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You Can Keep Us Current

For those of you who have never had the pleasure of having a teenager in Drivers Ed, just wait! It's not easy having a 15-year-old point out driving "indiscretions." Not that I have many, mind you. But I appreciate his excitement for learning and am taking away a few lessons of my own.

One, I don't know all the answers (hand placement on the wheel?). Two, I need to stay current (it's no longer 10 and 2; it's 8 and 4). And three, intent and reality are very different (I don't do it wrong intentionally!).

Applied to my professional REA life, it looks like this. There are many intelligent and caring people and groups working hard to serve you. They don't intentionally omit the Reserve Component from the conversation, but it happens quite a bit. We need your help to stay current. You have the answers. You are the conversation!

Legislative Update

Through our participation in The Military Coalition, REA has ensured that your interests were considered in several areas of legislation this year. But as an independent association, we've focused the majority of our energy in three areas: payment of IDT/UTA travel costs for inactive duty training and unit training assemblies, reduced age retirement, and improvements in the Montgomery G.I. Bill for Selected Reserve (MGIB-SR).

At the time of this writing, the following amendments passed in the Senate. Updates will follow as the legislative process continues.

- An amendment by Sen. Jeff Sessions (R-Ala.) would authorize the payment of IDT travel costs for certain Selected Reserve members. A similar provision passed the House.
- An amendment by Sen. Blanche Lincoln (D-Ark.) would authorize use of education benefits for up to 10 years after separating from the Selected Reserve.
- An amendment by Sen. Saxby Chambliss (R-Ga.) would reduce the Reserve retirement age by three months for each 90 days served on active duty since Sept. 11, 2001.

For now, THE OFFICER magazine is our primary means of keeping you informed of legislative and policy issues. Although it may be tempting to skip straight to the REA article, I encourage you to read the whole magazine. In last month's issue, ROA Executive Director LtGen Dennis McCarthy, USMC (Ret.), spoke to two issues: speculation concerning the "absorption of the Army and Air Force Reserve into the National Guard" and "separate leadership, manage-

ment, and resource controls" of the Reserve Component not being needed. If you've misplaced the issue, go to www.roa.org/publication and click on the October issue. I'd be interested in knowing your views on these issues. E-mail me at lburnett@reaus.org.

Special Thanks

Recently, REA supported a bill introduced by Rep. Ellen Tauscher (D-Calif.) requiring mandatory down-time between deployments for all troops. In addition to requiring minimum periods of rest and recuperation, the bill would provide predictability for serving Reservists, their families, and their employers. REA urged that the language concerning waiver authority be reviewed to ensure the necessary flexibility to respond to a continuously changing environment, stating that "predictability should not impinge on the flexibility needed to meet the needs of the nation." The language was adjusted and the bill passed. In her floor address, Rep. Tauscher stated: "For far too long, members of the Guard and Reserve have been under-represented in Congress. Today you have an opportunity to help them." Thanks to Rep. Tauscher and her staff.

Earlier in the year, a Task Force on the Future of Military Health Care was appointed to provide the secretary of defense and Congress an assessment and recommendations on military health care. Especially eager to present the perspective of enlisted personnel and their family members, REA reached out to two currently serving Reservists to attend a Task Force town hall meeting. SGM John Davis, USAR, a postmaster in Madison Heights, Va., who has been on active duty continuously since January 2003 (currently serving as the Chief, OMC Court Reporting Team in the Office of Military Commissions) and TSgt Mike Harris, USAFR, a C-5 jet engine mechanic with the 512th Component Maintenance Squadron, Dover AFB, Del., and a senior consultant for Booz Allen Hamilton, traveled to Norfolk, Va., to represent the enlisted voice. (TSgt Harris was REA's 1,000th member). Thanks to both for their time and involvement.

REA strives to have the enlisted perspective heard at every opportunity, and at the time of this writing, we are preparing to host a meeting with the Task Force and the Senior Enlisted Advisory Group. Details next month. ▀

ON THE WEB: For more information on the Reserve Enlisted Association, visit www.reaus.org.