

## **PY26 Acting Commandant's Guidance to Boards and Panels**

This document provides my guidance to Coast Guard promotion boards and selection panels for the performance of their duties under law and regulation. Coast Guard men and women are our greatest treasure. You are entrusted with the critical responsibility to ensure the future of the Coast Guard officer corps and our Coast Guard.

The American people depend on a strong, capable, and ready Coast Guard to ensure our national security and economic prosperity, both in calm and in crisis. The Coast Guard depends on a military officer corps made up of the strongest leaders of character to inspire our crews and the Service to deliver mission results today and into the future. Coast Guard officers perform a broad spectrum of duties in varied career fields, but they are first leaders and military officers of the Armed Forces. Every officer must demonstrate superior character, proven leadership, and an ability to execute Coast Guard missions, including warfighting.

The commission of a Coast Guard officer reposes "special trust and confidence" in the officer's character and abilities.

The Secretary, the President, and the Senate depend on the Coast Guard to select and recommend officers for promotion. Therefore, the authority, process, and criteria for selection of Coast Guard officers is of vital importance to the success of the Coast Guard and the joint force.

Selection for promotion of a military officer, whether on a fully qualified or best qualified basis, rests on the merits of the individual. Merit is determined based on evaluation of the candidate's demonstrated leadership and performance and, most importantly, the candidate's potential for service at the next higher grade with accompanying higher levels of authority, responsibility, and accountability. Select those officers who best merit promotion.

Within the promotion board process, the Coast Guard has additional tools to accelerate the promotion of those candidates with particular merit in a best-qualified promotion board: (1) In-Zone Reordering, and (2) Below-Zone Selection. It is important for the Service to identify and accelerate the advancement of officers of particular merit. Officers of particular merit are those who have demonstrated inspiring leadership to deliver results not typically achievable by others. They also exhibit drive, initiative, and creativity in both thought and action with an ability to challenge assumptions and the status quo.

This guidance applies to officer selection panels for assignment, special duties, or postgraduate education or training.

### **Guidance for All Commissioned Officers**

All commissioned officers must exemplify the Coast Guard Core Values of Honor, Respect, and Devotion to Duty. This is much more than meeting minimum standards of conduct. Officers must live and exemplify Honor, Respect, and Devotion to Duty at all times, both on and off duty. Failure in this regard is disqualifying for promotion, assignment to higher responsibility, and may be disqualifying for continued military service.

## **PY26 Acting Commandant's Guidance to Boards and Panels**

Coast Guard commissioned officers must maintain their own physical and mental readiness. They are responsible for ensuring the same for those they lead. Promote those officers who are fit, exemplify a healthy lifestyle, and lead others to do the same.

Promote officers who are the best leaders with clearly demonstrated potential for increased authority, responsibility, and accountability to lead at a higher grade. Promote officers who lead by inspiring their crews to achieve mission objectives and deliver results while taking the very best care of them. Promote leaders who exhibit courage by standing up for their people, taking risks when prudence dictates, and doing the right thing no matter the personal cost. Promote leaders who exhibit humility and who place the duty to serve the Coast Guard and those they lead above their own interests.

Promote officers who demonstrate the highest proficiency in a primary professional career field, and who broaden their perspective beyond their assigned billet or primary field when they approach or are at mid-grade or senior levels. Credit officers who develop proficiency in a secondary career specialty and other professional military fields, but do not disadvantage officers in professional career fields who are not given that opportunity. Officers should be continuous learners, curious, and seek to gain and apply knowledge from a broad range of sources. Promote officers who continuously pursue mastery of craft in their specialty through experience, study, training, and education including relevant professional licenses and certifications. Although educational degrees reflect important academic achievement and professional knowledge, and are required for some career fields, they are not the ultimate attainment of proficiency. Keep in mind that the Coast Guard assigns officers to meet the needs of the Service; therefore, officers may not have control over assignment decisions to advance career progression along fixed milestones. Resist narrowly focusing on an officer meeting specific career milestones and progressive assignments as the primary indicator of career success. While not all officers have the opportunity to serve in command, all should aspire to command or other positions of significant authority, responsibility, and accountability that demand a similar gravity of leadership and professional risk to achieve required outcomes.

Promote officers who are driven to serve something greater than themselves, who exhibit energy and a bias for action.

Value leadership over technical depth in a specific career path or occupational specialty. Some of the best officers are the strongest leaders who have not followed a standard career progression.

### **Guidance for Chief Warrant Officers (CWO)**

Appoint candidates who are masters of their specialty field and have demonstrated proven leadership abilities. Promote or retain those who have demonstrated an ability to lead others to deliver results and who have developed and mentored officers and enlisted personnel. Promote

## **PY26 Acting Commandant's Guidance to Boards and Panels**

those who leverage depth of specialty expertise to harness innovation, who find new ways to achieve results in their professional field and leverage new applications of technology.

### **Guidance for O3 and O4**

Promote officers with drive, energy, and initiative who have built proficiency in a primary officer specialty field, including professional knowledge, qualifications, and experience in assigned duties, and who have demonstrated proficiency as leaders. Junior officers should pursue proficiency in craft in tactical operations and the operational disciplines, delivery of mission support, or another enabling discipline (e.g., technology, financial management, law, external affairs); all are essential to the Service's missions. Junior officers must learn and demonstrate the courage to take deliberate risks as part of their development. This may result in mistakes of inexperience. In such cases, evaluate performance by whether the action taken was for the right reason, the officer learned from it, and the situation reflected the disciplined initiative we require of all Coast Guard officers.

