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## **All of Us Make a Difference With Our Service**

By Haney Hong

Even close friends and family are sometimes confused about what my service as a Navy Reservist and my role as President & CEO of the San Diego County Taxpayers Association. How is it that I have a full-time job in the civilian world while at the same time I get assigned to duties worldwide in the Navy and rotate from position to position every couple years?

As I relinquish my current Navy Reserve job on Dec. 4 as the Commanding Officer of Expeditionary Maintenance Detachment Lima and the concurrent national lead for the 400-person submarine tender support force, I find myself reflecting on my service for the Navy and for San Diego.

The easiest way for me to explain this is that I wear two occupational hats — and, fundamentally, it might not be that different from what you do day to day. One occupational hat I wear is with the Taxpayers Association. I spend the bulk of my time researching taxpayer issues and advocating for effective public management and good governance. The second occupational hat is as a submarine officer, currently focused on ensuring sailors are ready to maintain submarines anywhere in the world. I wear this occupational hat only part time. But most of you who have the time and resources to read this probably do something similar: you work full time in one occupation and part time in another. My wife runs full time a digital marketing business and works part time helping Drake University, her alma mater, as a member of the board of its Alumni Association. She may not get paid for the latter, but it certainly takes time and resources. Take another friend of mine, who works full time for Callan Capital, but she also spends part time as a leader for Big Brothers Big Sisters here in San Diego. Or a neighbor of mine, who teaches high school full time, but part time leads the association of home owners.

For the most part, a Navy Reservist works part-time for the public for one weekend every month and an additional two weeks a year — generally about 50 to 60 days annually — on top of their regular employment. During those times on duty, the 60,000 Navy Reservists work in all corners of the world. The sailors who report to me usually spend Saturdays doing repair work on the submarines berthed at Point Loma, but there are others who might spend this time on duty in a headquarters in Bahrain or Japan managing maritime operations, or in the field training for contingencies overseas. These Navy Reservists integrate with and support the approximately 327,500 full-time active duty Navy women and men.



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You might wonder why we have a Navy Reserve in the first place and how long it has been around. In 2015, we celebrated our Centennial, our 100<sup>th</sup> birthday as a creation of the Congress. The Navy Reserve, just like the reserve forces of the other uniformed services, is a “reserve” to be ready for emergencies. Just like in business or in a well-run municipal government, where a reserve of resources exists for rainy days, the Navy has a reserve of trained personnel ready for those rainy days when a pocket of the world becomes unstable or when someone or some group of people want to threaten our liberty and way of life — and it needs more attention than what our full-time force can handle.

The truth of the matter is we, as a people, cannot prepare for every possible national security emergency around the world and here at home; to do so would be enormously expensive for us as taxpayers at the opportunity costs of other well-deserving programs and issues. There would be nothing to defend if we spent all our money on preparing to defend ourselves. And so to get preparedness without breaking the bank, we have the Navy Reserve, a part-time force ready to surge and go overseas when our country calls.

It means that Navy Reservists aren’t full-time on the public’s payroll, but they’re ready to go by giving up some weekends and some time potentially in the work week. When I first joined the Navy Reserve (I transitioned from active duty full time to Reservist part time in Fall 2010), I lived in Boston and commuted once a month to Washington DC for Navy Reserve duties. Fortunately, that was only a \$150 round-trip ticket that I had to pay for myself, but there are Reservists who fly across the country for one weekend of duty once a month on their own dime and at much higher cost. Indeed, some Navy Reservists end up serving essentially as volunteers, because the cost of a commute by airplane plus rental car, plus food while on travel eats up their part time paycheck.

Many of my friends, family and colleagues thank me for my service, but I need to say that back in response. While I may be dual hatted as a Navy Reservist, you are dual hatted in other ways for the community. The second hat that I wear is a part time focus on our community’s and country’s national security challenges, but your second occupational hat might be a part time focus on other challenges we face as a people. Just as we cannot prepare for every national security emergency, we cannot prepare for every domestic emergency or community challenge, whether it be homelessness, behavioral health challenges for youth, public safety, or infrastructure. Doing so — again — would break the bank.

I guess this is all to say that for us as a people to afford what we need to address our myriad challenges requires for those of us who can to add another occupational hat. For the last 6 years I’ve done so as a Navy Reservist, but you may do it as a volunteer for a non-profit, as an advisor for a business entity, or something else. Either way, we’re all working to create stronger communities and that’s what’s important.