



# Commissioned Officers Association of the U.S. Public Health Service

January 7, 2015

Brig. Gen. (ret.) Tony Tata  
Director, North Carolina Department of Motor Vehicles  
Transportation Building  
1 South Wilmington Street  
Raleigh, NC 27601

Dear General Tata:

I am so pleased to be sending this letter to a fellow Army veteran, as I am confident that you will immediately grasp my concerns. The organization that I direct represents the Surgeon General of the United States and the commissioned officer corps of the United States Public Health Service (USPHS). These officers comprise the second-smallest of the seven uniformed services of our country, with 6700 officers on active duty. The Corps is comprised totally of commissioned officers; there are no NCOs or enlisted members. They wear uniforms that are very similar to those of the United States Navy, have Navy-style rank, receive military pay and benefits—including access to TRICARE--and are recognized in federal law as “veterans” (statute enclosed).

I am writing to you because one of our members has been attempting without success to get the North Carolina DMV to put the word “veteran” on his driver’s license. From what he has told me, his entreaties to the DMV have been rebuffed, as employees there have told him that he is not a veteran. Part of the problem is that officers in the PHS do not receive a DD214, as that document is only for folks who have served in one of the Defense Department services. They receive instead a “Statement of Service,” which the VA recognizes as the equivalent. I realize that very few people understand who or what the PHS officers are, so I am hoping that you can intervene and set this straight.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you or your staff have any questions about this matter.

Sincerely,

Col. James T. Currie, USA (ret.)  
Executive Director