

**GUIDELINE FOR
Veterans Service
Chairman & Committee Members
for
National, Regional & Branch Chairman and Committees**



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Revised: November 2017

TABLE OF CONTENTS

FRA OBJECTIVE	3
Object of Association	3
Nonprofit, Nonpartisan and Nonsectarian	3
NATIONAL FRA.....	4
Duties of Officers and Committees	4
Duties of the National President	4
Duties of the National Executive Director.....	4
Duties of the National Committee on Veterans Service	4
REGIONAL.....	5
Duties of the Regional President	5
Duties of the Regional Veterans Service Committee	5
BRANCHES	5
President’s Duties and Responsibilities	5
Duties of the Branch Veterans Service Committee	5
FRA VETERANS SERVICE OFFICER PROGRAM.....	6
General.....	6
Requirements for Certification and Accreditation.....	6
Procedure for Accreditation.....	7
Reaccreditation	8
Revocation of Accreditation	8
Training	9
Equipment Purchases.....	9
Insurance/Liability.....	10
Code of Conduct for FRA Service Officer Representatives	10
Additional Duties assigned as National Service Director.....	10
FRA VA VETERANS SERVICE PROGRAM.....	11
History	11
FRA Involvement	11
Where to Volunteer.....	11
Duties of VAVS Rep/Dep	12
REPORTING	13
Keep Good Records.....	13
Understanding the Report Form	13

FRA STUDENT VETERAN PROGRAM	15
Student Veteran Program.....	15
Scholarships	15
Access to Experts.....	15
Community	15
Additional Information	15
E-MAIL ADDRESS POLICY.....	16
Policy	16
Declaration.....	16
APPENDIX.....	18

FRA OBJECTIVE

Object of Association - The object of this Association is that we may take care of such members and their families who may be in urgent need of assistance, financial or otherwise; to assist in recruiting for the United States Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard; to assemble for social intercourse and keep ourselves informed on United States Naval, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard matters, whereby we may continue to loyally serve the nation and the United States Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard. These, together with the Preamble to this Constitution and Bylaws, define the object of the Fleet Reserve Association.

Nonprofit, Nonpartisan and Nonsectarian - The Fleet Reserve Association shall be a nonprofit, nonpartisan, and nonsectarian organization.

Members of the Fleet Reserve Association shall not receive pecuniary profit, incidental or otherwise, by reason of their membership in the Association.

Individual branches may, however, create and operate such death benefit plans as they may desire, provided that any and all payments to beneficiaries of deceased members of the branch shall be paid from the branch treasury and shall in no way obligate the national treasury of the Fleet Reserve Association.

NATIONAL FRA

Duties of Officers and Committees

Duties of the National President

The National President shall appoint all standing, special, advisory, ad-hoc and convention committees, and chairmen, except when a chairman of a committee has been named by action of a national convention, or where the C&BL otherwise provides. All appointments are for a duration of one year unless the C&BL, the convention delegates, or the National Board of Directors otherwise provides.

Duties of the National Executive Director

He/she shall notify the national officers and committeemen of their election or appointment and shall give notice to all branches of the National Convention and of the meetings of the National Board of Directors and all national committees.

He/she shall be the permanent chairman of the National Committee on Legislative Service and shall with other designated members register with the Secretary of the Senate and the Clerk of the House of Representatives as accredited representatives of the Fleet Reserve Association as required by the Federal Regulation of Lobbying Act. He/she shall further designate members to register with the Department of Veterans Affairs as accredited representatives of the Fleet Reserve Association.

He/she shall maintain a register of the branches of the Fleet Reserve Association, their officers and committees.

Duties of the National Committee on Veterans Service

The Committee shall consist of the National Service Director or designated FRA accredited National Representative as permanent chairman, and eight members, one from each region. A member's term shall be for three years with a minimum of two members replaced or reappointed each year by the incoming National President.

Committee members shall be either VA accredited as veteran service officer representing FRA or designated as a FRA Representative or Deputy Representative for the VA Voluntary Service program at a VA medical facility.

It shall solicit the cooperation of branch chairman of this committee and instill the importance of this committee at the branch level.

Duties of the committee shall be: To oversee the FRA VSO and VAVS programs, providing education and outreach of same to the membership of the Association, including the policies and regulations associated with these programs; to report on the number and activities of FRA accredited VSO representative and representatives in the VAVS program in each region; to solicit branches and Shipmates to become involved in departments of veterans affairs/services on the state, local or national level, including VA regional offices, medical facilities, state of national veteran cemeteries or veteran homes; and to annually recognize outstanding service by a Shipmate in service to veterans.

The Chairman shall make an annual report to the National Board of Directors and the National Convention.

REGIONAL

Duties of the Regional President: Regional President shall be the representative of the National President within his/her region.

He/she shall appoint regional chairmen and committees to receive, judge and forward selected branch committee reports to the cognizant national committee chairman and perform such other duties as may be required by the Regional President or the regional bylaws and/or standing rules.

Duties of the Regional Veterans Service Committee: To oversee the FRA VSO and VAVS programs, providing education and outreach of same to the membership of the Association, including the policies and regulations associated with these programs; to report on the number and activities of FRA accredited VSO representative and representatives in the VAVS program in each region; to solicit branches and Shipmates to become involved in departments of veterans affairs/services on the state, local or national level, including VA regional offices, medical facilities, state of national veteran cemeteries or veteran homes; and to annually recognize outstanding service by a Shipmate in service to veterans.

When the need for assistance is beyond the capacity of the local branch, the Branch President shall make a report to the Regional Chairman and Regional President with appropriate recommendations.

BRANCHES

President's Duties and Responsibilities: The branch president is responsible for ensuring that the branch officers and committee chairmen comply with their responsibilities set forth in the C&BL, FRA, regional bylaws and branch bylaws, and Branch Administrative Manual. These responsibilities involve annual or periodic submission of reports. A brief list of these responsibilities is as follows:

Annual Branch Committee Reports by the Committees on Americanism-Patriotism; Hospitals, Welfare and Rehabilitation; Public Relations; Youth Activities; and Veterans Service (Responsibility: Outgoing president and committee chairmen).

