of knowing what was transpiring at the national level and I did not travel or reach out to any branches.

The next Installation of National Officers is on October 3rd at the Orleans Hotel in Las Vegas. Luckily the next East Coast President has only 2 months of transition time. Please consider attending and supporting the next round of National Officers!

One experience I would like to share with you: I was invited to attend and witness National President Fetro testify to the Joint House and Senate Committee on March 3rd at the Dirksen Senate Office. We were not the only Veteran Organization there to testify that day. The Veterans of Foreign Wars(VFW), Student Veterans of America, Jewish War Veterans, Minority Veterans of America and some others all filed through security at 10am. We were directed to wait until the VFW had completed their session as their members filled the entire room. The VFW was given more than a full hour of undivided time to the panel. When the VFW finished and exited the room, the remainder of the organizations entered and gave their testimonies. The combined memberships of all these organizations did not even fill half of the room. I want the Fleet Reserve Association to have the same participation as the VFW did!

After participating in this experience I was motivated to increase our numbers for the FRA's "Storming the Capitol" and the Auxiliary's Annual Pilgrimage to the Mast of the Maine at Arlington National Cemetery. Persistent e-mails and flyers were delivered to all the Branches within driving distance of Washington DC. There was a large increase in the attendance of both events! We were placed into 5 different groups to keep the time, effort and walking to a minimum. As we travelled

around the buildings to our assigned senate and house offices, we took turns speaking to the staffers who supported military and veteran issues. We were given talking points and by the end of the day we were all comfortable speaking about the Major Richard Star Act, Pay Our Troops Act, VA Reform Disability Rating Calculation Act, and increase Basic Allowance for Housing to 100%.

There were many Auxiliary members that joined us at Capitol Hill that day, and the next day many Shipmates reciprocated and made the Pilgrimage to Arlington National Cemetery. At the end of each day, we were lucky to retire to the hospitality room which was hosted by nearby Branches and Units. The suite it was hosted in had an amazing view of Washington D.C., the Potomac River and I was lucky enough to see two bald eagles circling above the river until they drifted out of sight downwind.

During my visits to the various Branches, I noticed that there may be more annual reports than you have committee members. You are still going to events, donating money, and so on. All of it needs to be reported. I get it, no one likes to fill out reports and you may think it is a waste of time, but shouldn't you take the time to recognize your Branch and Shipmates for their work? Plus every Branch should be submitting at least one Shipmate of the Year for one of the Committees. It is hard to believe that there isn't at least one Shipmate in each Branch that deserves recognition.

I should have expressed my expectations more clearly for report submissions. Your first notification that reports were due was in early April. Secretary Rauch has diligently tracked the submissions of reports and is not a procrastinator. He reviews each report and checks the qualifications and will send it back for corrections if needed.

Maybe it comes down to training? The tools are there. There are committee manuals on the East Coast and FRA websites and YouTube videos to guide you. Shipmate Secretary Rauch can send you these video links. The Annual Branch Officer Report (ABOR) is due at election time; if there are changes that occur, just send in an amended ABOR. The deceased shipmate report is generated by each Branch so it can be used at the Region's convention for the 2-Bell Ceremony. Again, you can send in an amended report if there are more names to add.

The membership year runs from April 1 to March 31. The reporting year is July 1 to June 30. I have asked National if the dates can be consistent as the VSO reporting year is the same as the membership year. Your annual reports are most likely the same as the previous year, so you know what activities are coming up. Keep a running history and add to it as events happen. Be kind to your next Regional President and Secretary Rauch and submit your forms ASAP, do not wait until June 30, 2027.

This concludes my report. I move that it be received.

In Loyalty, Protection, & Service,
Valerie Toulotte
Regional President, East Coast
Past National Chaplain