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OFFICE OF THE JUDGE ADVOCATE GENERAL
NAVAL LEGAL SERVICE COMMAND
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JUDGE ADVOCATE GENERAL INSTRUCTION 12450.1A
NAVAL LEGAL SERVICE COMMAND INSTRUCTION 12450.1A

From: Judge Advocate General
Commander, Naval Legal Service Command

Subj: CIVILIAN PERSONNEL AWARDS PROGRAM

Ref: (a) DoD Instruction 1400.25-V431 of 4 February 2016
(b) DoD Instruction 1400.25-V451 of 4 November 2013
(c) DON Civilian Human Resources Manual Subchapter 451.1
(d) DON Human Resources Implementation Guide No. 451-02
(e) SECNAV M-5210.1
(f) OPNAVINST 5215.17A

Encl: (1) OJAG and NLSC Honorary Awards Guidance
(2) OJAG and NLSC Civilian of the Year Awards Guidance
(3) OJAG and NLSC Monetary and Time-Off Awards Guidance

1. Purpose. To establish procedures and criteria for recognizing outstanding performance by civilian employees serving under the cognizance of the Judge Advocate General (JAG) or Commander, Naval Legal Service Command (CNLSC).
2. Cancellation. JAG/COMNAVLEGSVCCOMINST 12450.1
3. Policy. Supervisory personnel must ensure that outstanding civilian performance is recognized. Each command and activity within the JAG community shall employ the methods laid out in this instruction for evaluating and nominating candidates based on exceptional performance that significantly contributes to the mission and encourages creativity and high performance in the workplace. Recognition should be made as soon after the achievement as possible. This instruction provides award procedures that apply to all civilian awards, including honorary, annual, recognition, and cash or time-off awards, as governed by references (a) through (d). For organizations with bargaining units, appropriate labor relations obligations must be fulfilled prior to implementation.
4. Award Coordination. The Performance Management Division (Code 66) shall promulgate additional guidance as needed online at <https://portal.secnav.navy.mil/orgs/JAG/66/awards/SitePages/Home.aspx> (Code 66 Awards Portal Homepage), ensure all templates and forms cited in this instruction are posted on this page, and coordinate all award nominations in accordance with

Department of Defense (DoD), Department of the Navy (DON), and Chief of Naval Operations Human Resource Office (CNO HRO) policy.

5. Honorary Awards. Honorary awards provide a means to recognize an employee's overall value to an organization or to acknowledge specific contributions made over a period of months or years. Honorary awards should be utilized to recognize an employee's performance throughout their career. Honorary awards are not intended to be solely used as retirement awards. To merit a civilian honorary award, an employee's performance or accomplishments must be superior when measured against the position requirements of the individual, and should exceed the contributions and service of others with comparable responsibilities. Enclosure (1) provides the criteria and process for the submission of most common honorary awards. Honorary award nomination templates shall be posted online and maintained by Code 66 at the Code 66 Awards Portal Homepage.

6. Annual Awards. Annual awards are those awards that are competed across commands and organizations via an awards board to recognize exceptional civilian performance over a given year.

a. Civilian of the Year. The Civilian of the Year (COY) program recognizes civilians working within Office of the Judge Advocate General (OJAG) and Naval Legal Service Command (NLSC) for outstanding achievement, performance, leadership, accomplishments, and overall contributions to their organization.

(1) As outlined in enclosure (2) the following annual awards are open to General schedule (GS) and Foreign National (FN) employees supporting OJAG/NLSC programs:

(a) NLSC Junior Civilian:	GS-10 and below (and FN equivalent)
(b) NLSC Senior Civilian:	GS-11 and above (and FN equivalent)
(c) NLSC Civilian Attorney:	All grades
(d) OJAG Junior Civilian:	GS-11 and below
(e) OJAG Senior Civilian:	GS-12 and above
(f) OJAG Civilian Attorney:	All Grades

(2) Enclosure (2) establishes COY employee nomination eligibility requirements, requirements for package submission, and critical nomination elements for consideration and selection. Application forms can be found at the Code 66 Awards Portal Homepage.

