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United States Coast Guard

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COMDTINST 1410.1  
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COMMANDANT INSTRUCTION 1410.1

Subj COAST GUARD ACTIVE DUTY OFFICER PROMOTION BOARDS

Ref: (a) CG Personnel Manual, COMDTINST M1000.6 (series)

1. PURPOSE. This Instruction consolidates and amplifies current policy, responsibilities and procedures and provides background information on the Coast Guard active duty officer promotion board process. It is intended to assist officers in understanding the process, but not to supplant the information and guidance provided in reference (a).
2. ACTION. Area and district commanders, commanders of maintenance and logistics commands, commanding officers of Headquarters units, Assistant Commandants for directorates, Chief Counsel, and special staff offices at Headquarters shall ensure familiarization with the provisions of this directive.
3. DIRECTIVES AFFECTED. This Instruction consolidates information from various directives and statutes, and amplifies portions of reference (a).
4. BACKGROUND.
  - a. Coast Guard officers are responsible for their career development and maintenance of their records. Personnel boards are such a significant aspect of service, that every officer should have an understanding of the board process. The officer promotion system, which is governed by reference (a) and underlying statutes and regulations, can be complicated and difficult to understand. Every season, active duty officers have an array of questions on how it works and have requested more comprehensive guidance.

DISTRIBUTION – SDL No.137

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- b. The Coast Guard's promotion authority for active duty officers emanates from 14 U.S.C. §251 through §275, and 10 U.S.C. §573 through §582 for chief warrant officers. Ensigns and those not included on the Active Duty Promotion List (ADPL) are promoted based upon 14 U.S.C. §271(c) and §276, respectively. Active Duty Reserve officers serving on extended active duty agreements pursuant to 10 U.S.C. §12301 are promoted in accordance with 14 U.S.C. §728. Reserve Program Administrators and Coast Guard Academy Permanent Commissioned Teaching Staff Officers are governed by 14 U.S.C. §276, and so are not covered by this instruction. 14 U.S.C. §271(c) provides that the promotion process for ensigns is governed by Service regulations, not the statutes for lieutenant (junior grade) through captain. Retired Officers recalled to active duty are not eligible for promotion at all.

5. DISCUSSION.

- a. Promotion boards recommend on either a best-qualified or fully-qualified basis, or both, as set forth in law and directed in precepts. The Commandant issues a generic precept each year, which provides additional guidance to promotion boards. It is available for review by officers throughout the board season. All personnel boards consider fundamentally the same type of information. However, each board develops its own overall standards and promotion criteria. The degree of significance a board assigns to each of the many factors it considers may vary according to the grade and type of promotion the board is making. For instance, a board selecting officers for lieutenant may emphasize different factors than would a Captain Continuation Board. Promotion is not a reward for satisfactory service. It confirms an officer's demonstrated potential to serve the Coast Guard in a higher grade.
- b. Before convening a board to recommend officers for promotion, the Commandant, acting for the Secretary of Transportation, determines the total number of officers to be selected for promotion to that grade. This number is equal to the number of vacancies estimated for the next 12 months, less the number of officers on the promotion list for that grade. (14 U.S.C. §255, 10 U.S.C. §574)
- c. After determining the number of officers to be selected for each grade, promotion zones are established. The promotion zone for each grade consists of that grade's most senior officers on the ADPL who are eligible for promotion to the next higher grade who have not previously been placed in a promotion zone for promotion to the next higher grade. Decisions about zone sizes and opportunities of promotion for each grade are based on a few different factors: the needs of the Service; the estimated number of vacancies available in future years to provide comparable opportunity to promote officers in successive year groups; and the extent to which current terms of service in that grade conform to a desirable career promotion pattern.

