



MARITIME MESSENGER

FRA Kempsville Branch 99 • September 2026 Illustrated Edition



U.S. NAVY
Flight operations aboard USS George H.W. Bush.
Photo: SA Sasha Ambrose.



U.S. MARINE CORPS
11th MEU Marines prepare for amphibious operations. Photo: LCpl Luke Rodríguez.



U.S. COAST GUARD
USCGC Harriet Lane returns from Pacific patrol.
Photo: PO3 Avery Tibbets.

FROM THE BRANCH PRESIDENT

Ready for a season of service

Shipmates and Auxiliary members, this edition turns our newsletter toward action: informed advocacy, practical help for veterans, stronger recruiting, and visible service in Hampton Roads.

The Fleet Reserve Association remains a powerful voice for current and former members of the Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard. Our local strength begins when each member attends, volunteers, invites an eligible Shipmate, and stays informed.

As we approach the 98th FRA and 93rd Auxiliary National Convention, I encourage every member to review the official convention updates, follow FRA legislative alerts, and bring one new idea to our next Branch meeting.

In Loyalty, Protection and Service,
Gabriel Falu, President
Kempsville Branch 99

THIS MONTH: FOUR ACTIONS

1. Attend the Branch meeting.
2. Volunteer for a Saturday bingo shift.
3. Invite an eligible Sea Service member.
4. Use the FRA Action Center to speak up.

BRANCH LEADERSHIP

Branch President: Gabriel Falu
Corporation Chair: Paula Falu
Auxiliary President: Pamela Bishop

Regular meetings

Branch 99 and Auxiliary Unit 99 meet on the second Wednesday of each month at 1900.

IMPORTANT CRISIS RESOURCE

Veterans Crisis Line: Dial 988, then press 1; text 838255; or visit [VeteransCrisisLine.net](https://www.VeteransCrisisLine.net). Support is confidential and available 24/7. Enrollment in VA health care is not required.

DATES, DEADLINES & BRANCH LIFE

Calendar at a glance

Keep this page handy. National convention details come from the official 2026 Convention Newsletter #4; local events reflect Branch 99 planning information available for this edition.

DATE	EVENT	WHAT MEMBERS SHOULD KNOW
2nd Wednesday 1900	Branch 99 & Auxiliary Unit 99 meetings	357 Edwin Drive, Virginia Beach. Bring a prospective member or a service idea.
Every Saturday	Branch 99 Bingo	Volunteers are needed for setup, sales, floor support and cleanup. Contact the Branch before arriving.
Sept. 29-Oct. 2	98th FRA / 93rd Auxiliary National Convention	The Orleans Hotel & Casino, 4500 W. Tropicana Ave., Las Vegas. Opening ceremony: Sept. 29 at 0930.
Oct. 31 dusk-8 PM	Community Trunk or Treat	357 Edwin Drive. Family-friendly event for children age 12 and under; participant spaces are limited.

NATIONAL CONVENTION NOTE

The special hotel group-rate deadline passed Aug. 27. Members still considering attendance should contact the hotel and consult FRA’s official convention page for current availability and last-minute changes.

SUBMIT AN ANNOUNCEMENT

Help keep the Maritime Messenger useful. Send meeting notices, volunteer needs, photos, member milestones and memorial notices to the Branch for the next issue.



FRA NATIONAL ADVOCACY

What FRA members said matters most in 2026

FRA’s 2026 Legislative Priorities Survey reported strong concern that earned benefits must remain dependable throughout a full military career and retirement.

1	Protect TRICARE access and affordability Respondents placed health care among their highest priorities, especially predictable fees, access to providers, and protection of lifetime-care expectations.
2	Preserve retired pay and COLA Members emphasized stable retired pay, meaningful cost-of-living adjustments, and progress on concurrent receipt.
3	Keep VA care veteran-centered Survey respondents strongly supported a robust VA system and warned against changes that reduce access, timeliness or continuity of care.
4	Support the all-volunteer force Competitive pay, housing, family support and quality of life help recruit and retain qualified Sailors, Marines and Coast Guardsmen.
5	Guarantee Coast Guard pay FRA has advocated for legislation that keeps Coast Guard members paid during federal funding lapses.