Duties of the Branch Veterans Service Committee: Branch committees shall perform the duties of their titles and shall function under the supervision of the Branch President and the Branch Board of Directors.

To become active in the FRA VSO and VAVS programs, providing education and outreach of same to the membership of the Branch, including the policies and regulations associated with these programs; to report on the number and activities of Branch level FRA accredited VSO representatives and representatives in the VAVS program to the Regional President and Regional Chairman; to solicit Shipmates to become involved in departments of veterans affairs/services on the state, local or national level, including VA regional offices, medical facilities, state or national veteran cemeteries or veteran homes; and to annually recognize outstanding service by a Shipmate in service to veterans. When the need for assistance is beyond the capacity of the local branch, the Branch President shall make a report to the Regional Chairman and Regional President with appropriate recommendations.

FRA VETERANS SERVICE OFFICER PROGRAM

General

The Fleet Reserve Association (FRA) oversees a number of veteran centric programs associated with the Departments of Defense, Labor, Veterans Affairs and other agencies. The National Service Director (NSD) serves as the chief liaison for the FRA to many of these departments and agencies and works with them and the Association to effectively serve its membership.

FRA's Veterans' Service Officer (VSO) program was established in 1927 to provide representation to members who suffered injuries or illnesses associated with military service in filing for compensation with the federal government and the Veterans Administration (now the Department of Veterans Affairs or VA.) Over the years, these services expanded to include support for surviving spouses and their dependents.

Congress and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) regulate organizations and individuals who seek to represent veterans and other claimants before the VA. Individuals shall not function in any capacity as a FRA representative in a claim or other matter before the Department of Veterans Affairs until he/she is officially accredited by the Department of Veterans Affairs, through the FRA. Individuals will not be accredited by VA unless the FRA has certified to it that the individual meets the eligibility criteria established by VA. The National Executive Director (NED) is FRA's certifying official.

FRA may certify the following individuals for accreditation provided they meet the eligibility criteria established by both VA and FRA as described elsewhere in this section:

- Claims Consultants
- Select state service officers
- Select county service officers
- NHQ staff
- Others as determined on a case-by-case basis by the NSD and NED

Accredited representatives for the FRA can assist any service member, veteran, spouse or dependent who has executed/filed a proper VA Form 21-22, *Appointment of Veterans' Service Organization as Claimant's Representative*, in all claims matters before the Department of Veterans Affairs. Representation for these claimants can occur at any level of the claims process, from the local (Regional Office) level to the national (Board of Veterans' Appeals) level. However, representation at the Federal Court of Appeal for Veterans' Claims (CAVC) level is beyond the scope and expertise of FRA's program.

Requirements for Certification and Accreditation

The FRA VSO program supports members via representatives accredited through the VA General Counsel's Office. To become accredited an individual must demonstrate knowledge of VA benefits programs including laws, rules and policies associated with same. This proficiency is garnered either through the successful completion of VA approved courses or through years of experience in the processing of veterans' claims. While prior military service is not required for accreditation, more than a general knowledge of Department of Defense structure and military service is necessary to be an effective VSO.

The NED shall not certify a person to be an accredited representative of the FRA unless such person:

1. Is of good character and reputation;
2. Is not employed by a civil or military department or agency of the United States;
3. Is a member in good standing of the FRA who functions in veterans service work; if not a member of the FRA, is a full-time employee of the FRA (a part-time employee may be considered under special circumstances) or is an employee of a state or county government agency of veterans' affairs whose principle accreditation is to the state, county or to another veterans service organization, and functions full-time in veterans service work; and,
4. Has successfully completed a Department of Veterans Affairs approved course of instruction on veterans benefits; or has received a passing grade on an examination recognized by a FRA Veterans' Service Officer approved program (e.g., American Legion, DAV, MOPH, AMVETS, VFW, NVLSP) and approved by the Department of Veterans Affairs, State Department of Veterans' Affairs or similarly-named agency; or has demonstrated an ability to satisfactorily represent benefit claims as attested by the Department Service Officer.

Decisions as to character, reputation, knowledge of veteran's benefits and other criteria in this section are solely within the discretion of the NED and NSD. In addition, volunteer representatives will ensure that claimants seeking assistance will sign a form releasing FRA from liability associated with processing the associated claim.

Procedure for Accreditation

Every person seeking certification by the FRA must complete the VA Form 21, *Application for Accreditation as Service Organization Representative*. Failure to complete the form completely, including appropriate signature of applicant, will delay certification by the NED. Any omission, misrepresentation or falsification of information on either form may be grounds for revocation of accreditation.

Upon completion of the required experience or coursework, applicants provide a completed VA Form 21 and any associated documentation to the FRA for review and processing which includes a signature from the certifying official. The NSD serves as the preliminary processing official for all applications and FRA's Constitution and By-Laws specifies that the National Executive Director (NED) serve as the designated certifying official for the Association.

Certified and signed original applications are then forwarded to the VA General Counsel's Office for final processing. After final approval with VA GCO, a locally generated FRA welcome letter is then sent to the new accredited representative. The VA requires that accredited representatives be re-certified every five years, which involves reapplying for accreditation with FRA.

The VA Form 21 will be submitted to the NED through the office of the National Service Director (NSD), who will review each form for completeness and accuracy. Any problems noted on the applications should be resolved prior to submission.

The NSD will review each application for accreditation. Any problems will be resolved before submission to the NED.

As National Certifying Officer, the NED shall certify the VA form 21 to the General Counsel of the Department of Veterans Affairs for the accreditation of an individual as a representative of the FRA. Once an application for accreditation is approved by the General Counsel, the NED via the NSD shall forward the applicant a FRA accredited representative's certificate.

Currently, FRA has two full-time, paid accredited representatives on its National Headquarters staff. They are NSD and the Assistant Director of Veterans Programs (ADVP). The General Counsel's office also recognizes other individuals as accredited representatives for the FRA and many of them hold accreditation with other veterans' service organizations and are employed by county or state veterans' service departments.