6. DEFINITIONS.

- a. Active Duty Promotion List (ADPL) – All commissioned officers (including chief warrant officers) who are regular, temporary, or reserves on extended active duty contracts comprise the Active Duty Promotion List (ADPL). Reserve Program Administrators, Permanent Commissioned Teaching Staff, officers on retired recall, and drilling reserve officers on orders are not included. Only commissioned officers on the ADPL are considered by the active duty promotion boards. All officers on the ADPL, even those with resignation and retirement requests pending, must appear before the boards to which they are eligible, unless on medical hold following a mandatory retirement date.
  - b. Promotion Boards – Personnel boards that select officers on the ADPL to grades from lieutenant (junior grade) to rear admiral (lower half) and for within the chief warrant officer grades.
  - c. Promotion Zone – The most senior officers of that grade on the ADPL who are eligible for consideration for promotion to the next higher grade, and who have not previously been placed in that promotion zone. Officers who are eligible for promotion based upon their date of rank in grade, but are not yet in the promotion zone are considered below zone. Officers who have already been considered for the next higher grade, but were not selected, are considered above zone.
  - d. Below Zone Selection – A promotion board may recommend a select number of officers for promotion to a grade below rear admiral (lower half) from among eligible officers junior in rank to the junior officer in the appropriate promotion zone. The number selected below zone may not exceed –
    - (1) Five percent of the total number of officers that the board is authorized to recommend for promotion to the grade of lieutenant or lieutenant commander;
    - (2) Seven and a half percent of the total number of officers that the board is authorized to recommend for promotion to the grade of commander; and
    - (3) Ten percent of the total number of officers that the board is authorized to recommend for promotion to the grade of captain;

unless such percentage is a number less than one, in which case the board may recommend one such officer for promotion. (14 U.S.C. §251)
  - e. Personnel Data Record (PDR) – An officer's record of Coast Guard service. It is currently maintained in both paper and electronic formats, with the goal of moving toward an entirely electronic system. PDRs are the primary documentation on an officer available to a promotion board. Discussion of the specific materials viewed by boards is included in this Instruction.
7. POLICY. The policy regarding promotion boards is set forth below in the following categories:

general information applicable to all promotion boards; specific promotion board guidance; policy concerning failure of promotion; removal from a promotion list; and frocking information.

- a. Selection Board General Information. Article 14.A.3. of reference (a) provides criteria for all the promotion boards. This portion of reference (a), as well as a precept, are provided to all board members. As stated earlier, however, each board develops its own specific standards and promotion criteria. Board deliberations are confidential and remain so even after the Board is complete.
  - (1) Information available to a Selection Board. Officer promotion boards review only officers' records and any communications from candidates directly to the board. Records may be presented to the boards with electronic imaging. To ensure that all candidates compete on a level playing field, officer promotion boards only see the officer portion of a record (not the enlisted portion for those officers with prior enlisted service). The boards are also given eligibility rosters of the candidates. These are in order of the last three digits of their social security numbers. Above and in zone officer rosters are combined, so that the status of the candidates is not discernible. Information regarding ethnicity is not available to promotion boards at any time.
  - (2) Record Material. Officers' records include a significant amount of documentation, much of which would not be helpful to a promotion board. To ensure that candidates are treated fairly and that family, ethnic, and religious information is not viewed, the documentation contained in enclosure (1) is all that is made available to promotion boards. The materials that are masked from a promotion board's view are delineated in enclosure (2).
  - (3) Reviewing a Record for Completeness. While every effort is made to ensure that records are checked for completeness prior to each promotion board, officers are ultimately responsible for their own records. Copies may be obtained by mail through CGPC-adm-3; and through personal visits to the Records Room in the Coast Guard Headquarters Building. Officers are encouraged to personally review their records when in the Washington, DC area.
  - (4) Communicating with a Selection Board. Officers are entitled by statute, 14 U.S.C. §253, to send a communication to their promotion board, to arrive not later than the date the board convenes. Officers may send letters via their chains of command for endorsement, but are not so required. The communication may invite attention to that officer's armed forces record alone. It may not criticize any officer or reflect upon the character, conduct, or motive of any officer. The same procedures apply to chief warrant officers, but are governed by reference (a), pursuant to 10 U.S.C. §573.

