

## NATIONAL OFFICERS



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## President's Message

### “Sea Change”

As a young ensign, a wizened warrant officer taught me about how to “read” the ocean. Waves coming from different directions often preceded by days the arrival of inclement weather. For years, I thought that was the meaning of “sea change.”

It was actually Shakespeare who coined the term in *The Tempest*. “Sea change” refers to a profound transformation; a change of great significance. Like the ocean, sometimes changes are predictable. Sometimes there are no reference points. I remember on a WESTPAC cruise our navigator showing the Captain our WEAX message — the Daily Enroute Weather Forecast issued by the Naval Maritime Forecast Center. It echoed verbatim the weather observations we had sent hours earlier. There were no other ships within 1,000 miles of us, so our past became our forecast. That works as long as one is in charted territory.

There’s a story that says Columbus plotted his journey on two charts — one for the crew, which showed a very slow progress so they wouldn’t fear falling off the edge of the flat world and mutiny, and his personal secret chart which tracked his actual progress. Doctors today often offer partial diagnoses so as not to upset or alarm patients. If I were seriously ill, I would want to hear it straight.

So, where is NRA heading? I’ll tell it straight: membership is down, our financial resources are diminishing rapidly, and we struggle for relevancy on Capitol Hill as we cannot fund the staffing we would like. If we doubled our paid membership tomorrow, we still would have less money than we did one year ago. We are not in uncharted territory, but we know where we’re headed — off the edge if we don’t change course. We need to opt for uncharted territory. Hence, our initiative to mature NRA into the Association of the United States Navy (AUSN).

The key for us is that we see change — in our membership trends, financial security, and legislative advocacy success. Our Active Component (AC) Sailors do not have what Reserve Component (RC) Sailors have — effective representation on Capitol Hill. We can share our mission as true execution of our Total Force by expanding our membership and benefits to our AC brethren.

For those uncertain of the concept of Total Force, or Active-Reserve Integration (ARI), my personal experience over the past two years confirms it does work. I travelled 17 times from Maryland to Hawaii to support US Pacific Command as Director of the Joint Operations Center. I pulled the same duty with the same responsibilities as captains and colonels that have been AC their entire careers. No discrimination. No reduced expectations. I worked as a full-up round supporting Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom. Although the Soldiers with whom I worked had the benefit of the Association of the United States Army (AUSA), our AC Sailors had no equivalent representation. AUSN can change all that.

Our transition committee will provide an interim report at our spring conference. Come to Fort Worth, see what progress we’ve made, and be part of the future. I know money may be tight for many, so we’ve reduced the conference fee below \$200. We are not randomly trying changes and hoping to find success. We are building a solid business plan that we will execute with military precision. I will not allow our Association to fall off the map on my watch. Neither will I accept failure because of inadequate planning. Our committee is doing yeoman work. Lend a hand if you can.

If we try to hold to our past, we will lose our beloved Association and our future. We need to act like the experienced leaders we are, and respond to the call for sea change by striking out on a new course.

G. Mark Hardy  
National President

**Editor’s Note:** To learn more about your Association President, see <http://www.navy-reserve.org/president.pdf>.

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