

CAREER SPEAK is a six-part series being published throughout 2008 in THE RESERVIST in support of a broader Reserve Junior Officer (RJO) Career Management Program initiative. The series discusses successful career strategies and important how-to's in managing your Reserve career. Enlisted members are also encouraged to read this series to gain insight, especially if considering the Selected Reserve Direct Commission program in the future. CAREER SPEAK Part 5, published here, addresses many of the topics regarding preparation for promotion boards, assignments, career paths, and values Reserve Junior Officers should focus on throughout their career in order to maximize success. This document is intended to serve merely as a reference guide and is not a formal document relating to USCG policy or established practices.

## Part 5:

# An Unofficial Guide for Junior Officer Promotions

By LTJG Jennifer J. Fortuny

**C**oast Guard officers are a unique blend of professional and military personnel given the diverse and multi-mission requirements. Serving in a branch that has both military power and law enforcement authority is both an exciting and rewarding opportunity. As we are such a small service, our officers are expected to be professional specialists in a selected field, maintain flexibility among assignments, as well as be proficient administrators of their own careers. This guide was created for junior officers who understand that knowledge is the key to success. Information for this guidance was drawn from a variety of resources including: Coast Guard Personnel Manual, Reserve Policy Manual, the Commandant's Guidance to Officer Selection Boards, Reserve Officer Corps Management Plan and the Commandant's Career Guidance.

### Understanding The Promotion Process

The Inactive Duty Promotion List (IDPL) consists of Reserve officers in an Active Status, which includes all officers in the Selected Reserve (SELRES), the Individual Ready Reserve (IRR), those on Involuntary Mobilization Orders or Active Duty Special Work (ADSW) orders and officers on the Active Status List (ASL). Reserve officers serving on Extended Active Duty (EAD) and Reserve Program Administrators (RPAs) are not eligible for consideration for promotion on the IDPL. Reserve officers on EAD not wishing to integrate into the regular officer corps may request to be released from active duty and placed on the IDPL prior to the promotion board convening.

### The Running Mate System

An officer on the Active Duty Promotion List (ADPL) becomes eligible for consideration for promotion to the next higher grade at the beginning of the promotion year in which he or she completes the amount of service computed from the date of rank in the grade in which they are currently serving (see Table 1). Reserve officers become eligible for consideration for promotion based on their ADPL running mate. The running mate is assigned based on the officer on the ADPL of the same grade who is next senior in precedence to the Reserve officer. An officer who has been twice failed for selection or who has been considered but has not been recommended for continuation will not be assigned as a running mate. Lieutenants (junior grade) and lieutenants are promoted based on the time in grade system, i.e. 18 months for lieutenant (junior grade) and 36 months for lieutenants.

Grade In Which Serving	Length of Service
Lieutenant (junior grade)	2 years
Lieutenant	3 years
Lieutenant Commander	4 years
Commander	4 years
Captain	3 years

### Calculating the Opportunity of Selection (OOS)

Before convening a selection board to recommend officers for promotion, CG-1 determines the total number of officers to be selected for promotion to that grade based on calculations consisting of the number of vacancies existing in that grade, plus the number of additional vacancies estimated for the next 12 months, less the number of officers already selected on the previous promotion year selection list for the grade. This number then becomes the "zone." Zones consist of:

- "Above-zone" officers previously non-selected for the next higher paygrade.
- "In-zone" officers being looked at for the next higher paygrade for the first time.
- The IDPL "zone" includes both the "above-zone" and "in-zone" candidates.
- "Below-zone" officers eligible to be considered for the next higher paygrade.

### Fully Qualified vs. Best Qualified Boards

Promotion boards are governed by a best-qualified basis, a fully-qualified basis, or both best qualified and fully qualified, as set forth in law and directed in the boards precept issued by Coast Guard Personnel Command. These boards also consider officers requesting continuation on active duty, retention in a particular occupational field, or appointment in another status. The board members are governed by the numbers specified in the precept and may recommend promoting, continuing, retaining, or appointing only that number. Each of these promotion boards will fundamentally consider the same type of information.

**The fully-qualified determination:** The board will compare each officer to those in the present grade and those in the next higher grade to 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, fitness, and potential to perform creditably those duties to which he/she reasonably might be assigned, the board will go to the second determination step. If past performance indicates the potential for increased responsibilities but administrative assignments, expertise, skills, and abilities doubtful or limited, the board will not recommend the officer.