- (5) Selection Board Membership. Officers interested in serving on promotion boards may contact the Officer Personnel Management Division of the Coast Guard Personnel Command to convey their desire. The form from the Register of Officers or an e-mail is sufficient. Board memberships are constructed based on a number of factors, so that not every officer will have an opportunity to serve. Some of these factors are officer performance, professional growth, specialty, accession source, and geographical location.
  - (6) Board Results. Each promotion board report is routed through the chain of command to the Secretary of Transportation for final approval. Results are not disseminated until this occurs. The entire approval process usually ranges from four to six weeks. Once CGPC receives the board report back from the Department of Transportation (who approves the results), non-selection calls are made immediately. First, CGPC contacts the appropriate Chiefs of Staff, who in turn call the commanding officers of the individuals who were not selected. This is a courtesy, so that when the results message is released the following day, officers are not taken by surprise.
  - (7) Board Deliberations. Deliberations of a promotion board are and remain confidential. This requirement is not to hide the process, but is instead intended to protect officers from following misleading information. Every year, new boards convene and develop their own specific criteria for promotion. If each board gave out advice as to what they thought was the key to promotion, officers might follow suggestions that would not help them succeed in future years. Officers seeking career and promotion advice should ask their assignment officers for feedback, and should review the guidance in reference (a).
- b. Specific Board Guidance. There are a few different types of promotion boards, best-qualified, fully-qualified, and a combination of the two.
- (1) Fully-qualified Boards. Lieutenant (junior grade) promotion boards are fully-qualified. These boards recommend those officers for promotion whose records indicate they are qualified to perform all duties to which they reasonably might be assigned in the grade for which they are being considered. Each board shall definitely recommend whether each officer it considers is or is not qualified, without any restrictions or qualifications.
    - (a) Comparison. In recommending each officer it considers, the members of a board compare him or her to the present grade officers and those in the next higher grade that they have observed in their careers. They determine how well the individual measures up to such officers according to the overall criteria the board established. If the board believes the officer has demonstrated by past performance, the fitness and potential to perform creditably those duties to which he or she reasonably might be assigned, the board recommends him or her. If past performance indicates potential for increased responsibilities and

administrative assignments is doubtful or limited, the board does not recommend the officer.

- (b) Not recommended. If the board does not recommend an officer or finds an officer's performance in his or her present grade is unsatisfactory, they indicate the reasons in the board report. This feedback is provided in an individual letter to any officer not selected for promotion.
- (2) Best-qualified Boards. These are the lieutenant through rear admiral (lower half) promotion boards. Boards to consider officers on a best-qualified basis may recommend only the number specified in the precept.
- (a) Comparison. In recommending officers for promotion on a best-qualified basis, a board considers the extent to which the eligible officers compare among themselves in accomplishing past assignments and potential for greater responsibility according to the overall criteria the board adopted. Best-qualified boards consider officers' records, comparing past performance, capacity to successfully undertake tasks of progressively greater difficulty involving broader responsibilities, capability and inclination to study for further professional growth, and potential to perform creditably those duties to which these officers might be assigned in the next higher grade. Officers both in and above zone are considered in the same pool. That is, those who are above zone are not identified as such, and the eligibility lists are provided to the board in order of the last three digits of their social security numbers. The number of below zone selections is limited by statute. (14 U.S.C. §259)
  - (b) Not recommended. Board reports list those selected for promotion in date of rank (precedence) order. They do not include reasons for the officers not selected, because the recommendations are based on the competitive nature of the pool, not on a fully-qualified standard.
- (3) Best and Fully-qualified Boards. Promotion boards for chief warrant officers are convened on a best and fully-qualified basis. (10 U.S.C. §575) Boards convened to consider officers on both a fully-qualified and a best-qualified basis for promotion may recommend to promote up to the number specified in the precept.
- (a) Comparison. The board makes two determinations, fully-qualified and best-qualified. First, the board compares each officer as described above in the fully-qualified section. If past performance indicates the potential for increased responsibilities and administrative assignments is doubtful or limited, the board

does not recommend the officer. Those officers meeting the fully-qualified determination are then compared on a best-qualified basis, as described in the best-qualified section. Only officers who have been found fully-qualified may be considered on a best-qualified basis. Normally, the number of officers found fully-qualified exceeds the number of officers found best-qualified. In this case, there is no requirement to identify reasons for those officers who were found fully-qualified, but were not selected amongst those best-qualified. However, if an officer is found to be performing in an unsatisfactory manner, the Board specifies the reason for that finding. In addition, if the board is unable to attain enough best-qualified candidates to meet the number specified in the precept, the Board specifies the reasons for their unqualified determinations.