TURN INFORMATION INTO INFLUENCE

Visit the FRA Action Center at fra.org. Review the current issue, personalize the message, and contact your elected officials. A short message from a constituent and veteran can reinforce FRA’s national testimony.

Source: FRA NewsBytes, Feb. 6, 2026, “FRA 2026 Survey Highlights.”



READY AT SEA • Flight-deck operations aboard USS George H.W. Bush in the Atlantic Ocean. U.S. Navy photo by Seaman Apprentice Sasha Ambrose.

VETERAN BENEFITS & CLAIMS

Practical help for Shipmates

FRA VSO AND CLAIMS SUPPORT

FRA is accredited to assist veterans with VA claims and appeals. Accredited Veteran Service Officers can prepare, present and file claims; trained Branch Veteran Claims Advisors help Shipmates understand the process and prepare to use VA.gov.

Before an appointment, assemble:

- DD-214 or separation documents
- Service treatment and private medical records
- Current diagnosis information
- Marriage, divorce and dependent records
- A short timeline connecting the condition to service

AVOID CLAIMS SCAMS

Never pay an unaccredited company to “guarantee” a VA rating. Verify accreditation through VA before sharing medical records or signing a fee agreement.

CURRENT VA SNAPSHOT

VA reported that more than 250,000 Veterans enrolled in VA health care during 2026 as of Sept. 1. Enrollment can open access to primary, specialty, mental-health and preventive care, subject to eligibility.

VA also reported the disability and pension claims backlog fell below 70,000 in July 2026. Faster national processing does not remove the need for complete evidence and accurate forms.

Need transportation?

Ask your local VA medical center about Beneficiary Travel, the Veterans Transportation Service, VetRide, volunteer drivers or locally coordinated rides. Eligibility and availability vary.

Start here: VA.gov, 800-698-2411, or an accredited representative.

Sources: FRA Member Benefits; FRA NewsBytes (Feb. 6 and Aug. 21, 2026); VA news releases dated July 7 and Sept. 1, 2026.



EXPEDITIONARY READINESS • Marines assigned to the 11th MEU prepare to board a CH-53E before amphibious operations. U.S. Marine Corps photo by Lance Cpl. Luke Rodriguez.

MEMBERSHIP HAS PRACTICAL VALUE

Benefits beyond the meeting room

Membership supports FRA’s legislative voice and connects Shipmates with programs that can help families, students and veterans.

Advocacy	National representation on pay, health care, retirement, veterans’ benefits and Sea Service quality-of-life issues.
Education	The FRA Education Foundation awards more than \$90,000 in scholarships annually for eligible Sea Service personnel, FRA members and dependents.
Information	FRAtoday, weekly NewsBytes, Making Waves alerts, OnWatch and the FRA Action Center.
Savings	A member marketplace with offers on travel, entertainment, dining, electronics and shopping through the myFRA profile.
Disaster relief	Financial assistance may be available to Shipmates suffering losses from natural disasters.
Community	Local fellowship, youth and patriotic programs, VA volunteer service, branch events and service projects.

ONE-MEMBER CHALLENGE

Before the next meeting, identify one eligible Navy, Marine Corps or Coast Guard Shipmate. Share one concrete FRA benefit and invite that person to Branch 99.

Source: FRA Member Benefits and FRA Membership Manual, accessed Sept. 2026.



SERVICE ACROSS THE PACIFIC • Coast Guard cutters protect maritime safety, sovereignty and vital ocean resources. Official U.S. Coast Guard photograph.

AUXILIARY OF THE FRA - UNIT 99

Service, fellowship and a stronger future

The Auxiliary supports veterans, active-duty families, youth programs, scholarships, patriotic education, welfare projects and the shared mission of the Fleet Reserve Association.

A MESSAGE TO MEMBERS

Every Unit member brings a useful gift: experience, creativity, contacts, time, compassion or leadership. Renewal begins when we show up, listen carefully and choose one job we can complete together.

Three easy ways to participate

- Attend the second-Wednesday meeting.
- Adopt one community or welfare project.
- Invite a family member or friend to learn about the Auxiliary.