**The best-qualified determination:** Those officers meeting the fully-qualified determination described above must then be considered for selection on a best-qualified basis, which embodies three elements;

- First the board considers all those fully-qualified officers, impartially and equally.
- Second the board applies the same criteria to all of the candidates.
- Third, the board evaluates by comparison, with the most capable officers advancing to positions of higher responsibility.

## Familiarity with board selection criteria

Understanding selection board criteria is critical to your success when going before a promotion board. Although each board will develop its own selection criteria, the standards outlined below are crucial and must be accurately recorded throughout your individual record. The critical point to remember when competing for career advancement is that promotion is not a reward for satisfactory service; it is a tool used to confirm an officer's demonstrated potential to serve the next higher grade. Subtle differences are only recognized by carefully grading each officer's record in each of the following categories:

**Performance Evaluations:** Officer Evaluation Reports (OERs) define performance dimensions considered to be most significant, provides documentation of performance in present and past assignments, and assesses performance and readiness for greater degrees of responsibility.

**Professionalism:** An officers' ability to provide quality service, portray a positive Coast Guard image, maintain diversity of assignments while gaining professional competence, and familiarization with general administration and knowledge. The service expects each officer to be qualified in at least one occupational field and experienced in others.

**Leadership:** Demonstrated leadership traits and values that allow them to serve in a series of assignments with increasing responsibility in the grade to which promoted. Officers must also exemplify our core values of honor, respect and devotion to duty in the highest degree.

**Education:** Many officers are detailed to postgraduate education or specialized training. Although it would be desirable to afford every officer such an opportunity, it should not disproportionately be emphasized when considering an officer for promotion.

## Be Prepared For Your Promotion Board

Know what is in your record! Your electronic record is the most important collection of documents. You must ensure it is correct and complete throughout your career. These documents are the only information provided to boards and panels in order to make personnel management decisions (i.e. promotions,

assignments, and career development). Your record establishes your performance, character, accomplishments, and organizational core values.

Requests for copies of record items should be sent to:

CGPC (adm-3)  
4200 Wilson Blvd., Suite 950  
Arlington, VA 22203  
FAX: 202-493-1676



The year before you are eligible for promotion, you should ensure you are prepared and meet all of the requirements for promotion. Timeliness of board documentation is of the utmost importance. If you are "in-zone," the following documents should be considered and/or submitted to Coast Guard Personnel Command (CGPC-rpm).

### Mandatory:

Current Year OER (within six months of regular submission schedule)

or

Special OER (within 6 months of regular submission schedule)

Reference: PERSMAN 10.A.3.c.1(c)  
Special OER

### Optional:

Reserve Officers eligible to be considered by a board are "strongly encouraged" to submit communications to the board. Communications to the board consist of each or all of the following:

- Letter of Communication to the Board
- Reserve Officer Resume (Form CG-5481)  
[http://www.uscg.mil/RPM/docs/resume\\_5481.pdf](http://www.uscg.mil/RPM/docs/resume_5481.pdf)
- Record of Professional Development (Form CG-4082)  
[http://www.uscg.mil/RPM/docs/record\\_4082.pdf](http://www.uscg.mil/RPM/docs/record_4082.pdf)

## In Summary

Ultimately, it is your responsibility to ensure that your career goes where you want it to go. You are in control and should ask for mentoring assistance and guidance from peers and senior officers to help steer you around the traps and bumps that may come your way. Examine the careers of the officers that you admire and respect and don't be afraid to ask them to mentor you. There is much that can be learned from the mistakes and successes of those senior to us. So armed with this knowledge, take charge of your career and best wishes to you in all of your future endeavors.

**About the Author:** *LTJG Jennifer Fortuny enlisted in the Coast Guard in 1993 and has served in various active duty and reserve billets throughout her career. After receiving her commission in 2005, she was recalled to active duty, and served as the Reserve Officer Evaluation System Manager and Reserve Career Management Officer at Coast Guard Personnel Command, subsequently receiving a selection as a Reserve Program Administrator in 2007. In summer 2008, she transferred to ISC Seattle(pf).*