Reaccreditation

In 2008, VA began requiring the reaccreditation of service officers every five (5) years. As a consequence, FRA will periodically re-assess an individual's character and acceptable job proficiency.

Those individuals of good character and reputation, who demonstrate adequate job knowledge through consistent success on representing claimants and educational growth, will be reaccredited by the FRA.

Revocation of Accreditation

Individual FRA accreditation may be cancelled at any time by the General Counsel of the Department of Veterans Affairs or upon a recommendation to the General Counsel for such action by the NSD or NED, based on clear and convincing evidence of one or more of the following if the representative:

- Refuses to comply with or violates laws administered by the Department of Veterans Affairs or with regulations governing practice before the Department or other laws, regulations and/or policies applicable to accredited representatives or any facility at which accredited representatives perform services.
- Knowingly presents a fraudulent claim before the Department of Veterans Affairs or before any other governmental department or agency, or knowingly submits false information in connection with a claim before such department or agency.
- Requests, demands or accepts compensation, in any form, for providing assistance or representation.
- Engages in any other unlawful, unprofessional or unethical practice such as deceiving, misleading or threatening a client; neglects to prosecute a claim before the Department of Veterans Affairs in an expeditious manner; fails to provide a reasonable and timely response to a request for evidence by the department; or, deliberately withholds a client's application for benefits or evidence related thereto, from same.
- Fails to comply with policies and procedures prescribed by the FRA Veterans' Service Officer Program.
- Failure to maintain educational proficiency, either through the Department of Veterans Affairs, or by a FRA approved continuing education program.
- Failure to act in a professional manner towards veterans, family members, clients, co-workers and VA employees.

1. Those accredited by the FRA are expected to act courteously and professionally towards others at all times. Rude, discourteous, obnoxious or intimidating behavior reflects poorly on the FRA and the individual, and is not acceptable.

2. The NSD will investigate complaints of unprofessional conduct, report to the appropriate employer and, depending on the findings, take appropriate action to include revocation of accreditation, if necessary.

Training

The compensation program administered by VA is arguably the most complex benefit program in government today. On average it takes a new VA employee two to three years to become proficient in general claims processing and another three years of training and study to master most of the skills needed to make correct decisions involving service connection, disability evaluation and effective dates

Advocate training is provided from many sources. The National Veterans Legal Services Program (NVLSP), the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), Disabled American Veterans (DAV) and many other service organizations provide training on a continuing basis to service officer representatives.

Another type of FRA approved advocacy course is NVLSP Basic Training Correspondence Course in veterans' benefits law. The course, which consists of a complete online course, a complete set of intake forms, and a proficiency examination that advocates take and submit to NVLSP for grading.

Volunteer FRA service officer representatives are responsible for obtaining initial and continuing training. Information on training resources can be obtained from the NSD.

The FRA VSO Program accredits service officers at the Branch or Regional level which may include covering the costs of training and other expenses associated with their participation in this program on a voluntary basis. FRA representatives must request pre-approval and be screened by the NSD prior to beginning any VSO training in conjunction with them becoming certified to assist individuals as an accredited FRA VSO. Failure to be request preapproval for training may result in non-reimbursement for course expenses and/or rejection of application for accreditation.

FRA-accredited representatives are expected to be aware of changes in VA laws, policy and procedures related to their duties as accredited service officers. This is accomplished through annual refresher training, correspondence course work or training course work provided by appropriate service organizations or the VA. Representatives are required to maintain accurate records of training, and provide proof of continuing education to either the NSD or NED when requested.

Equipment Purchases

FRA representatives must receive approval from the NSD prior to the purchasing of any office equipment, including computers, software, publications, printers, file cabinets, shredders, office furniture and/or other related office materials if a request for reimbursement of said purchases is made by the representative. Computers and software should meet established requirements and specifications of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Equipment purchase reimbursements will be based on the size and scope of the representative's outreach, need and other considerations. Each request will be reviewed based on its own merit and decided on a case-by-case basis.

Some states provide Veteran Service Organizations with funds in the form of grants to provide veteran outreach within their state. If requested, the NSD can provide information and/or assistance in applying for such grants.

Insurance/Liability

FRA will provide appropriate limited liability insurance coverage for accredited volunteer representatives for certain errors or omissions.

FRA representatives must obtain a signed waiver of responsibility from each veteran or family member they represent on behalf of the FRA to release the Association and their representatives from any liability or legal action against the FRA and the volunteer representative. The FRA representative must offer the best representation and not offer any promises or guarantees to the veteran or their family members in reference to outcome of their claim before the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Code of Conduct for FRA Service Officer Representatives

1. Do not knowingly present a fraudulent claim or submit false information in connection with a claim before any government agency.
2. Do not engage in any unlawful, unprofessional or unethical practice such as deceiving or misleading a client.
3. Remember that you are responsible for compliance with all laws and regulations of each government department or agency governing confidentiality of information and release of information from official records. Information should be released only if authorized by the client, and only to the extent authorized.
4. Under no circumstances, should FRA representatives serve as guardian, committee or fiduciary by any other designation, of veterans or other persons receiving benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs.
5. Representation by the FRA is gratuitous and under no circumstances should you demand, request or receive remuneration in cash or in any other form, from persons to whom representation or other assistance is provided.
6. FRA voluntary representatives will refrain from the use of racial, religious, age-related, sexual or ethnic epithets, innuendoes, slurs or jokes in the work place.
7. FRA representatives must conduct themselves in a totally professional manner and refrain from inappropriate advances, verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature, or requests for sexual favors.

Additional Duties assigned as National Service Director

The NSD also provides support to service members and veterans who wish to file appeals with the individual services within the Department of Defense. The actions associated with the Board of Corrections of Military Records and Medical Evaluation Board normally do not require representation by the FRA.

