

YOU ARE INVITED TO THE NATIONAL CONVENTION or

NATIONAL CONVENTION 101

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National Convention Committee Chairman

Almost everyone in the CPOA has heard of the Annual National Convention, but the majority of our membership has no idea what the convention is all about. This article, I hope, will educate you a little about what the National Convention is all about.

WHATS ALL THE HUBBUB? Every year in late August or early September, the CPOA is required, by law, to hold an annual business meeting. The convention meets this requirement. Theoretically, every chapter president is required to attend. Chapter presidents are primary delegates. We all know that due to operational commitments this will not happen, so at least one person from each chapter hopefully will attend as their chapter's delegate. Sometimes no one can make it from a chapter so someone from another chapter represents the absent chapter as a Proxy delegate. If more than one person shows up from a chapter, they can be an Alternate delegate. These representatives meet over a period of 5 days to conduct the business of the CPOA for the next year. Things such as the annual budget, the Captain Caliendo Scholarship, Long Term Planning, National Elections, Membership, etc., are discussed. There are also usually presentations by various Coast Guard organizations such as PSC, Mutual Assistance, Detailers, Pre-Retirement Benefits counseling, and last year we had a PowerPoint presentation from the Chiefs Mess of the newest cutter Bertholf. The Master Chief of the Coast Guard, as well as the Commandant, usually try to attend to pass the latest up-to-date information to the Chiefs. Plus you have time to meet and talk to "Those That Have Gone Before Us." For example, at my first convention I got a chance to listen to a Chief who made chief "Before The Mast" just a few years after the Revenue Cutter Service was renamed. Moreover, it is always fun to listen to Chiefs that retired before you were born tell their tales (Just beware of any stories that start out, "This aint no..."). If you have ever been at a Chief's call when folks did not agree, you can imagine what it is like when 50, or more, Chiefs of various backgrounds sit around one table and discuss a delicate subject! It can get heated and it can get scary! However, it is awesome to watch how these consummate professionals use the same process as congress to keep order and proceed to a final solution. You would expect that after some of these heated discussions that these people would want to meet outside behind the hotel to revisit the ways of the Old Guard! Instead, they meet in the Hospitality Room for friendly debriefing and refreshments.

WHATS THE HOSPITALITY ROOM? If the meeting rooms are where business is conducted, the hospitality room is where the fun, the politics, the sales, and the social scene occur. After checking into the hotel and freshening up, the first place you want to find is the hospitality

room. This is where you meet the Convention Committee and pick up your convention package, greet old friends, meet new friends, catch up on what has been happening, or just grab a cup of coffee or cold drink of choice and sit back, watch and listen. The hospitality room is definitely the hub of the convention. The food and drink in the Hospitality Room is free to all delegates and their guests. 50/50 raffles are held daily, as well as other sanctioned raffles and events. Chapters may exhibit and sell their authorized Chapter fundraisers in the hospitality room. Remember when I said food and beverages are free in the hospitality room? I meant it. The costs have to be recouped somehow. It has been a tradition that attending chapters and/or delegates make a donation to the hospitality room - all donations are appreciated. The only income the convention committee generates in order to put on a convention comes from Convention Magazine ads, Registration Fees, and Hospitality Room donations. In addition, remember to talk to a member of the convention committee to secure a place to show off and sell your chapter's fundraisers before you set up or try to sell something.

WHAT IS THE PLAN OF THE WEEK? Since the convention committee tries to select a site that has things to do during non-meeting hours, some folks like to arrive on Friday, Saturday, but no later than Sunday. Remember, you need to have time to register with the convention and get your nametag. The fun begins with opening ceremonies that start Monday morning around 0900. During opening ceremonies plenty of awards are handed out, welcomes are made, and speeches are made. This is a formal gathering so Trops are in order for active duty and nice clothes for everyone else. After the opening ceremonies, a luncheon is held to honor the Organization's National Past Presidents, Gold, and Platinum members. After the luncheon, it is time to get down to business. Delegates (CPOA, CGEA & CPOAA) head for their various meeting rooms. Afternoon sessions are usually run from about 1300 – 1600. Morning sessions are usually from 0800-1200. The dress for convention meetings is casual for all attendees, although uniforms for active duty may be worn. On Thursday evening there is a casual dress dinner (though some folks prefer to wear suits and dinner dress and everything in-between), and usually dancing. Closing ceremonies are held on Friday mornings.

WHAT ELSE DO I NEED TO KNOW? The biggest thing an attendee needs to remember is do not be shy. If you are a rookie attendee, do not be afraid to ask questions of the grizzled old guys in the hospitality suite. They were a rookie once too. You get out of the convention exactly what you put into it. Remember to always wear your nametag. This not only tells everyone that you are a member of the convention, but also helps us old guys with bad memories remember your name! Something else all attendees need to know is how the convention is paid for. When an attendee signs up to come, they must make their room arrangements directly with the hotel. They must also send a registration form to the convention committee stating who they are, what they are, which events do they wish to attend, and what choice of meals they desire. A check covering the amount of the chosen events, meals, etc (which also includes the \$30

registration fee) should be sent to the Convention Committee as soon as possible. What is the \$30 service fee for? The \$30 covers all kinds of things that nothing else covers – things like your nametag, the paper that the reports are printed on, the pads of notepaper at your seat, and the million other things that seem to pop up. OK, but why stay at the expensive hotel when I can stay at a cheaper place down the road? This is a really good question and I am glad you asked because it is really important that you stay at the convention hotel. Remember when I said that the service fee covers all the little things. What it does not cover is the meeting rooms, the hospitality room itself, and several other key items. When the convention contract is signed, the CPOA guarantees that so many rooms will be used by CPOA attendees during the week. In return, the hotel waives the costs of these rooms and spaces. If the promised number of rooms are not utilized, the CPOA must pay for them. It is a major penalty that we just cannot afford.

SO EXACTLY WHY SHOULD I ATTEND A CONVENTION? For a multitude of reasons! First and foremost, to help the CPOA comply with the law of having their annual business meeting. We must have a minimum number of representatives attend. Second, if you like the CPOA, come and learn how things are done at the national level. It is really quite impressive. Not only do you see parliamentary procedure at its best, but you can sit in on the various national convention committees and take the knowledge you garner back with you to your chapter. Third, you can network out the gazoo! The backbone of being a Chief is knowing who to call when the situation arises. You can get some connections at a convention that you cannot get anywhere else. Fourth, to rub shoulders with the top enlisted and officers in the Coast Guard. And finally, just to have fun. Conventions are held in places where you may not get a chance to go again and you can see things you may not see anywhere else. I have met very few people who do not want to come back after having attended their first convention. If the Commandant of the Coast Guard feels that our convention is important enough to grant permissive orders, don't you think it is important enough to attend? I hope to see you there. If you have any questions, please email me at cpoa.con@yahoo.com, or the Convention Committee Vice-Chairman and CGEA member, ET1 Monica McCormack at cgea.conv@yahoo.com. Also, check for the latest changes on the CPOA website, www.uscgcpoa.org.

TO CGEA MEMBERS: The CPOA motto is, "In respect for those who have gone before us... and a guide for those who follow." You are the Coast Guard's up and coming Chief Petty Officers. The CPOA's next generation. These guidelines apply to you so that you can see what lies before you and give you an idea on how Chiefs work together. Your presence is not only welcome but expected and desired.