(3) It is critical that all awardees be selected based on performance during the reporting period in a way that is fair and transparent. COY board composition, roles and responsibilities,

and conduct are governed by enclosure (2). Code 66 and COY board members are required to ensure boards comply with these requirements.

b. Annual Performance Awards. Performance awards are recognition of accomplishment at the end of the annual performance rating cycle that are voted on by Performance Award Review Boards (PARBs). PARBs may recommend ratings-based monetary awards and quality step increases (QSI).

(1) Monetary Performance Awards. Monetary performance awards are based upon the employees' rating of record, per reference (b), and the award framework determined by the Director of Navy Staff (DNS), in consultation with CNO HRO. Code 66 disseminates updated information in accordance with CNO HRO guidance at the end of a rating cycle. Performance awards do not require award justification forms.

(2) Quality Step Increases. Supervisors may recommend subordinates to the PARB for consideration to receive a QSI. QSIs recognize exceptional performance with a permanent GS step increase. QSIs are distributed annually in conjunction with the PARB process and standards are outlined in reference (a). Supervisors wishing to nominate civilian employees for a QSI shall reach out to their respective Assistant JAG (AJAG) or Chief of Staff (CoS) for unit specific information about how to nominate an employee. After PARB deliberations, a PARB representative will provide Code 66 with the recommended recipients' names and a copy of their performance appraisal. Year-specific PARB and QSI rules, guidelines, submission procedures, and board composition will be issued annually by Code 66 on or before April 30th.

7. Recognition Awards. Recognition awards identify contributions by civilian employees over a length of time that might otherwise go unrecognized.

a. Length of Service Awards. Length of service awards are issued to recognize prolonged civilian service. They are issued in 5 year increments for 5 to 50 years of federal government service. They will be presented to employees who have reached a service milestone while employed at an OJAG or NLSC command. Quarterly reports are automatically generated by the DON Office of Civilian Human Resources. From this report, certificates are initiated and drafted by Code 66 on a quarterly basis and then forwarded to JAG or CNLSC, as appropriate, for signature. Once the award is approved it will be forwarded to the relevant command for presentation. Commands are not required to initiate these awards but may contact Code 66 to determine if, or when, an award is appropriate.

b. Retirement Certificates. Retirement certificates are prepared by Code 66 for presentation to civilian employees upon their retirement from federal civilian service. They are initiated by the retiring civilian employee's supervisor and may be given in addition to honorary awards to retiring civilians. Requests for retirement certificates shall be sent directly to Code 66 via email at least 60 days prior to the expected date of presentation. The email should be sent to Code66_CivPers@navy.mil, and should indicate the full name of the employee and the expected date of retirement. Code 66 will then prepare the certificate and route to JAG or CNLSC for signature. For career service for 35 or more years, the signature of the Secretary of the Navy (SECNAV) may be obtained by submitting a memo to Code 66 requesting SECNAV's signature.

In these instances, commands shall contact Code 66 for assistance. Memos shall be submitted by the employee's supervisor at least 90 days prior to the intended date of presentation. Code 66 shall then route retirement certificates following the procedures outlined in reference (d).

8. **Cash and Time-Off Awards.** Cash and time-off awards are given in recognition of either a special act or an exceptional accomplishment, sustained performance, or to recognize a one-time achievement. Time-off awards give employees additional annual leave which may be taken over a pre-set period of time. In accordance with applicable DON and CNO HRO policy, the OJAG Fiscal and Resources Support Division (Code 64) and Code 66 will provide guidance when cash and time-off awards can be submitted for processing. Enclosure (3) provides additional information on how these awards shall be processed and issued.

9. **Award Submission Timelines.** Award submission timelines as laid out in this instruction are intended to guarantee that awards are processed with enough time to assure timely presentation. Late awards may not be signed in time and should be accompanied by an explanation as to why they were late, to accompany the package to JAG, CNLSC, or the Executive Management Advisory Panel Awards Committee (EMAP AC).

10. **Records Management.** Any records created as a result of this instruction, regardless of media and format, shall be managed in accordance with reference (e).