The NSD also provides assistance by serving as liaison with the Department of Labor (DOL) in employment disputes for returning reservists, and ensures oversight to ensure that DOL rules and regulations are being properly implemented.

FRA VA VETERANS SERVICE PROGRAM

History

Founded in 1946, the VA Veterans Service Program (VAVS) coordinates volunteer efforts at VA health care facilities. It is supported by more than 350 organizations, making it one of the largest centralized volunteer programs within the federal government. Since 1946, volunteers have provided more than 676 million hours of service to our veterans.

The VAVS National Advisory Committee (NAC) advises the VA on volunteer matters, assists in recruiting and orienting volunteers, and keeps members of participating organizations (like FRA) informed of the need for volunteers.

Over the past several years, the number of volunteers has decreased while the number of services provided by VAVS is increasing. This decline in volunteers includes FRA's representation in the program. FRA currently maintains full member status on the NAC, but our status will be downgraded to "associate member" and we will lose our voting privileges on the committee unless we rebuild our VAVS base.

FRA is founded on the cardinal principles of "Loyalty, Protection and Service." A recommended demonstration of those principles is summarized in our Constitution and By-Laws Section 816(a), which outlines our responsibility to "foster and maintain good relations between the FRA and the hospitals..." One way we can foster a good relationship with local VA hospitals or medical centers is by becoming part of the VAVS program.

FRA Involvement

Most VA facilities have a VAVS Advisory Committee, which consists of representatives from the various service organizations and volunteer groups serving the hospital. Local VAVS Advisory Committee members meet on a quarterly basis to discuss the hospital's voluntary services program, recognize outstanding volunteers and to share the needs of hospitalized veterans. Having FRA representation on these advisory boards allows our organization to play a more active role in serving veterans. As an added benefit, increased FRA involvement also secures our position on the National Advisory Committee, which in turn, allows us a stronger voice in improving VA healthcare.

Whether you're interested in serving on the advisory committee or simply volunteering, your first stop is the local VA hospital or medical center. Ask if they have a VAVS program and whether FRA is represented on their advisory committee.

Where to Volunteer

- **VA Medical Centers-** www.va.gov/volunteer
- **VA Community-Based Outpatient Clinics**
- **VA Poly Trauma Centers-** <http://www.polytrauma.va.gov>
- **Fisher House Foundation-** <http://www.fisherhouse.org>
- **State Veterans Homes-** <http://www.nasvh.org/home/index.cfm>
- **Vet Centers-** <http://www.vetcenter.va.gov>
- **VA Youth Volunteering-** www1.va.gov/volunteer/studentprgm.cfm

Duties of VAVS Rep/Dep

- **Assist** with improving the VAVS Program
- **Provide** input/feedback to VA staff and VAVS Committee
- **Recruit** volunteers
- **Promote** donations of financial and material goods
- **Advise** and inform leadership of VAVS and VA issues and concerns
- **Attend** and participate in VAVS meetings and distribute information to Branches
- **Serve** on subcommittees and task groups
- **Maintain** Branch records (hours and donations)
- **Coordinate** facility activities and projects
- **Conduct** Annual Joint Review
- **Register** as a Regularly Scheduled Volunteer

If you would like to represent FRA, or act as an alternate representative if another Shipmate has already been designated, you'll need a formal designation letter from FRA Headquarters. Your branch secretary can request this directly at vafra@fra.org or by calling 1-800-372-1924 (ext. 115).

Regional Presidents have a listing of the VA facilities in his/her region, which includes contact information for each facility. This information is also posted at www.fra.org. Click the "Members" tab and then click the "Member Resources" link then finally "VA Resources" on the left side of the page.

REPORTING

Keep Good Records

Branch level Veteran Service Officers (VSO) should ensure they keep accurate records and ensure they safeguard any personal information provided by a claimant.

The National Standing Committee has developed a standardize form for reporting annually activities within the Branch which have benefited the veterans' communities. The committee with periodically review and update the report.

As with any National Standing Committee which requires annual reporting, the form should be completed, signed by the appropriate Branch Chairman and President and forwarded to the designated Regional Chairman and Officers for consideration of Regional and National recognition.

Understanding the Report Form

When filling out the report form, please be as complete and accurate as possible. The following is a guide for completing the Veterans Service Committee Annual Report:

First Section (Heading information and #1): Region and Branch members in "Good Standing" can be found in the Fourth Quarter Report of Membership (Ending March 31, of the current year). The Branch Membership Group can also be found on the 4th quarter membership report.

Second Section (#2): If the Branch participates in Veteran Service activities answer, "yes" and continue report; *if "no", sign as if a "negative" report, go to final section, Branch president signs and turns in to Regional Chair.*

Third Section (Veterans Service Officer (VSO) activities; #3):

- (a) Report number of FRA accredited Veterans Service Officers, including names. (Branch may request verification from NHQ of any Branch member stating to hold accreditation with FRA.
- (b) Report the number of Branch members currently training to become accredited as a VSO.
- (c) Report the number of original, and requests for increase claims in each specific category, and total of all claims processed and submitted to VA for consideration.
- (d) Report the number of hours dedicated to claims work (claimant interviews, processing claim, submittal and any additional follow up with the claimant).
- (e) Report any funds expended by the Branch and/or Shipmate VSO for office space, supplies and outreach materials in relation to VSO work.
- (f) Report hours attending outreach activities as an accredited VSO for FRA.
- (g) Report hours attended and location of annual VSO training; provide certificate of completion or attendance to NHQ for verification.

Fourth Section (VA Voluntary Service (VAVS) Program activities #4):

(a) Report the name of the VA facility location to which the Branch and/or Shipmate volunteers or provides donations.

a. Report the name of the Shipmate (if designated) who is the FRA Local Representative.*

b. Report the name/s of Shipmate/s designated as FRA Local Deputy Representatives.*

(* Branch Secretaries receive from NHQ a copy of “designation” letters, signed by the FRA certifying official, the NED for Local Representative/Deputy.)

Fifth Section (#5): Report the total number of hours and volunteers who volunteered for the Branch at the listed VA facility (the Local Rep can request a listing of accumulated regular, occasional and total hours volunteered for the facility.)

