Revitalizing a National Security Asset

America is in its second decade of a war whose end we cannot see against a fanatical enemy that has stretched our forces and frayed our families. Beyond today’s foe are enemies even more capable using technologies even more devastating.

America is preserved by the best military in history. Yet it is a thin line; our military is an all-volunteer force comprising less than one percent of those it serves. It is overcommitted, underfunded, and increasingly isolated from the very people it safeguards.

The Reserve and Guard stand shoulder to shoulder along that line, providing nearly half the nation’s armed forces. Proven in battle, nearly a million have mobilized since 9/11; more than 1,200 have made the ultimate sacrifice. Theirs is a total commitment to America: to leave all they love to defend the nation they love.

In 2017, ROA celebrates our 95th Anniversary of service to the nation. Founded in 1922 at the prompting of General of the Armies John “Black Jack” Pershing and congressionally chartered in 1950, ROA is the only national organization solely dedicated to supporting all Reservists and their critical role in national defense. ROA champions the cause of Reservists at home and at war, protecting the rights and benefits of individual Reservists while preserving a strong Reserve force as an essential component of our national security.

“As long as I have been working with ROA, this is the first time I ever wanted to join; I’m joining ROA because you’re representing what I need, not what the Pentagon is telling you I need.”

Reserve Component field grade officer to ROA’s Susan Lukas

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Our enduring mission is aligned with a unique and powerful value proposition: ROA is the nation’s expert in the use, support and resourcing of the Reserve Components of our uniformed services: we are the only national representative of all seven of America’s Reserve Components. Reflecting the experience of a new generation of citizen-warriors, today’s ROA is more dynamic than ever. We’re providing the resources, support, and education officer and NCO Reservists and their families need for success.

ROA is committed to a strong Reserve force and specialized attention to individual Reservists; we call it “Reserve Strength. Reserve Life.”

“ROA is back,” and is “swinging above its weight.”

For our association, fiscal year 2017 (April 1, 2016 to March 31, 2017) was a year of significant revitalization, with stronger financial performance, renewed programs, and a vibrant, effective legislative campaign on Capitol Hill and in the Administration. As one outside observer told me, “ROA is back,” and is “swinging above its weight.”

ROA’s revitalization has been facilitated by a fine strategic plan, written in 2014 by volunteer committee members who spent hundreds of hours thinking through the challenges confronting an organization with chronic budget deficits, bleeding membership, weakened programs, and eroding value, facing reduced relevancy within the overcrowded military and veterans “milieu” plying the hallways and hearings of the nation’s capital.

The committee crafted a Strategic Way Ahead that established a framework for revitalization, which we have used with excellent results over the past three years.

The Strategic Way Ahead has now been updated into a five-year strategy plan — “ROA Strategy 2017-2022” — which organizes our continuing revitalization of ROA broadly within the military strategic construct of “ends/ways/means.”

“Ends” – or end states – are the “state of being” we wish to achieve; they are the goal and culmination of a successful strategy. ROA’s end state is expressed in our vision: *

“ROA is recognized as one of America’s fastest-growing and most respected, influential, and financially strong professional military associations; advocating for a strong national defense and a top-quality reserve force with a compensation and benefits package for reserve members, retirees, veterans and their families and survivors that is commensurate with the extraordinary and unique demands and sacrifices imposed upon them.”

“Ways” are the courses of action we use to attain the ends, the things we do. ROA’s strategic ways are organized within five lines of effort:

1. Increase revenue and decrease expenses.
2. Influence legislation and military policy.
4. Provide quality products and services.
5. Improve strategic communication.

*End states can change to fit changing circumstances: the original purpose of ROA as written in its 1950 Congressional charter, expressed as an end state is: “Supports and promotes the development and execution of a military policy for the United States that will provide adequate national security.” Over time, ROA focused on supporting national security exclusively through its focus on the Reserve Components. That led to the current end state, which refines the original for present circumstances.
“Means” are the resources we have at hand or must develop which we will use to do the Ways that will accomplish the Ends.

Further refining our strategic process is the concept of the Center of Gravity. From ROA Strategy 2017-2022: “A center of gravity is the physical or moral entity that is the primary component of strength, power or resistance. A true COG does not just contribute to the strength of an organization; it is the strength. It is the entity that provides power and strength to everything else.”

The ROA Strategy 2017-2022 states that an engaged membership is ROA’s primary component of strength and power. Without members who engage to influence legislation and military policy, pay dues, donate time and money, buy ROA products and services, attend association events, voice their opinions on issues, and recruit new members, ROA cannot operate with financial strength and would be unable to influence legislation and policy.

Progress on ROA’s Strategic Lines of Effort

Increase revenue and decrease expenses.

ROA has undergone a financial revitalization driven by severe expense reductions over the past three years complemented by growth in revenue. The extent of the improvement is reflected in “top line” numbers: Net change in net assets (operations) improved from a budgeted deficit of $362,429 for FY 2016 to a budgeted surplus of $15,137 for FY 2018. The association had endured deficits from the mid-six figures to over a million dollars in previous years.

Cash flow reflects this recovery, and for the first time in many years, we anticipate no draws being necessary this fiscal year.

ROA ended FY 2017 (March 31, 2017) with core expenses down some $158,000 from the previous fiscal year and $394,000 under budgeted projections. This was a team effort, including nonexistent spending among elected officials who accepted no travel reimbursement and lean accommodations at meetings. We eliminated most staff travel, professional association dues, and unnecessary expenses. Staff lost parking spaces in the headquarters to make way for revenue-producing tenant parking.