11. **Review and Effective Date.** Per reference (f), Code 66 will review this instruction annually around the anniversary of its effective date to ensure applicability, currency, and consistency with Federal, Department of Defense, SECNAV, and Navy policy and statutory authority using the OPNAV 5215/40 Review of Instruction form. This instruction will be in effect for 10 years, unless revised or cancelled in the interim, and will be reissued by the 10-year anniversary date if it is still required, unless it meets one of the exceptions in reference (f), paragraph 9. Otherwise, if the instruction is no longer required, it will be processed for cancellation as soon as the need for cancellation is known following the guidance in OPNAV Manual 5215.1 of May 2016.

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Commander, Naval Legal Service Command

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Judge Advocate General

Releasability and Distribution: This instruction is cleared for public release and is available electronically only via the Judge Advocate General's web site: <http://www.jag.navy.mil>.

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OJAG AND NLSC HONORARY AWARDS GUIDANCE

1. **Honorary Awards.** Honorary awards recognize an employee's overall value to an organization and can be used to promote organizational goals and objectives. Awards of this nature allow for valuable contributions to be acknowledged, and may reflect contributions made over a period of months or years. Recognition may be in addition to, or instead of, cash or time-off awards. Generally, honorary awards should not be used as retirement awards; however, if a significant accomplishment occurs close to retirement that justifies an honorary award, the award may be presented at an employee's retirement.
2. **Types of Honorary Awards.** The awards listed below are a combination of career service and honorary awards commonly used to recognize civilian contributions. Formal criteria can be found in reference (d).
 - a. **DON Distinguished Civilian Service Award.** This award is the highest honorary award SECNAV can confer on a DON civilian employee. The award is granted only to those employees who have given distinguished and/or extraordinary service to the DON. The Executive Management Advisory Panel Awards Committee (EMAP AC) will review all nominations. The achievements or service must be truly exceptional when measured against the position requirements of the individual, and should far exceed the contributions and service of others with comparable responsibilities. This award should be reserved for contributions that are so unusual or significant that recognition at the SECNAV level is deserved. Within the OJAG/NLSC enterprise this award has been used to recognize: contributions or business improvements that had an effect beyond the JAG community or effected other branches of federal government; a pattern of long-term sustained high performance; or, career achievements that had a widespread effect.
 - b. **DON Superior Civilian Service Award.** This award is the second highest honorary award in the DON. Contributions, while exceptional in value, would be narrower in scope or effect (e.g., accomplishment that is significant and has far-reaching, major command-wide effect). JAG or CNLSC may approve this award. Within the OJAG/NLSC enterprise this award has been used to recognize contributions that changed the business or systematic processes of the command at large or to recognize an extended period of exceptional service by a long-serving civilian employee.
 - c. **DON Meritorious Civilian Service Award.** This award is the third highest honorary award in the DON. Contributions, while high in value, are more limited in scope/effect (e.g., accomplishment should be significant and have far reaching impact, but less than the Superior Civilian Service Award). JAG or CNLSC may approve this award. Within the OJAG/NLSC enterprise this award has been used to recognize one-time contributions that changed the business and systematic processes for a division and local command processes or to recognize an extended period of exceptional service by a civilian employee.

d. Flag Letter of Commendation. This award signifies appreciation for individual achievement or a pattern of excellence that has had an impact on the OJAG/NLSC organization but that does not rise to the level of a Meritorious Civilian Service Award. JAG and CNLSC approve this award. Within the OJAG/NLSC enterprise, this award has been a great tool for junior staff members who have had significant impact over a short period of time. It has also been given to employees whose tenure was short but their impact on the command or division exceeded expectations.

e. Other Awards. Reference (d) contains an exhaustive list of additional awards that may be appropriate under unusual circumstances, for example awards recognizing a civilian for Valor. Commands and divisions that believe a civilian employee should receive one of these awards shall work with Code 66 to determine if they are appropriate, and on the submission if warranted.

