

SECTION IA - *The Nomination and Appointment Process*

The Nomination

All appointments to the service academies are made by the President. To be considered for an appointment to a service academy, an applicant must have a nomination from an authorized nominating source. Title 10, U.S. Code, Annotated establishes two nomination categories. The first, usually referred to as “congressional nominations,” includes the nominations of the Vice-President and Members of the United States Senate and House of Representatives. The second, referred to as “service-connected” or “military-affiliated” nominations, includes the selections of the President and nominations of the appropriate service (e.g., Secretary of the Navy for nominations to the Naval Academy).

Applicants should apply to all nomination sources for which they are eligible. Congressional nominations account for approximately three-fourths of all appointments. Therefore, Members of Congress should not exclude from their nomination process those applicants who may also hold service connected nominations.

Congressional Nominations

Members of Congress may nominate applicants who meet the eligibility requirements established by law. Senators nominate from applicants in their entire state. Representatives nominate from applicants domiciled in their congressional districts as constituted at the time of their election. Applicants may apply for and receive nominations from both their United States Senators and from their Representative. Applicants may also apply to the Vice-President of the United States, who can nominate applicants from the country at large as well as U.S. citizens living abroad.

Service-Affiliated Nominations

An unlimited number of presidential nominations are available for children and legally adopted children of career officer and enlisted personnel of the armed forces, active or reserve, including the Coast Guard. One hundred candidates may be appointed with these nominations each year. A parent in the Reserves must be serving as a member of a reserve component and be credited with at least eight years of service or must be entitled to retired pay except that he or she is not yet sixty years old. Otherwise, the parent must currently be on active duty (other than for training) and have served continuously for at least eight years or have retired with pay or have been granted retired or retainer pay. The President may also appoint the children of Medal of Honor winners.

Students may also be appointed to the service academies based on nominations as children of military personnel who were killed in action; died from wounds, injuries or disease while on active duty; sustained 100 percent disability from such wounds, injuries, or disease as certified by the Department of Veterans Affairs; or who are currently prisoners of war (POW) or missing in action (MIA). The children of civilians in POW or MIA status are also eligible. Legally adopted children are eligible.

The Secretary of the appropriate service may nominate for appointment enlisted members of the regular and the reserve components of the appropriate service, members of the service’s own Reserve Officer Training Corps and Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps programs, and the Junior Reserve Officer Training programs of the other services which have been designated as Honor Units with Distinction.

Qualified Alternates

If the annual quota of midshipmen/cadets is not filled, the Secretary may select up to 150 candidates who received congressional nominations but were not selected. These candidates must be fully qualified.

Additional Appointments

If the annual quota of midshipmen/cadets is still not filled, the Secretary may nominate candidates who competed for the nomination and are fully qualified. At least three-fourths of these candidates must have received a congressional nomination.

Who is Eligible?

Each applicant for a nomination must meet the following eligibility requirements as of 1 July of the year of admission to an academy:

Age: Be at least 17 years old, but not have passed the 23rd birthday.

Citizenship: Must be a U.S. citizen.

Marital Status: Be unmarried, not pregnant, and have no legal obligation to support children or other dependents.

General Admissions Standards

Before nominating an applicant, Members of Congress should carefully evaluate each applicant’s overall qualifications, including the legal domicile to confirm that the applicant is domiciled within the boundaries of the representative’s congressional district. The three academies consider evidence of character, scholarship, leadership, physical aptitude, medical fitness, goals and motivation in determining each nominee’s “whole-person” evaluation.

Character

Absolutely critical in the course of evaluating a candidate is a positive determination of the candidate's character. Absence of good moral character is cause for disqualification.

Scholarship

Each element of a candidate's academic record is carefully evaluated by a service academy's admissions board. The elements evaluated include a complete high school record (and college record, when applicable), class rank and either the SAT-I or the American College Testing (ACT) scores. All strengths and weaknesses in a candidate's academic background are taken into account.

SAT-I test scores are available to Members of Congress directly from the testing agency approximately 30 days after an applicant has been tested. However, for Members of Congress to receive them, the applicant must request that the agency forward the test results to the Congressional offices. The applicant may do this at the time he or she registers for the test. It is each Member's responsibility to coordinate with an applicant on the receipt of test scores. Members of Congress may expedite the process by obtaining a SAT-I code number from the testing agency and providing this code number to applicants. Members may obtain SAT-I code numbers by calling (609) 771-7600. To obtain ACT test scores, the applicant uses Code 7000 on the test application form. The applicant will then be furnished an additional copy of the test scores to send to his or her Members of Congress. To register for the SAT-I and ACT, students should check with their school counselor or visit the appropriate web site (www.sat.org and www.act.org) for details of test dates and registration requirements. Candidates will normally enhance their competitiveness by taking both the SAT and the ACT more than once. Non-standard, un-timed tests are not acceptable. The admissions offices of the academies stand ready to assist in evaluating test results.