The Officer magazine went from one print and one digital edition in 2015 to two digital editions for 2016. (It has been suspended entirely for FY 2018.) Eliminating The Officer ultimately saved $85,000 per year. (Moving from print to digital saved us only about $24,000 and we found that the electronic version got a meagre 10,000 views, hardly enough to justify the expense).

The efficiencies driven by a complete replacement of our HVAC system, which was experiencing frequent failure throughout 2015 and 2016, drove down monthly heating and cooling expenses by more than 30 percent, over $60,000 annually.
We renegotiated some contracts (such as our building engineer contract, payroll services, etc.), saving $24,500. Our new leased IT system is saving money and improving service and reliability. This included moving to a cheaper but more useful association management software program called YourMembership, which brought us an enhanced website and database with more functionality and features helpful to departments, chapters, and individual members.

By FY 2017, the staff was down from 21 in 2014 to seven full-time employees, reducing payroll and benefits by $1,083,162. All staff now work on the fourth floor and are augmented by interns. You can only cut so far, and you can’t cut your way to growth; further cuts would cripple the association’s ability to regenerate its once-strong programs, so necessary for revitalization. Growth, in terms of our capacity to fulfill our purpose, was now the imperative.

Thus, ROA has shifted the organizational main effort in FY 2018 from the survival-oriented belt-tightening of FY 2016 and FY 2017 to a deliberate campaign of increasing revenues and rebuilding programs in line with the Strategic Plan, while continuing to improve efficiencies where possible.

Revenues have begun improving: core revenue for ROA in FY 2017 compared to FY 2016 was up $32,000, and up $84,000 compared to the FY 2017 budget. (FY 2017 core revenue and core expense numbers are un-audited and subject to change after completion of ROA’s FY17 audit.)

ROA’s primary revenue-producing asset is the 1968 Minuteman Memorial Building at 1 Constitution Avenue NE, now owned by ROA without external debt. The building’s beauty and location facilitate ROA’s “Top of the Hill” banquet and conference business and our tenants, which together produce nearly $1.5 million in annual revenue. Yet, by 2015, aging systems were failing; tenants and Top of the Hill customers were complaining about bad heating and cooling, stuck elevators, a garage door that didn’t open, and faltering audio-visual equipment.

The Minuteman Memorial Building’s HVAC system, its generator, garage door mechanism, and AV system have been replaced. Elevators will be rebuilt to code between July and November 2017, and worn flooring in our ballroom and conference room is being replaced at this writing. Internal funds were tapped for this $1.5 million maintenance campaign that has been essential to retaining our valued tenants while targeting increased revenue growth.

Finally, as FY 2017 closed, we paid off the $5 million TD Bank loan on which we had been paying $22,658 each month since 2013 with little decrease in principal. After four years, the loan, which had financed Minuteman Memorial Building improvements and maintenance, still carried a principal of $4.38 million! About half the payoff was made from draws against internal funds and half from an internal loan from ROA’s Memorial Endowment Trust Fund. Now free of external debt and repaying the loan with nominal interest, we have cut our monthly payments to $7,248.
Growing revenue, in September 2015, USAA’s government relations team leased our second floor, with a ten-year renewable lease negotiated between us, saving expensive brokerage commissions. They have proven a superb neighbor, becoming a premier affinity partner, providing ROA with tens of thousands in sponsorship funds as well as excellent services for our members, including the new USAA ROA credit cards.

Norfolk Southern Railroad’s government relations team continues to be a great neighbor, leasing our third floor and using Top of the Hill facilities from time to time.

In August 2016, we signed Condor Communications to manage our Top of the Hill banquet and conference business, from marketing, to sales, to event management. A banquet and conference business is different from a not-for-profit; it requires sales, marketing, account management and event skills; ROA’s previous solution of a full-time TotH manager had proved inadequate. A trusted partner with a deep bench, Condor freed ROA staff needed elsewhere; they immediately found and collected $45,000 in unpaid receivables and increased revenues from both customers and caterers. Condor is increasing revenues and reducing expenses associated with the business. We’ve had our second wedding and have developed a “cigar and whiskey” offering for the covered portico – old Washington brought back to life.

Our annual contract with Condor expires in August and we are negotiating now with a year’s experience for context; with revenues of $734,593 in FY2017 and facilities in top shape, Condor and ROA foresee a $1 million Top of the Hill business entirely within our grasp.

Our “Sustaining Member” annual giving campaign, renewed in 2015, netted nearly $100,000 in FY2017; the average donation is $49, with some in four figures. That’s a lot of heartfelt donations, and we are grateful and are putting them to good use. The program has continued into the current fiscal year with strong returns; with a new director of development on board, we are reviewing our annual giving program within the context of our new capability to mount a comprehensive development campaign comprising all forms of giving, including estate, grants, and even a capital campaign that could, for example, endow Minuteman Memorial Building maintenance.

Donations during FY 2017 showed the generosity of corporate partners, former members and the potential of estate giving. ROA was the beneficiary of a $100,000 gift from Prudential, which funded the newly minted “Red Cap” program to teach and develop grassroots activism at ROA’s department and chapter levels – these ROA “Red Cap activists” visiting their member district offices contributed to ROA legislative victories in the congressional session that ended in December.