3. Honorary Awards Submission and Process. Award packages for the DON Superior Civilian Service Award, the DON Meritorious Civilian Service Award, and Flag Letters of Commendation must be submitted electronically to OJAG Code 66 via email at Code66_CivPers@navy.mil a minimum of 60 calendar days in advance of the anticipated presentation date. Distinguished Civilian Service Awards shall be submitted a minimum of 90 calendar days prior to the anticipated date of presentation, to the same Code 66 email address, to ensure timely approval by the EMAP AC. Always ensure award recipient's name is spelled correctly on all award recognition forms and draft citations. All award packages must include the following:

a. Honorary Award Recognition Form. A completed civilian honorary award recognition form, including a thorough justification detailing the specific conduct that merits recognition, is required for each civilian award nomination. An electronic template can be found at the Code 66 Awards Portal Homepage.

b. Draft Award Citation. Commands or divisions must submit a complete award citation that does not exceed the space allotted in the sample citation. An electronic template can be found at the Code 66 Awards Portal Homepage. The citation should match the font size, type, and margin size on the sample. Code 66 will not edit award citations for length or content, and non-conforming citations will be returned to the originating organization.

4. Authorized Review and Endorsements. All civilian award packages requiring signature and approval by JAG or higher authority shall be endorsed by the current AJAG. All civilian award packages requiring signature and approval by CNLSC or higher authority shall be endorsed by their supervisory commanding officer and chief of staff (CoS), where applicable. The OJAG Executive Director shall review the endorsements and make a recommendation to JAG or CNLSC on all civilian awards that require signature and approval by the JAG, CNLSC, or higher approval authority.

OJAG AND NLSC CIVILIAN OF THE YEAR AWARDS GUIDANCE

1. **Award Background and Eligibility.** The Civilian of the Year (COY) program recognizes civilian GS and FN employees working within OJAG and NLSC for outstanding achievement, performance, leadership, accomplishments, and overall contributions to their organization.

a. Each calendar year, a COY will be selected from each category below:

- (1) NLSC Junior Civilian: GS-10 and below (and FN equivalent)
- (2) NLSC Senior Civilian: GS-11 and above (and FN equivalent)
- (3) NLSC Civilian Attorney: All grades
- (4) OJAG Junior Civilian: GS-11 and below
- (5) OJAG Senior Civilian: GS-12 and above
- (6) OJAG Civilian Attorney: All grades

b. The OJAG and NLSC Senior COY and Civilian Attorney of the Year will receive a Superior Civilian Service Award certificate and medal, and a 40-hour time-off award, provided that the nomination meets all other requirements for the Superior Civilian Service Award as described in reference (d).

c. The OJAG and NLSC Junior COY will receive a Meritorious Civilian Service Award certificate and medal, and a 40-hour time-off award, provided that the nomination meets all other requirements for the Meritorious Civilian Service Award as described in reference (d).

d. All nominations must be approved by the nominee's CO or Division Director. Nominations are due annually on 30 January and shall be submitted to Code66_CivPers@navy.mil. If this date falls on a weekend or holiday, submissions shall be due on the next business day. COY nominations shall include:

- (1) A completed COY Nomination Form, available at the Code 66 Awards Portal Homepage,
- (2) A short biography (see sample on Code 66 Awards Portal Homepage), and
- (3) The employee's most recent performance appraisal.
- (4) In the event a nominee is selected, the nominating command shall also be responsible for providing a draft award write-up after coordination with Code 66.

e. Employees must have been in their nominated position for the entire nomination period.

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f. Nominations should clearly demonstrate the employee's exceptionally high standards of teamwork and cooperation. Nominations should also explain how the employee's performance was superior in quality, quantity of work product, and impact, compared to what would ordinarily be expected of an employee at that same or similar level or position.

g. Nominations should validate the employee's achievement by presenting examples of how the employee created new and innovative methods or processes that contributed significantly to the success of the organization through noteworthy effect across the enterprise, or other similar examples of exceptional performance. These examples should be contrasted with typical or expected performance of other employees at that same or similar level or position.