Sixth Section (#6): Report if the FRA Local representative has completed the annual VAVS joint review; provide a copy of the signed review.

Seventh Section (#7): Report all donations provided by the Branch, either monetary or in durable items (estimate monetary value).

Eighth Section (FRA Student Veteran Program, #8): Does Branch participate in the FRA Student Veteran Program? If, “yes”, complete questions; if “no”, proceed to #9.

(a) Report the name/s of schools to which Branch has provided outreach to in the past year.

(b) Does Branch provide a local scholarship to a student veteran at the named institution, or any student veteran?

a. Amount of Scholarship.

b. Number awarded.

Ninth Section (#9) (Other veteran centric activities): This section would include any activities the Branch initiated, sponsored or participated in which would be focused on your local community emphasizing on veterans. This can include: veteran parades; veteran information tables at VA facility or DOD base; homeless awareness activities; outreach event at local Branch; any other activity focusing on veterans, their families and survivors.

Tenth Section (#10) (Shipmate of the Year): In nominating a Branch member for consideration for “Shipmate of the Year” in Veterans Service, take into consideration all aspects in which this member excelled in for the reporting year.

NOTE: IN NOMINATING A SHIPMATE AS “SHIPMATE OF THE YEAR” OR DESERVING OF SPECIAL RECOGNITION, ON THIS REPORT, NOMINATION MUST BE ACCOMPANIED BY A SEPARATE SHEET(S) OF PAPER, GIVING A DETAILED REPORT OF THIS SHIPMATE’S ACTIVITIES.

Final Section (Signature of Branch Chair and President): Sign and forward completed report to appropriate members listed on “Distribution”, keeping a copy in Branch files.

FRA STUDENT VETERAN PROGRAM

Student Veteran Program

The Fleet Reserve Association (FRA) plays an active role in ensuring your benefits remain strong through our legislative advocacy. FRA is your voice on Capitol Hill, communicating with Congress on your behalf on pay, benefits, health care, retirement, family and survivors issues.

The FRA Educational Foundation provides a variety of scholarships for current and former sea service enlisted and their family members.

FRA's Veterans Service Program has accredited veteran service officers (VSO) who can help you navigate through your VA compensation, educational and health care benefits.

Scholarships

FRA's Educational Foundation has granted more than \$100,000 in undergraduate and graduates scholarships annually to our members and their families. For a complete listing of scholarships and qualifications, please visit www.fra.org/foundation.

Access to Experts

Students who have questions on their military or veteran benefits can get straight answers from FRA's resident subject matter experts. FRA's VSOs can provide assistance understanding and filing for VA disability compensation, educational or other benefits. Looking for help? FRA can get you the assistance you need, when you need it.

Community

Students looking to get involved either on campus or in their communities can become in one of the hundreds local FRA Branches. Members can volunteer to assist high school students participating in NJROTC, Sea Cadet or Young Marine programs. Other volunteer opportunities include becoming involved in the VA Voluntary Service (VAVS) program at your local VA medical facility. Contact a local FRA Branch to see how you can reach out to help others in your community.

Additional Information

If a Branch is interested in additional information, or outreach materials, contact FRA National Headquarters.

E-MAIL ADDRESS POLICY

Policy

All member information, including e-mail addresses are to be considered confidential records and kept as such by the Fleet Reserve Association (“FRA”) and its branch and regional leaders. The purpose of this policy is to ensure the proper use of FRA member e-mail addresses by FRA staff, branch, branch leaders and FRA membership (“Covered FRA individuals”). If there is evidence that Covered FRA individuals are not adhering to the guidelines set out in this policy, FRA reserves the right to take disciplinary action (up to and including removal from the membership) or legal action. If you have any questions or comments about this E-mail Address Policy, please contact FRA National Headquarters.

- 1) All member e-mail addresses are confidential member information and shall not be disclosed to third parties. If Covered FRA individuals send an e-mail communication to more than one member, the sender must take all precautions to ensure that member e-mail addresses cannot be seen by other recipients of the e-mail communication through the use of blind carbon copy distribution lists.

- 2) The use of member e-mail addresses by Covered FRA individuals shall be permissible for the purposes of communicating association business and activities to the membership. Covered FRA individuals may not use member e-mail addresses for sending e-mail communications for their own personal commercial interests or for third party commercial interests.

- 3) It is strictly prohibited for Covered FRA individuals to use member e-mail addresses for the purposes of:
 - Sending or forwarding e-mail communications containing libelous, defamatory, offensive, racist or obscene remarks.
 - Sending or forwarding e-mail communications containing materials that infringe the intellectual property rights of others.
 - Forwarding a message or copy a message or attachment belonging to another user without acquiring permission from the originator first.
 - Forging or attempt to forge e-mail messages, or disguise or attempt to disguise their identity when sending e-mail.

Declaration

By virtue of joining the FRA, I agree to comply with the guidelines set out in this policy and understand that failure to do so might result in disciplinary or legal action.

APPENDIX

- Appendix 1 FLEET RESERVE ASSOCIATION VETERANS SERVICE COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT
- Appendix 2 FRA APPLICATION FOR ACCREDITATION
- Appendix 3 APPLICATION FOR ACCREDITATION AS SERVICE ORGANIZATION REPRESENTATIVE
(VA Form 21)
- Appendix 4 RECORDS RETENTION TIME PERIODS
- Appendix 5 DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS CONTACT NUMBERS
- Appendix 6 FEDERAL BENEFITS FOR VETERAN AND DEPENDENTS

FLEET RESERVE ASSOCIATION VETERANS SERVICE COMMITTEE

Region: _____ Branch Name & Number: _____ Membership Group: _____

1. Total Branch members in Good Standing as reported in the 31 March Membership Report: _____

2. Does your Branch Participate in Veteran Service activities in your community for FRA?
Yes ___ (*Continue report*) No ___ (*Negative Report, sign and return to Regional Chair*)

