



# Commissioned Officers Association

of the U.S. Public Health Service

17 June 2014

Brig. Gen. John I. Pray, Jr., USAF (ret.)  
President, United Service Organizations  
P.O. Box 96322  
Washington, DC 20090-6322

Dear General Pray:

I find it hard to believe that any USO facility would refuse admission to a member of one of the uniformed services of this country, but such happens routinely to officers of the US Public Health Service (USPHS). This officer may have served in Iraq or Afghanistan, may have deployed in the wake of Katrina or Sandy, or may be returning from deployment to our Southwest border in support of our engagement with the refugee children there. This officer serves under the direction of the Surgeon General of the United States and wears a uniform that is similar to those worn by Navy personnel. He or she wears rank, receives uniformed service pay and benefits—including full exchange and commissary access as well as treatment under TRICARE—and carries a CAC. This officer might be one who provides health care for the US Coast Guard; one of their colleagues serves as the Coast Guard's Surgeon General. This person is a member of the commissioned corps of the United States Public Health Service. Their numbers are small—only 6800 altogether—so it is not as if their presence would overwhelm any given USO facility.

I see no reason why these officers should not be afforded the same access to USO facilities as is given to members of the military. I realize that the USO serves the armed forces. The fact that these officers are all unarmed medical personnel of a uniformed service of the United States should not disqualify them from being given the small luxury of stopping by a USO facility when they are transiting one of the large airports in our country. It is a small enough gesture of thanks for these officers who serve their country in uniform every day. I understand that individual USO chapters make their own rules with regard to access, but I think it not unreasonable that the national headquarters of the USO could suggest to these local organizations that they consider accommodating the uniformed officers of the USPHS.

Thank you for your consideration. Please feel free to have your staff contact me at 301 731-9080 or [jcurrie@coausphs.org](mailto:jcurrie@coausphs.org) for additional discussion.

Sincerely,

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