Leadership

Participation and achievement in organized athletics, student body and class government, clubs and class extracurricular activities, scouting, boys/girls state, church or other community-related activities demonstrate evidence of leadership potential. Candidates who have found it necessary to work to provide family support are considered to have demonstrated desirable leadership potential.

Physical Aptitude

Measuring strength, endurance, agility and

coordination, the candidate fitness assessment (CFA) is designed to determine each candidate's readiness to undertake the rigorous athletic and physical education program at the academies. Each academy includes the results of the test in their whole-person evaluation. The Naval Academy generally evaluates the CFA on a pass/fail basis, but gives due consideration to scores that are exceptionally high or low. The test may be taken as many times as necessary.

Medical Fitness

Candidates who meet minimum scholastic standards will be scheduled to take a service academy qualifying medical examination at a military or civilian contract facility near the candidate's home. Although medical qualification standards vary for each of the academies, only one exam is required. Additional tests may be necessary and may vary depending upon the academy. Scheduling and evaluation of the exam is accomplished by the Department of Defense Medical Examination Review Board (**DoDMERB**). Candidates who have questions about their medical exam results should direct them to:

DoDMERB

8034 Edgerton Drive, Suite 132
USAF Academy, CO 80840-2200
Phone: (719) 333-3562

Website: <https://dodmerb.tricare.osd.mil>

Medical scheduling and evaluation are time-consuming processes, especially if consultation, retesting or corrective action are required. The process may take from six weeks to four months.

Motivation

An attempt to measure motivation may be made through observation of the candidate's interest level in attending an academy and serving as an officer in the armed forces. Motivation is an intangible quality and difficult to evaluate; however, since it most frequently the factor that determines an appointee's success or failure at a service academy, the effort must be made.

Whole-Person Evaluation

All of the preceding factors are part of the "whole-person" evaluation used by each of the academies. These qualities are required of an individual in order to meet the challenges of the academy programs and, following graduation, as commissioned officers.

Applicant Evaluation

Each academy uses a questionnaire to make an initial assessment of an applicant's potential for appointment. An eligible applicant should contact each academy by calling or writing to request the appropriate questionnaire. The questionnaire may also be completed on-line by visiting each academy's web page.

Soon after the applicant submits the questionnaire, the admissions office will reply to the applicant with an evaluation of the applicant's demonstrated ability to meet admissions standards. Applicants who meet the standards are declared candidates; those who do not meet the standards at that point may later submit additional test scores or information to the academy for reevaluation. The applicant must provide the following information: academic standardized test scores (ACT, PSAT, SAT-I), rank in class and grade point average, social security number and participation in high school extracurricular activities.

Applicant Screening

The academies send status reports to Members of Congress from September through April. In addition to considering these candidate status reports, Members are encouraged to conduct their own screening panels as part of the selection process. An alternative is to use a numerical process where numerical weights are given to respective categories of the selection process, e.g. scholarship, athletics, extracurricular activities. A selection committee can assist the staff member in interviewing and screening applicants. The purpose of such a committee is to evaluate, conduct a comparative analysis of, and recommend the best candidates to the Member. The committee can be composed of individuals from different cities or townships with the person most knowledgeable about the academies to serve as chairman, which could be the senior member of the board or a local admissions liaison information officer. A Member's staff can make up a screening panel also. To assist the Member efficiently, members of the board should be briefed by a staff member or liaison officer each year as to the requirements of each academy and the latest information in order to make the very best selections possible. A professional educator on the board is helpful also. To encourage more community involvement, membership on boards or panels should have limited terms.

Vacancies

Each U.S. Senator and Representative may have a maximum of five cadets or midshipmen at each service academy at one time. **A Member of Congress may nominate up to ten candidates for each vacancy.** In

order not to close out the ability to nominate to each academy each year, **the Member should verify that a vacancy will be available for the next year before filling more than one vacancy.** During the summer, the service academies report who is charged to each office as well as the number of vacancies available for the coming admissions cycle. In addition, new Members receive vacancy status reports from each academy shortly after they assume office. Throughout the year, Members are notified by each academy whenever additional vacancies become available because of separations.