3. Veterans Service Officer (VSO) activities:

(a) Number of FRA Accredited VSO's : _____

a. Names : _____

(b) Number of Shipmates in training to become FRA Accredited VSO: _____

(c) Claims Processed:

a. Disability	_____	e. Aid & Attendance	_____
b. Dependency	_____	f. Education	_____
c. Pension	_____	g. Other	_____
d. DIC	_____		

TOTAL _____

(d) Number of Hours Expended _____

(e) Funds Expended: By Branch _____ By Shipmate VSO _____

(f) Hours attending VA Outreach activities _____

(g) Hours of VSO annual training attended: _____ Where: _____

4. VA Voluntary Service (VAVS) Program activities:

(a) Name of VA Facility _____

a. Do you have a Shipmate Designated as a Local Representative: _____

i. Name: _____

b. Do you have a Shipmate(s) Designated as Deputy Rep:

i. Name: _____

ii. Name: _____

5. Hours volunteered VA Facilities by Shipmates: _____

(a) Regular Hours: _____ Number of Shipmates: _____

(b) Occasional Hours: _____ Number of Shipmates: _____

6. Has FRA Local Representative completed VAVS Annual Joint Review: Yes ___ (Attach) No ___

THIS FORM MAY BE REPRODUCED LOCALLY FOR BRANCH AND/OR REGIONAL USE
Regional/Branch Chairmen may want to add items for their own purposes (Use additional sheets if necessary)

FLEET RESERVE ASSOCIATION VETERANS SERVICE COMMITTEE

7. Donations made to VAVS Program/VA Facility:	Branch	Shipmate
(a) Durable Items (Water, clothes, coffee, etc.)(Est. Value):	_____	_____
(b) Monetary:	_____	_____
(c) Total:	_____	_____

8. Does Branch participate in the FRA Student Veteran Program with a local college or university?
Yes ___ No ___

(a) Name of school: _____

(b) Does Branch award an annual scholarship to school: Yes _____ No _____

a. Amount of Scholarship: _____

b. Number awarded: _____

9. Other veteran centric outreach activities Branch participated in the past year: (List date, activity and details)

10. Shipmate nominated as Shipmate of the Year, or deserving of special recognition:

Name: _____

NOTE: IN NOMINATING A SHIPMATE AS "SHIPMATE OF THE YEAR" OR DESERVING OF SPECIAL RECOGNITION, ON THIS REPORT, NOMINATION MUST BE ACCOMPANIED BY A SEPARATE SHEET(S) OF PAPER, GIVING A DETAILED REPORT OF THIS SHIPMATE'S ACTIVITIES.

IF NO ACTIVITY, A NEGATIVE REPORT IS REQUIRED.

REPORT TO BE SIGNED BY BRANCH CHAIRMAN AND BRANCH PRESIDENT OF THE REPORTING YEAR.

_____	_____
BRANCH CHAIRMAN 20 ____ - 20 ____	BRANCH PRESIDENT 20 ____ - 20 ____

Branch Chairman: Submit report to Regional Chairman.

Regional Chairman: Submit Report to National Chairman immediately following Regional Convention.

IF ADDITIONAL INFORMATION IS REQUIRED, CONTACT REGIONAL COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN
(Please provide comments on how to improve this report/committee on a separate sheet)

Distribution:

- (1) Regional Chairman
- (2) Regional President
- (3) Branch Files

THIS FORM MAY BE REPRODUCED LOCALLY FOR BRANCH AND/OR REGIONAL USE
Regional/Branch Chairmen may want to add items for their own purposes (Use additional sheets if necessary)

FRA APPLICATION FOR ACCREDITATION

General - In order to present claims and gain access to certain information concerning veterans and others seeking benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), the law requires that a recognized veterans service organization certify that the individual is of good character and has a basic understanding of benefit programs administered by VA. The information on this application will be used by the FRA to determine whether it will ask VA to accredit you.

Requirements for completion and submission

Please complete this application. A response to each question is required. If a question does not apply to you please place N/A in the area provided for a response. Incomplete applications will not be processed. This form, certificate of education completion AND the VA Form 21, Application for Accreditation as Service Organization Representative, must be completed. Complete, sign and submit both applications, along with certificate of education to the FRA National Service Director (NSD) who will verify the information contained on both applications. Incomplete applications recieved will not be processed and returned to applicant.

NAME

LAST NAME

FIRST NAME

MIDDLE INITIAL

Have you ever used a different name: NO YES

If yes, please provide complete name and describe circumstances of name change:

Name: _____

Circumstance: _____

Are you currently an FRA member? NO YES Branch No./MAL _____

HOME ADDRESS

Current Home Address:

Street Address

City

State

Zip

How long have you lived at this address? Months _____ Years _____

EMPLOYMENT HISTORY

Current Employer:

Name of Employer _____ Address of Employer _____ From: / / To: / /

Previous Employers:

Name of Employer _____ Address of Employer _____ From: / / To: / /

Name of Employer _____ Address of Employer _____ From: / / To: / /

Have you ever been fired from a job? NO YES

If yes, please explain: _____

CRIMINAL HISTORY

Have you ever been convicted of a crime? (exclude traffic violations, except DUI) NO YES

If yes, list conviction(s) & state(s) where convicted: _____

Describe Crime(s): _____

Please attach a separate sheet if additional space is needed.

continued on back

Aug-15

FRA APPLICATION FOR ACCREDITATION

Page 2

EDUCATION

High School Attended _____ City _____ State _____

Did you graduate? NO YES If yes, what year? _____

College(s) Attended	City, State	Did you Graduate?		Year
		No	Yes	
_____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
_____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
_____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____

If you have not graduated, please list how many credit hours earned to date: _____ If you have graduated, please list your degree(s): _____

SERVICE OFFICER EXPERIENCE

Are you *currently* a veterans service officer? NO YES

If yes, what organization? _____

From:	To:
/ /	currently

If you are a State employee or County Service Officer, please list the specific State/County.

Indicate VA benefits related course, completion date and location (Provide copy of certificate.)