- (b) Not Recommended. When the board is tasked with choosing up to a maximum number of best-qualified candidates, they may choose less than that number only if there are an insufficient number of fully-qualified officers. If the board selects less than the maximum number, it is indicating that the officers not chosen were either not fully-qualified or unsatisfactory in their performance. In either case, the board specifies in writing the reasons for the non-selections.
  - (c) Finding Unfit or Unsatisfactory Performance. (10 U.S.C. §576) The selection board reports the names of those chief warrant officers they considered whose records and reports establish unfitness or unsatisfactory performance in their permanent regular grade. The selection board acts as a special board as outlined in article 12.A.21b. Warrant officers found unfit or unsatisfactory in their performance of duty by the promotion board are then referred to an evaluation board convened under the guidelines of Article 12.A.21.c. of reference (a).
- c. Failure of Selection for Promotion. Officers in the grade of commander and below in the promotion zone fail of selection if they do not appear on the list of selectees recommended by the board considering them, or if they are subsequently removed from the list of selectees in the board's report. Officers do not fail of selection if a selection board did not consider them because of an administrative error. Officers who fail of selection the first time appearing before a promotion board are considered a second time the following year, unless they are otherwise separated prior to the applicable board.
- (1) Chief Warrant Officers. Unless continued, retired, or separated under some other provision of law, a chief warrant officer who has twice failed of selection for promotion to the next higher chief warrant officer grade is:
    - (a) Retired not later than the first day of the seventh month after approval of the findings of the board, if retirement eligible. Chief warrant officers holding higher

temporary commissioned grades are retired with the highest commissioned grade above chief warrant officer held for not less than six months, if the duty was satisfactory;

- (b) Retired on the first day of the month immediately following the month in which the officer completes 20 years of creditable service for retirement if the officer has 18 years of service on the date on which the report of the board was approved; or
  - (c) Discharged on the seventh month following the date on which the report of the board was approved, if the officer has fewer than 18 years of creditable service.
- (2) Ensigns. If during an ensign's first three years of commissioned service, a selection board for promotion to lieutenant (junior grade) determines his or her performance is unsatisfactory, or he or she fails selection for promotion a second time, the Commandant may revoke the ensign's commission or vacate a temporary appointment. (14 U.S.C. §281, 14 U.S.C. §214(e), 10 U.S.C. §1162)
- (3) Lieutenants (Junior Grade). Each permanent regular officer serving as a lieutenant (junior grade) who fails of selection for promotion to lieutenant for a second time is:
- (a) Honorably discharged not later than 30 June of the promotion year in which the second failure of selection occurs, or
  - (b) If he or she so requests and the needs of the Service allow, honorably discharged at an earlier date without loss of benefits that would accrue if the member were discharged on 30 June; or
  - (c) If on the date specified for discharge, the member is eligible for retirement under any law, retired on that date. (14 U.S.C. §282)
- (4) Lieutenants. Each permanent regular officer serving in the permanent grade of lieutenant who has failed of selection for promotion to lieutenant commander for the second time is:
- (a) Honorably discharged not later than 30 June of the promotion year in which the second failure of selection occurs; or
  - (b) If the member so requests and the needs of the Service allow, honorably discharged at an earlier date without the loss of benefits that would accrue if the member were discharged on 30 June; or



- (c) If on the date specified for discharge, the member is eligible for retirement under any law, retired on that date; or
  - (d) If on the date specified for discharge, the member has completed at least 18 years of active service, kept on active duty and retired on the last day of the month in which he or she completes 20 years of active service, unless earlier removed under another provision of law.
  - (e) If Service needs require, the Commandant will convene a Continuation Board to recommend regular officers for continuation on active duty for terms of two to four years. This board is conducted on a best-qualified basis. Officers continued will compete for promotion while in the continuation status. If not promoted during that term, they are either discharged with the appropriate severance pay, or if they have over 18 years, will stay on active duty until they are retirement eligible.
- (5) Regular Officers Serving Under Temporary Appointments. A regular temporary officer serving as a lieutenant (junior grade) or lieutenant who fails of selection for promotion for the second time will be treated in the same way as a lieutenant (junior grade) who fails of selection twice. Officers subject to discharge or retirement because of their two time failure of selection may elect to revert to their permanent grade instead. (14 U.S.C. §284)
- (6) Lieutenant Commanders and Commanders. Lieutenant commanders and commanders who fail of selection to the next higher grade for the second time may remain on active duty until retirement eligible, except those Reserve Officers serving on extended active duty contracts. Detailed information on mandatory and voluntary retirements is in Chapter 12 of reference (a).
- (7) Captains. If a Captain Continuation Board convened under 14 U.S.C. §289 does not recommend a captain for continuation, he or she must retire by 1 July the year following the Board. These Boards are convened based upon Service need. Non-selection by a Rear Admiral Promotion Board is not considered a failure of selection, and so does not affect retirement eligibility.
- d. Removal from a Selection for Promotion List. Promotions are not effected at the time a selection board report is approved, but when vacancies occur or when the requisite time in grade is achieved (as applicable). Between the time when officers are placed on a selection list and when officers are promoted, their promotion can be delayed, and/or they can be removed from a Selection List.