Statue of General Dwight D. Eisenhower at West Point.

Congressional Nomination Methods

There are three methods of nomination which may be used by Members of Congress. They are: competitive, principal with competing alternates, and principal with numbered alternates. Members of Congress may use any of these methods at their discretion. Regardless of the nominating method and means of evaluation used, **it is strongly encouraged that a full slate of ten nominations be submitted for each vacancy.** A higher number of nominees increases the quality of the incoming academy class.

Competitive Nomination

This is the method of nomination favored by the academies and used by most Members of Congress (approximately 70-75 percent). The Member of Congress submits to an academy an unranked slate of up to ten nominees for each vacancy. The candidates are then ranked in order of merit in accordance with the specific academy system. The most highly qualified is selected for an offer of admission (an appointment) to fill the vacancy. If the Member has more than one vacancy, ten nominees may be submitted for each vacancy (two vacancies: 20 unranked nominees, three vacancies: 30 nominees, etc.). The academy then selects the best of the qualified nominees to fill each of the available vacancies. **Again, it is strongly encouraged that members nominate as many young men and women as possible for each vacancy, as it enhances the quality of the candidate pool.**

Principal with Competing Alternates

This method provides for designation of a principal nominee by the Member of Congress. The other nine unranked nominees are submitted to the academy for evaluation and compete as alternates. If the principal is fully qualified (academics, medical and physical aptitude), he or she will be appointed and will fill the vacancy. Note that this method does not take into account the quality of the other nominees if the principal nominee is fully qualified. On the other hand, if the principal does not qualify, the alternates then compete for the vacancy. Selection at this point is based on merit as determined by the evaluation and ranking of the alternates by the service academy.

Principal with Numbered Alternates

Under this method, the principal nominee is designated and the alternate nominees are ranked in order of preference by the Member of Congress. If fully qualified, the principal nominee receives the appointment to fill the vacancy. If the principal nominee does not qualify, then the first alternate is considered for the appointment and so on. In effect, the highest

designated nominee who is fully qualified for entrance is appointed to fill the vacancy.

A Point of View

Years ago, Members of Congress used the principal with numbered alternates method because the law specified this method. After expansion of the service academies (1964-1968), Members of Congress were allowed ten nominations for every vacancy. Today, about one congressional sponsor in four is using the principal method. Most Members favor the use of the competitive method. The advantages of the competitive method are:

First: The more competitive the method of selecting and evaluating nominees, the more likely the individual selected for appointment will be the best qualified. In the case of principal nominees designated by Members of Congress, for example, a minimally-qualified designated principal nominee must be offered the Member's appointment, even though one or more of the Member's alternate nominees may be far better qualified. Use of the competitive nomination method ensures that the top-ranked, best-qualified nominee is offered admission.

Second: Use of competitive methods would appear to have a distinct advantage for Members of Congress by eliminating the requirement for the Member of Congress to rank one constituent over another. Every candidate has an equal chance based on merit and eliminates any perception of political influence. Most candidates and their parents recognize this fact.

Appointment of Other Qualified Candidates

In addition to those selected to fill vacancies for a Member of Congress, it is possible that one or more additional nominees of the Member of Congress may be successful in gaining appointments under the qualified alternate or additional appointment categories. These appointments are not charged to the Members of Congress but are charged as qualified alternates and additional appointees.

Early Nominations

There are advantages and disadvantages to making nominations early. **The most significant advantage is that early offers of admission can be extended to outstanding candidates,** thus allowing the service academies to compete with other selective universities for that high quality student. An early admissions decision might be the determining factor that brings an outstanding person to a service academy. Early nomination also provides ample time to replace a withdrawn or disqualified candidate with another nominee. Members may submit nominees singularly,

or as a partial slate, at any time. This approach is convenient and helps service academies expedite the evaluation of nominees.

It is difficult to advise as to the best deadline date for accepting applications for a nomination. Each Member of Congress has a different volume of applicants, and somewhat different evaluation and selection procedures. **A November deadline date would appear to fit the needs of most congressional sponsors and still provide for consideration of well-qualified applicants who are late in applying.**

Students are strongly advised to apply to their congressional sponsors and their academy of choice in the spring of their junior year, but many fine prospects do not apply for entry into a service academy until their senior year is well underway and their college plans are being developed. Thus, we encourage Members of Congress to consider substitute nominations as the admissions cycle progresses.

Late Nominations

The service academies' administrative deadline for the receipt of nominations is 31 January.