Are you requesting reimbursement for the cost of training? NO YES COST* \$ _____ *Provide receipt

Are you *currently* accredited with any other veterans service organization? NO YES

If yes, for what organization(s)? _____

From:	To:
/ /	currently
From:	To:
/ /	currently
From:	To:
/ /	currently

Please attach a separate sheet if additional space is needed.

Have you *ever* worked as a veterans service officer? NO YES

If yes, for what organization? _____

From:	To:
/ /	/ /

Location: _____

Reason for Leaving: _____

I affirm the foregoing to be true to the best of my knowledge. Further, I authorize investigation of all statements contained in this application. I understand that misrepresentation or omission of facts requested may be cause for rejection of this application or later cancellation of my accreditation.

Signature of Applicant	Date of Signature	Daytime Phone Number of Applicant

APPLICATION FOR ACCREDITATION AS SERVICE ORGANIZATION REPRESENTATIVE

PRIVACY ACT AND PAPERWORK REDUCTION ACT NOTICE: The information requested on this form is solicited under 38 U.S.C., Section 5902, which authorizes VA to recognize representatives of approved organizations for the preparation, presentation, and prosecution of claims under laws administered by VA. The requested information will enable VA to determine your eligibility for accreditation as a representative of a recognized service organization. Your disclosure of this information to us is voluntary, but your failure to provide full information could delay or preclude your accreditation. The Privacy Act authorizes VA to disclose the information outside VA for certain routine uses, which have been published in the Federal Register with reference to a VA system of records entitled, "Current and Former Accredited Representative, Claims Agent, and Representative and Claims Agent Applicant and Rejected Applicant Records-VA" (01VA022). Such routine uses include verification of the identity, status, and service organization affiliation of representatives, civil or criminal law enforcement, communications with members of Congress of their representatives, Government litigation, and notification to service organizations of information relevant to a refusal to grant or a suspension or termination of accreditation.

RESPONDENT BURDEN: VA may not conduct or sponsor, and you are not required to respond to, this collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB Control Number. The public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 15 minutes per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to VA Clearance Officer (005G2), 810 Vermont Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20420. **Send comments only. Do not send** this form or requests for benefits to this address.

SECTION I - TO BE EXECUTED BY DESIGNEE (Type or print)

1. LAST NAME - FIRST NAME - MIDDLE NAME	2. BUSINESS ADDRESS
---	---------------------

3. BRANCH OF SERVICE (Check applicable boxes)

ARMY
 NAVY
 AIR FORCE
 MARINE CORPS
 COAST GUARD
 NON-VETERAN
 OTHER (Specify)

4. LIST OF DATES OF ALL ACTIVE SERVICE	5. CHARACTER OF DISCHARGE(S)	6. METHOD OF QUALIFICATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> COMPLETED VA APPROVED COURSE <input type="checkbox"/> PASSED VA APPROVED EXAMINATION <input type="checkbox"/> EXPERIENCE

7A. NAME OF ORGANIZATION WHICH YOU WILL REPRESENT	7B. EMAIL AT ORGANIZATION (Optional)	7C. PHONE NUMBER AT ORGANIZATION (Optional)
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7D. RELATIONSHIP TO ORGANIZATION		7E. COUNTY VETERANS SERVICE OFFICERS
ARE YOU A MEMBER IN GOOD STANDING OF THE ORGANIZATION SHOWN IN ITEM 7A? <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	ARE YOU A PAID EMPLOYEE OF THE ORGANIZATION SHOWN IN ITEM 7A, WORKING FOR THE ORGANIZATION FOR NOT LESS THAN 1000 HOURS ANNUALLY? <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	ARE YOU A PAID COUNTY EMPLOYEE: A) WHO WORKS FOR THE COUNTY NOT LESS THAN 1000 HOURS ANNUALLY; B) WHO HAS SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETED VA-APPROVED STATE TRAINING AND EXAMINATION; AND C) WHO WILL RECEIVE REGULAR STATE SUPERVISION AND MONITORING OR ANNUAL TRAINING? <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO

8. ARE YOU ACCREDITED TO ANY OTHER ORGANIZATION(S)?

YES NO (If "YES," give name of organization(s))

9A. ARE YOU EMPLOYED IN ANY CIVIL OR MILITARY DEPARTMENT OR AGENCY OF THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT? <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO (If "YES," give name of agency or department)	9B. HAVE YOU EVER HELD A FEDERAL GOVERNMENT POSITION WHICH INVOLVED ANY ACTION RESPECTING CLAIMS IN THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS OR THE VETERANS ADMINISTRATION? <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
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It is understood and agreed that neither the designee nor the organization will charge or accept any fee or other gratuity for services rendered a claimant; that neither will publish or divulge any confidential information except as provided by law or regulation; and that any breach of these conditions will be sufficient basis for revocation of accreditation.

10. SIGNATURE OF DESIGNEE	11. DATE OF SIGNATURE
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SECTION II - TO BE EXECUTED BY PROPER CERTIFYING OFFICER OF RECOGNIZED ORGANIZATION

CERTIFICATION: Subject to the foregoing agreement, the undersigned hereby certifies that the designee is of good character and reputation, is qualified by ability and experience to present claims, and that the foregoing statements are believed to be correct. We therefore recommend accreditation.

12. SIGNATURE AND TITLE OF CERTIFYING OFFICER	13. NAME OF ORGANIZATION
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14. ADDRESS OF CERTIFYING OFFICER	15. DATE OF SIGNATURE
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PENALTY: The law provides that whoever makes any statement of a material fact, knowing it to be false, shall be punished by a fine or imprisonment or both (18 U.S.C. 1001).