- (1) Regular Commissioned Officers. The Secretary of Transportation, acting for the President, may remove an officer's name from a promotion list.
  - (a) Delay in Promotion. Each officer in the chain of command or Commander, CGPC-opm, is responsible for delaying a promotion if he or she knows the appointee has disqualified him or herself after being placed on a promotion list. Disqualification means any circumstance that casts doubt on the moral or professional qualifications of the officer concerned, including pending action by a board of officers, courts-martial, or investigative proceedings. (14 U.S.C. §271(f))
  - (b) Reporting of Circumstances. A complete report of the circumstances recommending removal of the selectee is sent to CGPC-opm (if CGPC-opm did not initiate the action). The selectee is also furnished a copy of the recommendation.
  - (c) Delay in Promotion Board. The case is referred to a board of officers to recommend whether to remove the selectee from the promotion list. Article 5.A.13 of reference (a) provides amplifying procedural information. The board's report explains in detail the reasons for its recommendation. An officer whose name is removed in this manner remains eligible for consideration for promotion. The removal is counted as a failure of selection. If promoted as a result of the next selection board, the officer is given the date of rank and position on the ADPL as though his name was never removed. However, if the officer is not selected by the next selection board or if the officer's name is again removed from the list of selectees, the officer shall be considered for all purposes as having twice failed of selection for promotion. (14 U.S.C. §272).
  - (d) Declination of Promotion. An officer who declines promotion is considered to have failed selection.
- (2) Chief Warrant Officers.
  - (a) Adverse Information. When information of an adverse nature is received concerning a warrant officer subsequent to having been recommended for promotion by a selection board, but before an appointment letter has been tendered, or when an appointment letter is returned by an officer in the chain of command who deems the officer unqualified for appointment, the name of the chief warrant officer is referred to a special board. The board, which consists of three officers whose permanent grade is commander or above, determines

whether that chief warrant will be promoted. If the board also finds the chief warrant officer unfit or unsatisfactory (in addition to being unqualified), the chief warrant officer's name will then be referred to an evaluation board to consider retiring or discharging him or her from the Service. The board's report explains in detail the reasons for its recommendation.

- (b) Future Boards. A chief warrant officer whose name is removed in this manner remains eligible for consideration for promotion, unless separated or retired as a result of an evaluation board. The removal is counted as a failure of selection. If promoted as a result of the next selection board, the chief warrant officer is given the date of rank and position on the ADPL as though his or her name was never removed. However, if that officer is not recommended, a two-time failure of selection has occurred. (14 U.S.C. §272).
  
- e. Frocking. The Commandant may frock officers under the authority of 14 U.S.C. §632. Frocked officers have certain benefits of the higher grade to which selected, but not yet promoted. They are authorized to assume the title and wear the insignia of the grade to which frocked; to housing commensurate with the grade to which frocked; and a new Armed Forces Identification Card. Assistant Commandants for Directorates, area and district commanders, commanders of maintenance and logistic command, Chief Counsel, chiefs of special staff offices at Headquarters, and commanding officers of Headquarters units may request authority from Commander, (CGPC-opm) to frock officers under their cognizance who meet any one of the requirements listed below. Requests must be signed by a flag officer or civilian senior executive service. Captain and commander assignment panels make recommendations to CGPC as to the officers who should be frocked to the next higher grade in conjunction with future assignments. Officers may be considered for "frocking" under these circumstances:
  - (1) The higher grade is necessary to clearly establish the officer's position when he or she reports to another agency or Service for duty;
  - (2) The higher grade is necessary to ensure the officer is assigned Government quarters commensurate with the grade in which he or she would serve;
  - (3) The officer is ordered to a command billet of the higher grade for which he or she had been selected and the higher grade is desired to maintain the Coast Guard's image in an area where he or she is the senior Coast Guard officer; or
  - (4) The higher rank is a significant factor in establishing the officer's stature, thereby enhancing his or her ability to successfully carry out his or her duties.