Those served by ROA were the beneficiaries of notable donor generosity; during FY 2017, contributions included: from the estate of Mary Madeline Josi, $39,134.87; from the estate of retired Col. Betty Lee Raymer (USMC), $18,774.28; from the estate of Lt. Col. Leo Baer, USA, $10,000; $4,000 from the Tawani Foundation; $2,000 from the Capt. Ron White, USCG (Ret.) Legacy Society; $250 from Maj. Gen. Robert ROA members Richard Spencer (right) and Dale Andersen attended the Nebraska State Legislature Hearing on LB 121, exemption for retired military state income taxes. Following the hearing they met Nebraska State Senator Tom Brewer, who was a sponsor of the bill.
Nester, USAFR (Ret.); and in memory of Lt. Col. Duane Richards, USAR (Ret.), $100 from Helen Henninger of ROAL, and $50 from Col. Judi Davenport, USA (Ret.).

Of note for its traditional significance, Cmdr. Michael Bee, USCGR (Ret.), generously donated his first retirement check, $1,200.40.

Indicating the strength of donations so far in FY 2118, ROA has received: from WWII veteran and Army Reserve Lt. Col. Harold K. Douthit’s estate, which had given ROA’s Henry J. Reilly Library and Scholarship Fund a half-million dollars the preceding year, another $451,000 for general use. ROA also received generous gifts of $39,000 from the estate of Col. Betty Lee Raymer, USMC (Ret.), $23,463 additional from the Douthit estate (for a total of over a million dollars), $20,451 from the Miami Foundation, $17,930.25 from the estate of Capt. Charles E. Clifford, USNR (Ret.), $2,500 from Tower Cares Foundation, and $125 from Col. William N. Schwab, USA (Ret.).

Indicating the growing strength of ROA development, days before the 2017 annual convention, ROA’s Industry Partners program received $5,000 from Humana. ROA Industry Partners has also received $5,000 pledges from Delta Dental and Oshkosh Defense. The ROA Industry Partner Program forms mutually beneficial relationships that enable ROA to accomplish its advocacy of a strong national security and viable Reserve Components while providing our industry partners with networking opportunities, enhanced communications, and assistance in planning research and development to meet future military requirements.

The single biggest source of revenue for ROA is the Minuteman Memorial Building, through its tenants and Top of the Hill business. The viability of the building to attract customers and build revenue depends on its condition which had degraded by 2015, with frequent failures of the heating and cooling system, both elevators, and various other components, such as the garage door and building generator. Flooring in Top of the Hill’s symposium center, the ballroom, and the associated hallways was tattered and worn.

Beginning in FY 2017, ROA undertook an internally funded $1.5 million renovation project to correct these deficiencies. As of this writing, ROA has an entirely new HVAC system, garage door mechanism, and generator. Sprinklers for the front garden (beautifully refurbished by ROA and Wright Mechanical staff) are repaired and operational for the first time in years, and the ADA-compliant automatic doors are in working order. Carpet

ROA’s Legislative and Military Policy Director Lt. Col. Susan Lukas, USAFR (Ret.) volunteers to renovate the Minuteman Memorial Building front garden.
and tile replacement of the tattered fourth floor corridor and symposium center carpet will be complete on July 23. The ballroom is halfway through the replacement of its worn and warped flooring with a rich new, commercial-grade, cherry wood laminate. Elevator rebuild begins in late July with the passenger elevator. The freight elevator will start in late November; each elevator should take 4 to 8 weeks. Not yet scheduled, but budgeted, is an external washing of the entire building.

There is progress yet to be made. While we have as a team made dramatic financial progress, revenue throughout FY2017 was insufficient to prevent the need for a draw from internal funds to ensure adequate cash flow. A $200,000 draw was necessary at mid-year.

The weakness was fundraising, both for STARS Foundation and the newly re-launched ROA Industry Partners. The lack of a staff member able to coordinate development for both ROA and STARs was a serious impediment. Having a fulltime director of development now on board should address this weakness (soon after she joined the ROA team, our new director, Pat Kramer coordinated a generous $3,500 grant from Tower Federal Credit Union’s Tower Cares Foundation to sponsor a June 20, 2017, Defense Education Forum seminar on Reserve Component mental health).

The year ended with an unexpectedly large inflow of insurance surplus revenue from Mercer that topped $700,000. (The size of these surpluses is dependent on insurance program payouts; as ROA’s membership ages, should we not see new program users, we must anticipate a decrease in surplus payments.) Without these inflows, our operations net change in net assets (our operational “bottom line”) would have been about $60,000 negative (not including the draw). With these big inflows, we finished the fiscal year with $1,068,006 in cash and cash equivalents.

Entering the new fiscal year more efficient than ever, with adequate cash, and a more robust fundraising outlook, ROA’s financial recovery, still fragile, has gathered strength. The FY 2018 budget anticipates an operational surplus – slender, but inked in black.

While we must be careful shepherds of our resources, so generously provided by others, we have begun our programmatic regrowth, with a robust legislative program, scholarship program, resumption of defense education forums, and growth of the Service Members Law Center law review library. ROA has, in short, resumed the fulfillment of our founding purpose, as will be shown in the following sections.
Influence legislation and military policy.