Nominations should be submitted by that time. Late nominations precipitate a last-minute rush to complete admission records. Information is needed from the nominees, their schools and testing agencies. Medical and physical fitness examinations must be scheduled, taken and evaluated. All of this must be completed before an academy completes evaluation of a candidate. In the case of a full slate of ten nominees all competing for the same vacancy, the top individual cannot be selected until all the required records have been received for each of the nominees.

Substitute Nominations

Members of Congress are sometimes asked to nominate applicants for admission who will further the attainment of service academy class composition goals. Often a service academy will bring sought-after candidates to the attention of appropriate Members of Congress. These individuals may be used to fill a nomination slate to ten or to replace other nominees who have declined or whose nominations have been withdrawn. Substitutions may be made by Members after the staffer checks with the appropriate office at the following numbers:

Army: (845) 938-5723

Navy: (410) 293-4392

Air Force: (719) 333-2520

Nomination Form

The nomination form (DD Form 1870) is normally used by Members of Congress to submit the names of the nominees for the three service academies. This form

must be typed or neatly handwritten and must be signed by the Member. Instructions and mailing addresses are indicated on the form. The form is available online at <http://webster/other/serviceacademy/index.cfm> for the Senate and at <http://housenet.house.gov/forms-library.htm> for the House. Only the signed original should be submitted. The Naval Academy also accepts nominations in letter format.

Appointment Notification

Candidates to be offered appointments are identified after careful evaluation by each academy. Exceptionally qualified candidates are often offered a letter of assurance (LOA) once they have been found scholastically qualified by the service academy's board. The LOA guarantees an offer of appointment after the remaining admissions requirements have been completed. If they have not actually done so, candidates must obtain an official nomination, satisfactorily complete a qualifying medical examination, and pass the candidate fitness assessment (CFA). Each academy may have other specific requirements that must be fulfilled before a fully qualified offer of appointment can be made.

Prior to officially notifying any congressional nominee of selection for an appointment, the service academies or their congressional activities offices will notify the congressional office so that the Member may have ample time to be the first to contact the successful candidate and offer congratulations. The academies usually wait two or three days after notifying the sponsor before notifying the candidate of an offer of appointment.

Publicity

Members of Congress should make wide use of the news media to announce to constituents when applications for nominations to the service academies will be accepted. News releases may be enhanced by information concerning the selection process used by the Member of Congress. An appropriate time for news releases is in the spring when nominations open and again in **September** to announce deadlines for nomination closing. Another release in **January** or **February** is recommended to announce names of all applicants selected for nomination to service academies.

Useful publicity also results from news releases made by Members of Congress concerning noteworthy accomplishments at the service academies by their nominees. Congressional newsletters are also good outlets for these announcements. Local releases, provided periodically to Members of Congress by the service academies, contribute to our common goal of keeping the academies in the public eye and attracting applicants with outstanding qualifications.

Some Members host town meetings which could be an opportunity to bring the advantages of the service academies to a group of potential applicants. Many Members of Congress are now hosting “Academy Days” as another avenue for reaching potential applicants. All

academies will render support when possible.

Public service announcements by Members of Congress on television programs are other ways to publicize the service academies as well as the nomination process.

Summary of the Nomination and Appointment Process

The following schedule may be used as a guide to the timing of important steps in the nomination and appointment process.

Beginning in the Spring	Members of Congress begin to receive applications for nomination to the service academies. Use news media, newsletters and other means to publicize the application process.
September through December	Members of Congress accept applications and screen applicants, including interview by screening board if used. Members of Congress send out press releases announcing application deadlines.
September through April	Academies provide periodic applicant evaluation to Members of Congress based on the evaluation of the information self-reported by the applicant. In late January or early February, status reports reflect validated information on the candidates.
Beginning in September	Academies send out early offers of admission/appointment and Letters of Assurance. Advance notice of appointments will be given to congressional offices by the academies. On the Naval Academy Candidate Evaluation Report, candidates will appear as “Not Evaluated” until validated information is received, which could be as early as September. The evaluation will change as additional information is received.
By 31 January (earlier if possible)	Members of Congress submit nomination forms to each academy.
October through February	Members of Congress send out press releases announcing nominees.
By Late April	Academies have offered the majority of appointments and notified the majority of candidates regarding their final application status.
By 1 May	Candidates must accept or decline their offers of appointment.
May through June	Academies may offer additional appointments to replace candidates who decline their appointments.
Late June or early July	Newly appointed class enters each academy. Members of Congress send out press releases announcing appointees and publicizing the application process.