Junior officers approaching O4, having established strong foundation of proficiency in a primary specialty, should broaden their developmental focus and perspective beyond their assigned duties. We value officers who seek opportunities to improve the Service through special assignment, joint and interagency tours, and program positions of greater responsibility. Some career fields (e.g., aviation, marine inspection, law) require remaining in specialty for successive tours and do not afford this opportunity at the junior level. Boards should consider that factor without disadvantaging those candidates. Among judge advocates, boards and panels should equally value those with litigation experience that includes trial, defense, special victims, and appellate counsel, as those skills remain important to the Service.

### **Guidance for O5 and O6**

Officers competing for selection to O5 and O6 are expected to have broad skills and perspectives with a keen grasp of the strategic environment and the Coast Guard's role in it. Senior officers at this level must create and lead teams to solve complex or ambiguous problems and ensure results. Promote officers with a record of superior leadership and performance in positions of command or other assignments of significant authority, responsibility, accountability, and judgment. While not all officers have the opportunity to command, all should aspire to command or other positions of significant authority, responsibility, and accountability that involve professional risk. Value officers who have demonstrated an ability to function broadly within and external to the Service by building and leveraging trust through professional networks and who ably represent the Service to the public.

## **PY26 Acting Commandant's Guidance to Boards and Panels**

The Coast Guard will need to address new and emerging mission demands and other challenges. Promote senior officers who have proven their ability to deliver results while balancing operational employment and readiness, as well as the ability to address legal, political, and fiscal risk across the array of Coast Guard activities. Senior officers must have a strategic perspective and vision, coupled with an ability to develop and deliver creative solutions, working with peers within the Service and others from our joint, interagency, or maritime stakeholders, and elected political leaders, to accomplish our mission. Place increased value on proficiency in joint military operations as demonstrated through success in assignment, experience, self-study, and completion of Joint Professional Military Education. Among judge advocates, boards and panels should equally value those with litigation experience that includes trial, defense, special victims, and appellate counsel, as those skills remain important to the Service.

### **Guidance for Captain Continuation and Selection to Flag Rank**

The Coast Guard Flag officer corps must be comprised of our very best leaders with the ability to set a strategic vision for the future and guide the Service to navigate complex and dynamic challenges. Select those few officers who have distinguished careers that include success in command or other positions of significant authority, responsibility, and accountability that involve professional risk, decision-making, and proven results. Select those who also take bold action to initiate, lead, and drive change within and outside the Coast Guard, who continually seek to improve the organization as change agents.

The strongest candidates for Flag selection must demonstrate the ability to lead horizontally across peer groups, both within and external to the Coast Guard, to achieve results. They must prove their ability to gain and leverage knowledge and experience beyond their primary career field, to think critically and view issues through multiple lenses, and maintain a strategic perspective. They must demonstrate effective decision-making and delegation of authority and responsibility while maintaining accountability at their level. Candidates must have a clear grasp of the Service's relevance to the Nation, including our connection to the maritime industry and community. They must also understand and be able to effectively navigate the political environment in the performance of their duties, remaining apolitical and ensuring the essential constitutional principle of civilian control of the military by the President, Secretary, other senior civilian officials, and by members of Congress.

The strongest candidates must also be superior representatives to the public and their elected representatives. They must possess the confidence, poise, and professionalism with superior communication skills to best represent the Coast Guard to the American people we serve, especially in a crisis or incident response.

Captains selected for continuation or retention should demonstrate strategic vision and ability to manage change, and share the attributes and qualities expected of flag officers. Their records

## **PY26 Acting Commandant's Guidance to Boards and Panels**

must not only reflect a sustained record of distinguished leadership and performance, but the proven potential and drive to make greater contributions with continued service.

### **Reserve**

Reserve officers are leaders within the Coast Guard Officer corps and the guidance in this document equally applies to Reserve officers and the Active Duty Promotion List (ADPL) and Inactive Duty Promotion List (IDPL) boards and panels. The Reserve Component (RC) is a national contingency-based enterprise trained and ready to meet our statutory mobilization and contingency requirements for a range of missions and support activities. When not ensuring Reserve readiness or mobilized for contingency, our Reserve officers maintain proficiency and contribute to Service requirements and operations by augmenting the active component. Promote Reserve officers who possess the skills required by their assigned position and who have taken additional steps to attain higher proficiency in key contingency response areas, including ICS competency, qualifications, and experience. Promote Reservists who have demonstrated the ability to lead to ensure superior competency attainment and mobilization readiness for those they lead. Value officers who have demonstrated significant success in a civilian profession and utilize their skills in service of the Coast Guard.

### **Reserve Component Management (RCM)**

Reserve Component Managers (RCM) officers serve in full-time support positions to organize, administer, recruit, develop, and train the Coast Guard RC. The standards set forth in this guidance apply equally to RCM officers and their boards and panels. When designating RCM officers, select those who possess the leadership and skills to support and strengthen the RC. For RC permanency, select those RCM officers whose service has improved the proficiency and readiness of the RC to mobilize and deliver mission results. RCM officers have varied backgrounds, experience, and skills in human resource management, finance, data analysis, and emergency management. The board should consider the level of competency and experience and officer has as reflected in the relevant CG-RCM10 officer specialty code. Promote RCM officers who demonstrate proven leadership and ability to improve the ability of the RC program and component to meet Coast Guard mission requirements.

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