The strategic planning process identified an engaged membership as ROA’s center of gravity, “the physical or moral entity that is the primary component of strength, power or resistance.” Yet, ROA was founded in 1922 expressly to do one thing: “. . . support and assist in the development and execution of a military policy for the United States which shall provide adequate National Defense.” That phrase, slightly modified but substantially unaltered, stands in our 1950 congressional charter. It is the fulfilment of that purpose that our membership enables.

The founding purpose has guided ROA over the decades. As the association grew, and in the absence of more extensive national security expertise in Washington, ROA’s focus broadened throughout the national security realm. In time, other centers of such expertise developed, eroding ROA’s claim to broad authority. The “market had changed” and ROA gradually lost credibility and clout, trying to be what it no longer could.

Three years ago, ROA’s leadership recognized the importance of renewing a “tightened focus” on the objective our association should naturally pursue: ROA, with its unique insight, experience, and knowledge of the reserves, owns the RC space. That is our value proposition. ROA concentrates on policy and benefits that help America’s Reserve Components provide an adequate national defense.

Today we are reaping the harvest of that discipline; ROA has achieved legislative victories and become a media source. In the past two years, we have been quoted or published in major Capitol Hill media, such as Politico, The Hill, and Congressional Quarterly’s Roll Call; we’ve “gotten ink” in Stars and Stripes, the Military Update syndicated column, Huffington Post, and been broadcast on Federal News Radio. We are a source for mainstream media, recently having been sought out for insights by the Wall Street Journal and the Washington Post.

During 2016, ROA submitted written testimony on four occasions and testified once. ROA frequently interacts with House and Senate Armed Services and Veteran Affairs Committees including submitting statements on RC issues, meeting with staff and congressional members, and sending advocacy letters to defense committee leadership. Last year, ROA submitted 15 letters to Congress. Our focus and the support of Prudential helped reinvigorate ROA’s legislative and military policy campaign, putting our new strength to work: we are more effective on the Hill now than in years, helped by our “Red Cap” grassroots activism.

ROA quickly achieved victories: one of ROA’s signature priorities became law last December only months after ROA adopted it for action, essentially alone among other military and veterans’ groups: equalizing benefits for the surviving families of RC members who die on inactive duty training with benefits provided families compensated for an active duty death – the difference can be a factor of ten! Benefits are now equalized, thanks to ROA.

Also brought home by ROA in the 114th Congress was authorization and funding for two C-40 cargo planes

ROA President Col. James R. Sweeney II, USMC (Ret.), presents USAR Maj. Valerie Gandy with an Operation Red Cap hat Nov. 16 in recognition of her service as a DoD Fellow, working in the staff of Texas Rep. Marc Veasey (standing behind Col. Sweeney).
(specially outfitted 737s) for the Navy Reserve and authorizations for two for the Marine Corps Reserve.

These victories show the power of focus.

A full list of ROA’s recent legislative and policy triumphs:

• Expanded lump sum retirement options to include the Guard and Reserve.

• Passed into law legislation giving the same rate of survivor benefits to an RC servicemember whether the death is in the line of duty performing active duty or inactive duty training.

• Helped secure $207.5 million for the Navy and USMC Reserve to buy four C-40As.

• Secured requirement that DoD report to Congress on reserve component servicemembers’ travel expenses.

• Advocated for provisions in the new GI Bill, passed by the House in July 2017, which would significantly improve benefits for RC members (awaiting Senate action).

• Discussed need for study on wait times at urgent care clinics, pharmacies, and emergency rooms of military medical treatment facilities that was included in the FY 2017 NDAA.

• Identified problem with DoD regulation on space-available travel for RC members that is preventing spousal travel; ROA advocacy pushed Congress to include a study on it.

• Continuation pay eligibility was expanded to those who have between 8-12 years of service.

• Guaranteed an assessment of transition between TRICARE programs when servicemembers are called to active duty.

• Supported veteran status for any person who is entitled to retired pay but did not complete Active Duty for Operational Support (ADOS) orders (does not carry benefits).

• Protected the right of any surviving spouse of a servicemember who died in the line of duty after 9/11 time to use the full 36-month Post-9/11 GI Bill benefit through January 1, 2021.
• Influenced improvements in mental health care access with person-to-person assessments related to contingency operations – helps the RC.

• Helped secure reintroduction of a bill that would allow Thrift Savings Plan contributions for a Reserve Component retirement so members are not penalized for civilian job contributions.

• Aggressively advocated and educated Congressional offices on the need for benefits under 12304b involuntary deployment orders, including GI Bill. Contributed to national news articles documenting the 12304b benefit disparity.

ROA takes into the 115th Congress a robust legislative agenda exclusively focused on the Reserve Components and their readiness. Unique among associations, ROA’s legislative agenda tackles issues affecting all Reserve Component services, their members, families and veterans. Eleven general legislative priorities, each with a corresponding position paper, address the capability of the entire Reserve Component.

A signature legislative initiative is ROA’s push to make it easier for members of the RC to gain veteran status for federal hiring preference. Members of the Reserve and Guard must now attain 180 or more consecutive years of active duty to get this status; that can be difficult if not impossible. In a proposal that would cost the taxpayers essentially nothing, yet yield great benefits, ROA proposes changing the word consecutive to cumulative. Members of the RC benefit in the competition for federal jobs – and the nation benefits by having more quality men and women in the civil service.

As you can see on page 9, our language was adopted and passed 412-0 by the House in March; a companion bipartisan Senate Bill, S. 1325, has good prospects.

ROA has also responded to the increased prominence of cyber missions, ensuring the 114th and 115th Congresses understand RC contributions. Four additional cyber legislative requirements ensure the Reserve Components get the proper resources and attention in this vital area.

ROA also has seven service-specific priorities with accompanying position papers. Finally, 74 ROA member-driven resolutions establish the association’s national policies.

No other organization exclusively represents all the nation’s uniformed reserve components. ROA has rediscovered its natural role and is thereby fulfilling its founding purpose.

**Grow membership.**

With 46 percent of ROA members age 70 or older, ROA’s membership is in dire need of replenishment. Efforts launched in FY 2017 include a national membership campaign whose goal is a net membership increase of one percent. While one percent may seem modest, when attrition is considered, it’s not an inconsequential challenge.

Perhaps an artifact of Cold War days, before judge advocates general were ceded outsize influence by commanders wary of complaints and investigations, the ori-
ROA’s membership statistics at the end of Fiscal Year 2017. As of March 31, 2017, ROA had 49,349 members.
entation has remained on “getting into the reserve center” for member growth. Certainly, a presence before dozens of reservists at one throw can yield a fine member intake.

A canard that may stymie membership efforts is the perception that we must focus on enrolling young prospects to the exclusion of older veterans. ROA exists to ensure a strong defense through our focus on Reserve Component readiness. We concentrate our legislative, policy, and to an extent benefits influence on issues that most prominently affect serving (young) reservists and their families.

This does not mean that our membership must only be “young”; in fact, experience indicates that we benefit greatly from members in their 50s and beyond, whose focus is less likely to be on careers and raising families, and who have the discretionary income, time, and desire to reconnect with the richness of their military life. Truly, an extensive diversity within the reserve milieu is best.

From a 2013 McKinley Advisors survey of member needs (our most recent), we know that members older than 60 are “not only the most satisfied with ROA membership, but they’re also the most likely to promote ROA.” Members 31-40 join and renew for legislative issues and see civilian association memberships as equally valuable (and potentially complementary); those under age 30 and from 41 to 50 “seek professional development education, resources to advance their military careers, access to civilian career opportunities, and legal information and employment law support.” Those age 51 and older “seek a unified voice for reserve officers.”

It’s obvious that ROA has a differentiated member base, even as it grows heavily weighted to those in their silver and golden years. Differentiation creates opportunities for ingenuity and personalization. With the days of officers being an almost “aristocratic” class long gone, and NCOs now accepted and taking leadership positions in ROA, extension of membership to the junior enlisted
ranks is an idea whose time has come. After all, ROA’s work serves all reservists! Attitudes do seem to be changing, although at the association’s annual convention in 2016, an amendment to open ROA membership to these deserving citizen-warriors narrowly failed.

As ROA National President James Sweeney wrote in the Winter 2017 issue of The Officer, “... we can change without sacrificing our core values or altering our focus and leadership advocating in the Reserve space. However, failure to adapt to changing circumstances has been the undoing of many an organization. Let ROA not be one of those that failed to adapt, that failed to broaden its horizons, that failed to consider reasonable accommodations and seize opportunities for growth.”

The McKinley survey showed that more than half of our members joined because a member referred them. What must be revived is the one-on-one “retail” approach: an ROA member speaking individually with a reservist about our association’s value (and we have generated great value in just the past two years!).

The Department of Virginia president attended a local Army Reserve Yellow Ribbon Reintegration event in June; he wrote, “While I would have preferred to speak to the entire group about ROA’s mission as we did last year, the organizers changed the format. ... So we did it the personal way – one or two people at a time. ... I concentrated my effort on the mid-grade enlisted and officers. I was moderately successful in that I was able to get two 2-year term memberships.”

At a Yellow Ribbon in May last year, another member of the Department of Virginia signed up 11 soldiers for associate memberships, nine NCOs and two junior officers. ROA must regain strength in this approach: its efficacy is shown in the success of one member of one chapter of one department: Missouri’s Chapter 442 has produced a half-dozen new NCO members in under 60 days — from the efforts of one member “enlisting” former and serving reservists of his acquaintance! If one-tenth of ROA’s members got half that many new enrollments this year, we’d increase membership by 15,000.

Two membership growth opportunities presented themselves to ROA, both culminating in FY 2017 to different effect. The association successfully integrated members of the dissolved Reserve Enlisted Association, enlarging ROA’s roles by some 1,700 currently serving and former NCOs. An initiative to integrate the dissolving National Association for Uniformed Services, its 30,000 members, and cash reserves, failed — despite great effort by ROA leaders — due to the vote of ROA’s membership at the September convention not to add language to the association’s mission statement desired by NAUS which explicitly committed ROA to the preservation of veterans’ benefits. Many members believed that, while ROA already fights effectively for benefits, changing the mission statement would potentially weaken our strong focus on support of national security and related policy. We must find a way to embrace future opportunities.

Of central importance in membership growth and retention is the fact that ROA’s national officers and staff create policies, programs, and frameworks for member growth, but departments and chapters grow membership. With renewed trust from our improved intra-association communications, comes a renewed vigor; national staff have been honored in the recent past to visit nearly a dozen chapters and departments — at their
invitation and “on their dime” (owing to our slender travel budgets).

In those visits, we have seen what is working: South Carolina Chapter 9 holds receptions in a member’s home, with “ROA business” held to a minimum and fellowship the focus. They have gone from attendances of five people to 30 and 40.

The Department of Washington has made grassroots activism its focus, donning ROA red ball caps and bending congressional ears. They can use that activism to attract members!

The Department of the Golden West specializes in junior officer professional development (and we will support their move into junior NCO professional development).

The association’s new associate membership, free to younger reservists, is an excellent way to bring in new members so that they may experience ROA first-hand. (Of course, new members should be welcomed into functioning departments or we will likely lose them.)

In FY 2018, with finances stabilized and “in the black,” and our legislative and policy program getting wins, member growth and retention are natural ROA priorities. And we know what members want.

From the McKinley survey, we know that as of a short time ago, members identified advocacy (84 percent) and information (65 percent) as the two greatest priorities for ROA. Lesser, but significant priorities were: in-depth (defense) news analysis, legal information and employment law assistance, military career advancement support, marketplace discounts, and face-to-face development opportunities offered by Defense Education Forum and officer professional education events.

The importance of advocacy is unequivocally compelling.

- A McKinley survey question answered by 132 potential enlisted members (ROA was considering opening membership to all ranks) garnered a 92 percent agreement rate for the statement, “I want to support the organization that is advocating on behalf of all reservists.”

- Current members “feel an obligation to be a member of ROA since it is advocating for the interests of all reservists (85 percent)” and “the fact that ROA is the only organization focused solely on reserve issues is a key differentiator for me (82 percent).”

- Three-quarters of respondents agreed that “it matters to me that ROA is chartered by the U.S. Congress.”

The effectiveness of ROA’s legislative and policy advocacy is resurgent and has achieved key results.

- We must build on that success and use the Red Cap initiative to increase grassroots activism.

- We must better communicate our successes, including those at the department and chapter level.

ROA’s information flow is improving but still uneven: the termination of The Officer and use of Reserve Voice and other social media (Facebook) has not yet filled in the gaps.

- We are improving Reserve Voice and must offer more engaging and pertinent Facebook posting.

- We are exploring how we can improve the SmartBrief newsfeed to offer options for more differentiated feeds – based on service, age, locale, etc.

- ROA.org has the capacity for special interest groups; we have three now and must expand both the number and use of these SIGs.
**Provide quality products and services.**

As indicated in the 2013 McKinley survey, 33 percent of members considered marketplace discounts and benefits to be important components of ROA membership. Products and services of the greatest impact to members include our affinity insurance and financial offerings. ROA’s flagship affinity products include:

**Mercer Consumer**

Mercer offers 30 products: life insurance, cancer insurance, TRICARE supplements, and others. Some 7,500 ROA members use Mercer products through our affinity agreement, representing $5 million in premiums. In FY 2017, Mercer paid to ROA some $225,000 in royalties. We are working now with Mercer to provide a medical prescription assistance product.

**USAA**

ROA’s partnership with USAA has deepened with their tenancy of our Minuteman Memorial Building as well as their association with us as an affinity partner. USAA provides ROA an annual $75,000 affinity sponsorship (and an annual $10,000 to STARs). The ROA USAA Visa and American Express credit cards directly benefit ROA with revenues through rebates and points donations. (Thus far, with the cards available approximately six months, only 20 co-branded cards are in use.) We are working now with USAA to provide a vision product.

Additionally, LifeLine Screening rebates, *SmartBrief* and AGIA generate approximately $15,000.

**Supporting Education**

Early in July, ROA proudly announced the ten recipients of Henry J. Reilly Scholarships for academic year 2017-2018. The $2,500 scholarships were awarded for undergraduate and graduate studies on a competitive basis of academics, leadership and service, and potential for contribution to society. The annual scholarship program, which resumed this year after a hiatus, is funded within the ROA’s STARs Foundation; STARs (Standing Together for America’s Reservists) is a 501(c)3 corporation that supports the work of the ROA to enhance the security of the nation by sustaining a strong Reserve force and supporting citizen-warriors and their families who serve our country so faithfully. Scholarship applicants must be members of ROA or direct family members. ROA used the firm International Scholarship and Tuition Services for turnkey scholarship program management; our positive experience with ISTS has led us to anticipate increasing the number of recipients next year.

**Service Members Law Center**

For budgetary reasons, ROA was forced to discontinue the position of director, Service Members Law Center, in FY 2016. Nonetheless, ROA has retained the center’s law review library, fully archived on its website, which also
offers useful links to other legal resources. Through the generous volunteer efforts of former SMLC director, retired Capt. Samuel Wright, USNR, the library has expanded to more than 1,500 reviews, with more added each week. We publish each new review in Reserve Voice and post to the library archives.

**Improve strategic communication.**

Immediately upon taking office in 2015, National President James Sweeney began reestablishing communications throughout ROA’s organizations. A monthly conference call with the Executive Committee, quarterly calls with department presidents, and a monthly call with the National Council all rewove the fabric of understanding and trust, which today is much strengthened.

Increased communications among leaders throughout ROA (and the partial payment of membership rebates made early in 2017) are paying off with renewed trust – which also promotes member growth: there is a new confidence that ROA is headed in a better direction and has a future.

Partially compensating for the absence of The Officer magazine, terminated for FY 2018 due primarily to budgetary constraints, the electronic bulletin Reserve Voice returned in April 2015 after a hiatus, with a frequency quickly becoming twice-monthly. Reserve Voice is now ROA’s primary outreach tool, reaching every member whose email is in our member database, approximately 30,000.