Pamela Bishop
Auxiliary Unit 99 President

PROJECT STARTER

Choose one 30-day project:

- Collect hygiene items for at-risk veterans
- Write cards to hospitalized veterans
- Sponsor a youth patriotic-essay activity
- Staff a membership table at a Branch event

NATIONAL AUXILIARY CONNECTION

The 93rd Auxiliary National Convention meets alongside the 98th FRA National Convention, Sept. 29-Oct. 2, 2026, at The Orleans in Las Vegas. Members should use the official FRA convention page for schedule updates.

COME WITH AN IDEA - LEAVE WITH A TASK

At the next meeting, propose one achievable project, name the first step, and volunteer for a role. Small completed projects rebuild momentum.



HONORING OUR SEA SERVICE FAMILY • FRA and Auxiliary programs strengthen the people who serve, the veterans who served and the families who support them.

BRANCH 99 IN ACTION

Volunteer. Recruit. Serve.

SATURDAY BINGO NEEDS YOU

Bingo is more than a fundraiser. It is a weekly point of connection that helps sustain Branch operations and community service. Reliable volunteers make the event welcoming, orderly and successful.

Ways to help

- Setup and room readiness
- Admissions or sales support
- Floor assistance and hospitality
- Kitchen or refreshment support
- Cleanup and closing checklist

VOLUNTEER SMART

Confirm the shift time and assignment with Branch leadership before reporting.

RECRUITING CONVERSATION

Ask: "Did you serve in the Navy, Marine Corps or Coast Guard?"

Explain: "FRA advocates for our earned benefits and helps members with career and entitlement concerns."

Invite: "Join me at the next Branch 99 meeting so you can meet the Shipmates."

The 2026 FRA Membership Manual describes FRA as an advocate on Capitol Hill and an ally when members need help navigating career or entitlement issues.

Follow up within 48 hours. A personal invitation works best when it is specific and timely.

MEMBER CARE CHECK

Know a Shipmate who is ill, grieving, isolated, facing a benefits problem or recovering from a disaster? With permission, connect the member to Branch leadership and the appropriate FRA or VA resource.



SHIPMATES ON WATCH • Service, teamwork and readiness connect today's Sailors with generations of FRA members.

KEEP, SHARE & TAKE ACTION

Member resource page

RESOURCE	CONTACT / USE
FRA National Headquarters	fra.org • 800-372-1924 • 703-683-1400 • fra@fra.org
FRA Action Center	Access from fra.org to review legislative issues and contact Congress.
VA Benefits & Health Care	VA.gov • 800-698-2411
Veterans Crisis Line	Dial 988, press 1 • Text 838255 • VeteransCrisisLine.net
Branch 99	357 Edwin Drive, Virginia Beach, VA 23462 • (757) 499-6650 • fra99.org

EDITORIAL REVIEW NOTES

This illustrated edition corrected the crisis-line contact, removed completed 2025 events and expired invitations, replaced the old TRICARE transition article, added current 2026 national advocacy and VA information, and converted underused pages into member-benefit, recruiting and action content.

PRIMARY SOURCES

- Fleet Reserve Association: [fra.org](#); 2026 Convention Newsletter #4; 2026 Membership Manual; Member Benefits; NewsBytes dated Feb. 6 and Aug. 21, 2026.
- U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs: [VA.gov](#) and VA News releases dated July 7, Sept. 1, Sept. 8 and Sept. 14, 2026.
- Veterans Crisis Line: [VeteransCrisisLine.net](#).

NEXT ISSUE INPUT

Send Branch announcements, verified dates, photos and member news early enough for editing. Before printing, recheck time-sensitive event details against the official source.

PHOTO SOURCES

Official U.S. Navy, U.S. Marine Corps and U.S. Coast Guard photographs from [Navy.mil](#), [Marines.mil](#) and [News.USCG.mil](#). Images are credited on page 1 and used in accordance with applicable Department of Defense visual-information guidance.

Recruiting new members is a never-ending requirement for a successful Branch.



LOYALTY • PROTECTION • SERVICE — The shared heritage of the Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard.