

While many of us are physically present, we are not home. I returned in 2011, but I am still not home. Not realizing the extent of my training injury; and, despite the back pain I began experiencing six months later; I completed my deployment and was selected for promotion to Commander. As to my medical status, I initially refused my doctors' advice to retire, but when I was told my presence in any danger zone would place others at risk, I acquiesced and accepted placement on the Temporary Disability Retirement List (TDRL)—a designation this Task Force has asked Congress to eliminate. My TDRL status had an immediate, devastating impact on every aspect of my life and family. First, because Navy regulations state any member on TDRL cannot be promoted, my hard earned promotion was withdrawn. Second, once discharged I had to direct my own health care, which was a complex task for my extremely competent MEDHOLD Case Manager. For over a year, I attempted to handle referrals to five different civilian providers in preparation for the TDRL Board I am to face this spring. Despite my education and experience, this was impossible. Third, my overall health rapidly declined when I returned to Federal employment at DHS (September 2012). Because my pain prevents me from sitting or standing for extended periods of time and degrades my ability to concentrate, I requested a transfer to a non-sedentary job. This request was denied. The legal challenges and maltreatment I am still enduring directly violate the spirit and intent of USERRA and No Fear Acts. I have been on leave without pay since November 2012; forced into five separate legal actions; and, burdened with over \$40K in debt. The last letter I received from DHS, makes no reference to my disability rating, but acknowledges, "[I] have been absent for compelling reasons beyond [my] control" and, "there is no foreseeable end in sight to my absences," but states I will be terminated for "Excessive Absenteeism." DHS has refused mediation offers from the Office of Special Counsel and Merit Systems Protection Board, and even an offer to terminate me for "the inability to perform my job," which would expedite my application for disability retirement.

My traumatic story is stranger than fiction, but I assure you it is real. I have notified every relevant oversight agency and Congress, yet due to bystander apathy and politics, I remain in this "perfect storm" of a bureaucratic nightmare—a "poster example," of a Veteran left behind. Employment for Disabled Veterans is absolutely essential to our identity. Many of us still have the fierce need to serve our nation. If you help me fully return home, I know other Veterans will benefit. Thank you.



LCDR John Gregory Richardson  
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