Making better use of ROA’s website, the “Unreserved” ROA blog features original content from staff and contributors on RC-focused issues. ROA’s Facebook page, whose Pentagon-produced “Early Bird” each weekday, with a “reach” of between 50 and 300.

Facebook posts other than Early Bird garner reaches in the mid-hundreds to low thousands, up significantly over the past two years since we resumed posting. One posting associated with ROA’s single-handed effort to reform veteran’s status for federal hiring preference (still a legislative priority) got more than 11,000 reaches; a July post on ROA’s advocacy for a new bill improving GI Bill benefits for reservists has reached more than 9,400.

In December 2016, ROA’s Coast Guard Reserve contingent formed the association’s first self-directed special interest group on ROA.org; since then we have launched a legislative and military policy SIG. These SIGs provide a way to offer differentiated information to members.

Challenges remain: ROA’s success at communicating its messages internally and externally has been hobbled by the lack of a fulltime communications director; the executive director, who has a background in public affairs and communications, is dual-hatted with this role and only partially effective. Nonetheless, the mission to communicate is ours to accomplish, and progress has been made over the past two years that provides a firm foundation for better performance.

**Standing Together for America’s Reservists, ROA’s STARs Foundation**

The STARs Foundation was formed in 2012 to provide ROA with a tax-advantaged 501(c)(3) corporation, into which financial support could be given, to further the association’s efforts: education of the American public about the role of the Reserves, promotion of educational events on national security, promotion of professional development of Reserve Component service members, charitable support of RC service members and families, and support of the charitable and educational purposes of ROA. STARs (Standing Together for America’s Reserv-
The STARs Foundation is an essential part of ROA’s ability to support Reservists and their families,” said Chairman Col. Margaret Cope, USAF (Ret.) in the Winter 2017 edition of The Officer.

STARs just concluded the pilot phase of its Reserve School Kit. The children of Reservists attend civilian schools; often school staff are unaware of the mobilization of a student’s parent. The Reserve School Kit is a notification and resource tool that ensures understanding; it helps parents and educators work together to keep the education process on track during – or following – a deployment. The kit was successfully piloted in some Pennsylvania schools, praised there and by the leadership of the Pennsylvania National Guard, and now its use will expand.


STARs and ROA will honor two champions of America’s Reserve Components at the July 2017 ROA and STARs Foundation Banquet. Comcast NBCUniversal Chairman and CEO Brian L. Roberts will receive the Nathan Hale Award for outstanding service to the Reserve community, and UnitedHealthcare Military & Veterans President, Dr. John Mateczun will receive the Twice the Citizen Award for faithful and tireless work toward a strong national security and efforts on behalf of reservists, their families and ROA.

ROA’s Investments, A Portfolio Soundly Managed

ROA maintains a portfolio of funds available for various purposes, including payment of costs associated with life memberships (which do not generate recurring dues rev-
enues), maintenance of the Henry J. Reilly Memorial and Scholarship program, payments associated with ROA’s annuity program, and other uses authorized by the governing body. The portfolio is managed by Dennis Barba, Jr., M.B.A and Ph.D. (in finance), of the Cleveland firm of Oxford Harriman & Company.

The current ROA portfolio is valued at $8,346,600. The portfolio generates current cash flow of approximately $175,000 annually. The portfolio’s current asset allocation is:

- Cash: 8%
- US Equity: 47%
- International Equity: 7%
- Market Neutral/Alternative: 8%
- Fixed Income: 30%

The portfolio’s performance under Mr. Barba has been:
- YTD 2017: 6%
- Trailing 12 months: 11%
- Since inception: 9.34%

A Revitalized ROA Fulfilling Its Purpose

As executive director, it is with great pride and deep satisfaction that I experience daily the privilege of “telling the ROA story,” to congressional staff and members singly and in testimony; to DoD, VA and other officials of the administration; military leaders; our own members; our sponsors and would-be sponsors; members of the Reserve and Guard, their families and veterans; other advocacy groups; employers; and the visitors from every place in America who so animate Washington, DC.

I like to tell people that ROA is nearly a century old and that General of the Armies John “Black Jack” Pershing essentially started us, out of concern that the nation might not be ready for the next war; those who know a little history find great meaning in that genesis (and see today’s parallels). I tell them that we are the only national association that advocates exclusively for all the nation’s seven uniformed Reserve Components.

The only one.

And I tell them of ROA’s vigor and effectiveness doing the work of our nation by advocating effectively for laws, policies, and programs that will ensure America a strong Reserve force in a time of unsurpassed complexity and risk to our national security. That will ensure the families of our Reservists are cared for. That will ensure veterans of our Reserve force get the care and benefits they have earned.

Today’s ROA is fulfilling the purpose that has guided it for nearly a century. This purpose is as vital now as it was at the heady close of the war to end all wars. By supporting our intrepid citizen-warriors and those at their side, we “…support and assist in the development and execution of a military policy for the United States which shall provide adequate National Defense.”

