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# Get in the Zone – Promotion

Thus, a zone consists of a range of lineal numbers, which can be correlated with dates of rank. Officers within a zone will be considered for promotion during that fiscal year's statutory promotion board.

## How are active duty zones established?

Starting with the most senior officer who has not yet been considered for promotion, BUPERS counts down until the correct total is reached. This range of officers becomes the zone. (For example, if the Navy needs 100 new URL captains, and the promotion opportunity is 50 percent, 200 URL officers will be in the zone.) Officers who are senior to the first officer in the zone are considered to be "above zone." These officers have already been considered for promotion. Officers who are lineally above zone but have not been considered by a Reserve board are listed as "above zone not previously considered" (AZNPC), and are treated as if in-zone for board purposes. This situation can occur when an officer leaves active duty and affiliates with the Naval Reserve after some delay. This also happened in 2001 when the 1700 community was folded back into the line community, and officers were redesignated as 1100. This created a one-time "surge" of AZNPC URL officers, and the FY01 URL O-6 zone shrunk to only seven months.

An above-zone officer remains above zone and is considered each year by the appropriate board until promotion, resignation, discharge, or retirement. Active duty zone announcement messages also include a "below zone" range, providing early promotion opportunity for truly outstanding officers. Under SECNAV policy, except for Reserve warrant officers, Reserve officers may not be considered for promotion from below the zone.

Each year, the Secretary of the Navy publishes a message that lists the convening dates of promotion boards, along with the senior and junior officers eligible for consideration for promotion. This year's

message date time group is SECNAV WASHINGTON DC 112014Z DEC 03 (ALNAV 091/03). Reserve promotions are driven by active duty promotions. Under Title 10 USC, Reservists must be eligible for promotion at the same time as their active duty counterparts. Therefore, Reserve promotion zones mirror the active duty promotion zones based on the running mate system.

Since eligibility for promotion as a Reserve officer is based on the running mate system, there may be more or fewer Reserve officers than active duty officers in a promotion zone. Usually, there are more. So, while active duty may select 100 captains based on a given zone and promotion opportunity, the Naval Reserve could conceivably select 200. Over time, this results in a "glut" of O-5 and O-6 Reserve officers, which is why the Apply board can only assign about 1/3 of these officers to pay billets. Congress and money, via selected Reserve endstrength, act as a throttle on career opportunities for Reserve officers. As a Reservist, it is easier to get promoted than it is to get a pay billet.

Promotion board results do not adjust relative seniority of officers, except in the case of early promotions. An officer's original precedence relative to peers at commissioning does not change over a career when promoted on due course. Being the best-qualified, most decorated officer does not result in an earlier date of rank.

On the BUPERS Web site is an annual planning document known as a "promotion zone forecast," which provides a five year look-ahead that estimates promotion opportunity, flowpoints, and promotion zones. The URL forecast for FY05-FY09 is available at <http://www.persnet.navy.mil/pers43/5-9prmzn.htm>.

You may also find additional important information concerning promotion boards at <http://www.persnet.navy.mil/selectbd/index.html>.

Last month, we discussed how seniority and precedence is determined. This month, we'll look at promotion zones.

## What is a promotion zone?

Congress establishes the maximum number of officers who may be on active duty in the Navy. This number, not job vacancies, drives promotion opportunities. Thus, while the Navy may be fully manned to Congressional specifications, several billets can still remain vacant. Each fiscal year, the Navy determines the number of active duty vacancies anticipated by competitive category at each paygrade due to retirements, resignations, promotions, deaths, etc. Additionally, the Secretary of the Navy determines a promotion opportunity (expressed as a percentage) for each competitive category. For unrestricted line (URL) officers, these numbers are typically 50 percent to 60 percent for CAPT (57 percent for FY05), 70 percent to 80 percent for CDR (77 percent for FY05), and 70 percent to 90 percent for LCDR (85 percent for FY05). These numbers can be driven by a number of factors, including retention goals and keeping promotion "flowpoints" within range.

The Department of Defense has issued flowpoint guidance for the Services. Annually, the Navy plans promotions to adhere to Department of Defense guidelines. Flowpoint is expressed as years and months of commissioned service the average officer will serve before actual promotion (date of rank). Each must remain within a predefined two-year band, but may drift from year to year. Flowpoints for FY05 URL selection boards are 9 years 10 months to LCDR, 15 years 5 months to CDR, and 21 years 10 months to CAPT. Other competitive categories may flow earlier or later, depending upon community requirements.