

## **Legislation -- Our Role, Your Role**

By CW4 (Ret) Roy Valiant  
USAWOA National President

### **My Fellow Members,**

**Eroding benefits, pay compression, retiree issues (lions and tigers and bears, oh my).** How does the USAWOA work issues like these? What is your responsibility to make or influence these changes? Do you have a responsibility?

**The USAWOA is very good at bringing warrant officer issues** to the HQDA and DoD table that other organizations can't or won't. However, it doesn't stop there. The Military Coalition (TMC) is the next step when it comes to issues that involve legislative action to make it happen.

**As part of the 35-member coalition,** we surface warrant officer issues to make them TMC issues. When TMC speaks, Capitol Hill listens because they know that TMC represents over 5.5 million voters. Through negotiations and the committee process on Capital Hill, issues become introduced to the Senate or House for continued study and approval/disapproval. A lot of times the difference between approval and disapproval is the level of "noise" that the senator or representative hears; not whether it is a beneficial bill or not. **This is where you come in**

**When you know of bills being introduced** to the senate or house, e-mail, call, mail, or fax your pleasure or displeasure with the topic. Make your "noise" heard. I have over simplified a process that takes months and most of the time years. The point is that you do have a responsibility for legislative action, whether it involves warrant officer issues, across the board military issues, or even retiree (most of you will be one some day) issues. You need to let your congressmen/women know how at least one voter (you) feels about the issue.

**How many of you live in a state that tax retired military pay, whether you are retired or not?** I am one of those retirees; paying state income tax on my retired military pay to the great state of Maryland. Working at Aberdeen Proving Ground gives a retiree a choice on where to live, in a tax-retired-military-pay state (Maryland) or in a non-tax-retired-military-pay state (Pennsylvania) and still be within reasonable commute distance from work.

**Over the last 2-3 years the Maryland Retiree Veteran Task Force (MRVTF)** has made great strides in getting Maryland to pass a bill to do away with income tax on retired military pay. Through the efforts of the task force and the individuals that made their "noise" heard I am close to keeping more of my retired pay; maybe as soon as this session. My point is regardless of the issue or the state in which you live, if there are state issues as well as national issues that affect you personally that you have a heartfelt opinion of, let your elected officials here your "noise".

**You might say “Why should I pay attention to what is going on in (pick a state) when I will PCS in a couple of years never to be back again?”** Let’s say, for example, that you plan to live near Ft. Lewis after you retire. That’s okay, because more than likely there is a warrant officer at Ft. Lewis in the same situation that is going to PCS to Maryland and retire. Point is, if you each get involved in the state-level issues that would benefit military personnel you would both come out ahead upon retirement.

**E-mail is a great thing** and a communication vehicle that has greatly improved and enriched our lives and in some cases made it miserable and added stress. A phenomenon that has happened over the years is the complete circle on the attention certain correspondence is given. When e-mail first came out, it was the attention getter that all immediately replied to, regardless of the issue or content. The onslaught of more people with more computers has inundated state-and national-elected officials with e-mail by the tens of thousands. Now some officials pay more attention to the written letter by snail mail than the e-mail. It does take more time to do and usually more thought to do it. E-mail is soooooo easy.

**When you hear of issues being discussed in congressional committee or on the floor, contact your elected officials to make your “noise”.** There is movement at DA level towards targeted pay raises for warrant officers (see Vice-President Nisker’s article which is also available for download). When the dust settles and this finally gets to the House or Senate for action, I will ensure the USAWOA membership knows about it so we can make our “noise”.

**What is your responsibility** to make or influence these changes? Do you have a responsibility? Yes, you do. Legislative issues and processes are not just for legislatures.

**Thank you for your continued support of the only organization by, for, and of warrant officers.**

**FOR THE CORPS!**

Roy Valiant  
CW4, USA Retired  
National President

(EDITOR’S NOTE: Ready to “make noise” and correspond with congress but not sure where to begin? Go to “downloads” on the USAWOA Online. Click on “Legislative Material,” then “Legislators – How to Contact.”)