It is important work. We thank those who stand with us.
Reserve Officers Association  
Statement of Activities - Consolidated

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<td><strong>Net Change in Net Assets</strong></td>
<td>1,904,484</td>
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<td>434,058</td>
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**Reserve Officers Association**  
**Statement of Financial Position - Consolidated**

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<tr>
<td><strong>ASSETS</strong></td>
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<td>Cash and Cash Equivalents</td>
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<td>Investments</td>
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<td>Deferred Compensation Assets</td>
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<td>78,009</td>
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<td>Accounts Receivable, Net</td>
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<td>765,836</td>
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<td>6,698,954</td>
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<td><strong>TOTAL ASSETS</strong></td>
<td>$18,225,814</td>
<td>$20,914,908</td>
<td>$21,301,414</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

|                        |              |              |              |
| **LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS** |          |              |              |
| **LIABILITIES**         |              |              |              |
| Accounts Payable and Accrued Expenses | $145,873    | $342,923     | $376,013     |
| Accrued Payroll and Related Liabilities | 170,961     | 84,015       | 40,556       |
| Departments' Share of Membership Dues | 533,333     | 557,942      | 531,923      |
| Deferred Revenue        | 140,702      | 105,680      | 188,960      |
| Note Payable            | 0            | 4,530,594    | 4,683,002    |
| Term Membership Dues    | 152,417      | 123,639      | 205,933      |
| Life Membership Dues    | 6,134,416    | 6,126,488    | 6,187,780    |
| Deferred Compensation Liability | 78,009      | 78,009       | 89,408       |
| Security Deposit Liability | 800         | 800          | 800          |
| **TOTAL LIABILITIES**   | 7,356,511    | 11,950,090   | 12,304,375   |

|                        |              |              |              |
| **NET ASSETS**         |              |              |              |
| Unrestricted Net Assets | 6,761,767    | 5,193,524    | 5,708,223    |
| Temporarily Restricted Net Assets | 1,303,707   | 969,767      | 497,110      |
| Permanently Restricted Net Assets | 2,803,829   | 2,801,527    | 2,791,706    |
| **TOTAL NET ASSETS**   | 10,869,303   | 8,964,818    | 8,997,039    |

|                        |              |              |              |
| **TOTAL LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS** |          |              |              |
|                         | $18,225,814  | $20,914,908  | $21,301,414  |
LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

AUTHORIZATIONS

Veteran Status: Extend Federal Hiring Preference for Reserve Component Members
Confer veteran status for purposes of federal hiring veterans’ preference on Reserve Component members after 180 “cumulative” days on active duty versus “consecutive” days on active duty.

Operational Support: Fix Pre-Planned Involuntary Call Up (10 USC 12304b)
Resolve inequities in benefits and entitlements afforded to Reserve Component members based on mobilization authority in line with other involuntary duty statuses.

Duty Status: Reduce the Number of Duty Status
Reduce the 30+ duty statuses to six or fewer statuses to eliminate barriers to completion of service because of a confusing and overly complex system that triggers pay delays, healthcare disruption and breaks in service.

Continuum of Service: Adjust the Mandatory Retirement Date
Extend the Mandatory Retirement Date when a servicemember has accrued non-participation time.

Retirement: Change the Blended Retirement Calculation for Reserve Forces
Resolve bias in the new blended retirement system against guard and reserve members who choose to serve in uniform even when performing non-paid duty. Provide a 2.5% retirement point calculation factor (vice 2%) when a member receives “points only” credit for service that does not qualify for TSP matching contributions.

Taxes: Update Tax Laws and Policies to Reflect Changes in the Military
Pass an omnibus tax bill for Guard and Reserve servicemembers to include the new blended retirement Thrift Savings Plan (TSP), military duty travel and rollover requirements.

APPROPRIATIONS

Biennial Military Personnel Account
Change the Military Personnel appropriation to a biennial account to eliminate the personnel and funding problems encountered under a continuing resolution or during a government shutdown.

End Strength: Increase levels to support strategic and operational requirements.
Restore end strength so the Reserve Components can continue to meet strategic and operational requirements.

Equipment: Fund National Guard Reserve Equipment Account (NGREA) to reduce equipment shortages and replace equipment currently being used beyond its functional life.
Fund the National Guard Reserve Equipment Account in the base budget to ensure this valuable account remains stable, thereby enabling the Reserve Components to meet mission requirements.

Equipment: Reduce Army and Marine Corps equipment shortages that increase operational risk.
Reduce the equipment shortage for the Army National Guard, Army Reserve and Marine Corps Reserve, where shortages are currently the highest among the services.

Training: Fully resource training to ensure Guard and Reserve members can perform duties during peacetime and contingencies.
Provide funding to support the Reserve Component strategic and operational requirements which are currently not funded at 100 percent of need.
Notes:
"I’m joining ROA because you said you’ll fight for us!"

– USAFR master sergeant visiting ROA Department of Georgia convention

If you have any questions or if we can be of assistance, please contact us. We are always looking for ways to better serve our members - YOU are important to us!

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roainfo@roa.org
(202) 646-7733

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Director, Administration ...................................... Diane Markham ........................................... (202) 646-7728
Acting Director, Army Affairs ................................ Jeff Phillips .................................................. (202) 646-7701
Director, Naval Services Affairs ............................ Brett Korade ............................................. (202) 646-7713
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Director, Resource Development ............................ Pat Kramer ................................................. pkramer@roa.org

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Accounts Receivable ............................................ Tracey Ware ............................................ (202) 646-7733
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Business Relations ................................................. Lani Burnett ............................................. (202) 646-7758
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Website Login Assistance ..................................... Tracey Ware .............................................. (202) 646-7733