RECORDS RETENTION TIME PERIODS

Records Retention Time Periods: Guidelines for FRA branches regarding record retention, including the length of time records should be kept:

- Accident reports and claims (settled cases) - 7 years.
- Accounts payable ledgers and schedules - 7 years.
- Accounts receivable ledgers and schedules - 7 years.
- Audit reports and accountants - permanently.
- Bank reconciliations - 1 year.
- Cash books - permanently.
- Charts of accounts - permanently.
- Checks (canceled, but see exception below) - 7 years.
- Checks (canceled for important payments, i.e. taxes, purchases of property, special contracts, etc.) - (Checks should be filed with the papers pertaining to the underlying transaction) - permanently.
- Contracts and leases (expired) - 7 years.
- Contracts and leases still in effect - permanently.
- Correspondence (routine) with members or vendors - 1 year.
- Correspondence (general) - 3 years.
- Correspondence (legal and important matters only) - permanently.
- Deeds, mortgages, and bills of sale - permanently.
- Depreciation schedules - permanently.
- Duplicate deposit slips - 1 year.
- Employee personnel records (after termination) - 3 years.
- Employment applications - 3 years.
- Expense analysis and expense distribution schedules - 7 years.
- Financial statements (end-of-year, other months optional) - permanently.
- General and private ledgers (and end-of-year trial balance) - permanently.
- General electronic mail - 2 weeks.
- Insurance policies (expired) - 3 years.
- Insurance records, current accident reports, claims, policies, etc. - permanently.
- Internal audit reports (in some situations, longer retention periods may be desirable) - 3 years.
- Internal reports (miscellaneous) - 3 years.
- Inventories of products, materials, supplies - 7 years.
- Invoices to customers/branches - 7 years.
- Invoices from vendors - 7 years.
- Journals - permanently.
- Minute books of National Board of Directors, including C&BL, and charter - permanently.
- Notes receivable ledgers and schedules - 7 years.
- Option records (expired) - 7 years.
- Payroll records and summaries, including payments to pensioners - 7 years.
- Petty cash vouchers - 3 years.
- Physical inventory tags - 3 years.
- Plant cost ledgers - 7 years.
- Property appraisals by outside appraisers - permanently.
- Property records, including costs, depreciation reserves, end-of-year trial balances, depreciation schedules, blueprints, and plans - permanently.
- Purchase orders (except purchasing department copy) - 1 year.
- Purchase orders (purchasing department copy) - 7 years.
- Receiving sheets - 1 year.
- Requisitions - 1 year.
- Sales records - 7 years.
- Savings bond registration records of employees - 3 years.
- Scrap and salvage records (inventories, sales, etc.) - 7 years.
- Stenographer's notebooks - 1 year.
- Stock and bond certificates (canceled) - 7 years.

RECORDS RETENTION TIME PERIODS

Records Retention Time Periods: Guidelines for FRA branches regarding record retention, including the length of time records should be kept (Continued):

- Stockroom withdrawal forms - 1 year.
- Subsidiary ledgers - 7 years.
- Tax filings - permanently.
- Time books - 7 years.
- Trade mark registration – permanently.
- Voucher register and schedules - 7 years.
- Vouchers for payments to vendors, employees, etc. (includes allowances and entertainment expenses) - 7 years.

Department of Veteran Affairs Contact Numbers

VA Department Name(s)	Toll Free Number(s)
VA Benefits: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Burial • Death Pension • Dependency Indemnity Compensation • Direct Deposit • Directions to VA Benefits Regional Offices • Disability Compensation • Disability Pension • Education • Home Loan Guaranty • Medical Care • Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment 	1-800-827-1000
Beneficiaries in receipt of Pension Benefits	1-877-294-6380
Debt Management Center (Collection of Non-Medical Debts)	1-800-827-0648
Children of Women Vietnam Veterans (CWV)	1-877-345-8179 (or) 1-888-820-1756
Foreign Medical Program (FMP)	
Spina Bifida Health Care Program	
Civilian Health and Medical Program of the Department of Veterans Affairs (CHAMPVA)	1-800-733-8387
CHAMPVA In-House Treatment Initiative (CITI)	
Education (GI Bill)	1-888-442-4551
Health Care Benefits	1-877-222-8387
Smoking Cessation Counselors	1-855-QUIT-VET (1-855-784-8838)
Veterans Crisis Line	1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255)
Combat Call Center 1-877-WAR-VETS (877-927-8387)	1-877-WAR-VETS (1-877-927-8387)
Life Insurance:	
Service members and/or Veterans Group Life Insurance Program	1-800-419-1473
All other VA Life Insurance Programs	1-800-669-8477
Mammography Helpline	1-888-492-7844
Women Veterans Hotline	1-855-VA-WOMEN (829-6636)
CHAMPVA Meds by Mail	1-888-385-0235 (or) 1-866-229-7389
Special Issues - Gulf War/Agent Orange/Project Shad/Mustard Agents and Lewisite/Ionizing Radiation	1-800-749-8387
Status of Headstones and Markers	1-800-697-6947
Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD)	Dial 711

FEDERAL BENEFITS FOR VETERANS AND DEPENDENTS

The VA publishes a comprehensive annual guide, Federal Benefits for Veterans and Dependents. The 2016 handbook can be ordered for \$5.00 from the U.S. Government Printing Office by calling toll free (866) 512-1800, or in DC (202) 512-1800 or by going online at <https://bookstore.gpo.gov/products/sku/051-000-00258-0>.

For those with a computer and online access to the Internet, the electronic version may be found at http://www.va.gov/opa/publications/benefits_book.asp. The site also provides downloadable versions of the booklet for android, iphone, ipad and other devices. Answers to most questions concerning veterans' benefits can be found within this handbook. Phone numbers for VA Regional Offices, Medical Centers, Veteran Outreach Centers, National Cemeteries and Insurance Centers are listed and I have a limited number of extra copies and if you want one contact me at FRA HQ or send an email to vafra@fra.org.

Also, veterans, survivors, dependents and other claimants can apply their initial application on-line for disability compensation, pension, education, and vocational rehabilitation and employment benefits without the additional requirement to submit a signed paper copy of the application.

VA provides veterans the opportunity to view and manage their benefits via an online venue called "eBenefits". For more information about "eBenefits" and how to sign up visit www.ebenefits.va.gov.