COMDTINST 1410.1

Encl: (1) Documents Viewed By Board Members  
(2) Documents Masked From View

DOCUMENTS VIEWED BY BOARD MEMBERS

CG -3211 OCS Agreement  
CG-4916 Initial Active Duty Form  
CG-9556 Acceptance of Oath and Office  
DD-214 Certificate of Release/Discharge  
DD-215 Correction to DD-214  
CG-ADAGR Active Duty Agreement  
CG-5500 Application for Direct Commission  
CGL-INTEXT Letters of Integration/Extension  
CGL-LOBG Letters of Obligating Service  
CG-REC Recall Orders  
CG-3303 Achievement Sheet  
CG-3307 Administrative Remarks (Officers)  
CG-4175 CG Reserve Annual/Term Point Statement  
CGHQ-2511B Statement of Credible Service  
CGHQ-4290 Transcript of Sea Service  
CGHQ-4717 Statement of Services  
CGL-APP Letters of Appointment  
CGL-AV Letters of Designation as CG Aviator  
CGL-REM Letters for Removal for Cause  
CGL-27 Letters for 27 Point Screening  
CGL-20YR Letters for 20 Years of Service  
CG -WC Weight Compliance Letter  
CG-ALC Letter of Alcohol Incident  
CG-CA Report of Civil Arrest  
DD-553 Deserter/Absentee Wanted  
CG-AW Award Citation  
CGL-PUN Punitive Letters  
CG-CIVC Report of Civil Conviction  
CG-GED Results  
CG-4082 Officer Educational Record  
CG-EDUC Educational Transcript  
CG-3304 Court Memorandum  
CGPPC-1071 Statement of Creditable Service  
CGPPC-1072 Statement of Creditable Sea Service  
DD-2366 Montgomery GI Bill Act of 1984  
Voluntary Separation Orders  
CG-5311-CG-5317 All Officers Evaluations

DOCUMENTS MASKED FROM VIEW

CG-3301 Enlistment Contract  
CG-3301A Statement of Understanding  
CG-3301B Agreement to Extend Enlistment  
CG-3301C Discharge & Reenlistment Contract  
CG-3309 Record of Discharge  
CG-5411 Statement of Understanding  
CG-2520 Application for Enlistment  
CGHQ-3299 Service Record Card  
DD-4/1,2,3 Enlistment/Reenlistment Document  
CG-3303 Achievement Sheet  
DD-368 Request for Discharge  
DD-1966/1 Record of Military Processing  
CG-5412 Termination of Recoupment Data  
CGHQ-3433 Statement of Service Retired Personnel  
DD-1882 Survivor Benefit Plan Election Change  
DD-1883 Survivor Benefit Plan Election Certificate  
Letters of non-selection/lock in  
Recommendation Package  
CGHQ-4973 Service for Retirement  
CG-3822 Injury Reports  
Final Commandant Act on HUMS Discharge Recommendation  
CG-4608 Report of Investigation  
Mishap Report  
Administrative Discharge Board  
DD-149 Board of Correction of Military Records  
Personnel Records Review Board (PRRB)  
Physical Evaluation (PE) Boards  
CG-3788A,B,C Enlisted Performance Evaluation Form  
CG-2842 Notification of Removal  
CG-3698A Assignment Data Card  
DD-108 Application for Retired Pay  
Mandatory Separation Orders  
Disclosure Log  
CG-3307 (Enlisted)  
SGLV-8285 Request for Insurance (SGLI)  
SGLV-8286 SGLI Election  
VA-21-3101 VA Claim (Request for Information)