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P R I M E R

OPNAV N14 Quick Reference: Officer Manpower and Personnel Governance in the U.S. Navy

Law, Policy, and Practice

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Prepared for the United States Navy

Approved for public release; distribution unlimited



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Summary

The Navy manages its officer corps with the primary goal of meeting the national security and military strategies. Within that broad goal, it also manages its officers to provide them with individual opportunities and a reasonable quality of life. It also attempts to manage its officers in the most cost-effective way. Its officer management occurs within a framework of law, policy, and practice. The Navy has a number of personnel management tools or levers that it can use to shape the officer corps to meet various goals.

If the Navy wishes to alter its personnel management practices—for example, to ensure a better match between its officer personnel and the national military strategy—it can do so. However, its ability to change some aspect of management depends on what determines the nature of the specific management practice. To change a law, of course, requires congressional action, typically a lengthy process. To change a Navy policy simply requires the Navy to issue a new one, which could happen quickly.

This document describes the laws and policies that affect various aspects of active component officer personnel management. We distinguish between Department of Defense (DoD) policy and Navy policy, because they are not always identical.¹ Where no table entry appears, it means that no specific policy exists or that it accords with the higher-level policy or with statute. Unless otherwise noted, the sections in the law category refer to U.S. Code Title 10. We indicate in the text those sections that refer to U.S. Code Title 37. Navy policy refers primarily to instructions from the Secretary of the Navy (SECNAV) or the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations (OPNAV).

Service end strength, entry qualifications, and constructive credit affect the number, characteristics, and entry grade of new officers. Officers are placed on an active duty list that establishes officers' seniority and is used in construction of promotion zones. Promotion timing and opportunity are driven more by policy than by law and are mainly functions of how promotion zones are constructed. Competitive categories are set by service policy. The selections for promotion are made by promotion boards whose functions are prescribed by law, although with direction from the Service Secretaries. The law defines those who were in a promotion zone but not selected for promotion as having failed of selection, and those who twice fail in a grade face mandatory tenure points set by law. Officers may face involuntary departures if they are not selectively continued, or officers may depart the service voluntarily. Both result in vacancies, which are the difference between officer inventory and grade strengths. Vacancies at most grades are filled by promotion, although O1s and some officers in higher grades enter via accessions. This simplified representation of a complex system, portrayed in greater detail in the body of the report, is designed to help the reader understand how policies relate to each other and to overall outputs.

¹ We cite Department of Navy directives, but while this research is focused on the United States Navy, it could be applicable to other services.