2. Selection Board Composition. All COY finalists shall be selected by a COY selection board.

a. The AJAG 06 will appoint members to serve on selection boards to make nominations for OJAG/NLSC COY awards.

b. Generally, selection boards will have (5) members, be chaired by an AJAG or CoS, and have both military and civilian representation.

c. Code 66 shall facilitate the awards board process and ensure that all boards are convened in a timely manner. Code 66 will forward selection packages to the JAG, AJAG 06, CNLSC, or DJAG, as appropriate, for approval.

d. In the event of an emergency or long-term absence of a board member during the evaluation process, the AJAG 06 can assign an alternate member to take over the duties and responsibilities of the absent board member, or approve modified membership of an awards board.

3. Selection Board Roles and Responsibilities

a. Prior to the board convening, members will review the nomination and biography of each nominated employee keeping in mind the high expectations for COY recipients. Each board member will dedicate ample time to participate in the COY board to ensure a fair process. Members will ensure they understand the performance benchmarks for COY award criteria. The COY selection board will conduct a strategic level review of all nominations within their cognizance. If a nomination is not consistent with organizational standards, the COY selection board has the option to return the nomination to the appropriate organization for further justification or review.

b. If the selection board has questions regarding a nomination, the board will contact the Code 66 point of contact for any clarifications. If needed, Code 66 will compile information for the board to review.

c. A COY Selection Board member who perceives that the integrity of the COY selection board has been compromised must report the incident to the AJAG 06, the Executive Director, or the Code 66 COY liaison.

d. COY Selection Board members shall not disclose any information about the board's proceedings to anyone outside the board, unless it is specifically required for official purposes.

4. Selection Board Member Official Conduct

a. The COY selection board will limit all conversations to designated meeting areas; use official written material furnished by the Code 66 administrative staff, professional observations, and COY Selection Board discussions to arrive at selection determinations; secure all lists, notes, or written materials while the COY Selection Board is not in session; and, destroy all notes of a personal nature at the completion of the COY Selection Board.

b. The COY selection board will not consider non-performance based factors (e.g., employee reputation or longevity) or performance outside the rating period. The board will not consider community service or volunteer work performed, as these contributions are best recognized by other means.

c. Selection board members will ensure that COY selections are used as tools to acknowledge and motivate employees by: recognizing significant individual achievements or contributions; ensuring selections are based on performance, with standards that are fairly applied across the OJAG/CNLSC enterprise; and ensuring that board members are not influenced by personal biases.

d. COY selection board members may recommend that employees not selected for COY but still deserving of an award be considered for a civilian honorary award. In such a case, COY selection board members shall work with Code 66.

e. All decisions of the COY selection board will be made by a majority of the members.

5. Post Board Selection Process

a. Board members' selection of award recipients are recommendations only. Decisions are considered, "For Official Use Only (FOUO)" until approved and made public. Selection board members will not, at any time, disclose award selections to employees. If a selection board member shares board recommendations with an employee, the selection board member may be dismissed from future boards.

b. The JAG is the COY approval authority for OJAG awards and CNLSC is the approval authority for NLSC awards. Once final approval is given, the OJAG/NLSC Public Affairs Office and Code 66 will promulgate the results.

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OJAG AND NLSC CASH AND TIME-OFF AWARDS GUIDANCE

1. **Cash Awards.** Cash awards are recognition in the form of a single monetary payment that may be awarded for a special act or for service in connection with, or related to, official employment. Cash awards may be used to recognize a group or individual effort that goes beyond expected job performance or to recognize exceptional accomplishments.
 - a. **On the Spot Awards.** These are awards designed to quickly recognize and provide immediate reinforcement of one-time achievements by employees that have resulted in service of an exceptionally high quality. On-the-Spot Awards range from \$25 to \$750.
 - b. **Special Act Awards.** Special Act awards may be used to recognize a group or individual effort that goes beyond expected job performance. Special Act awards are used to recognize exceptional accomplishments, such as an outstanding achievement. Special Act Awards start at \$751 and can be higher, subject to the approval authorities and limits in reference (d).
2. **Time-Off Awards.** Time-off awards are an alternate or additional means of recognizing the superior accomplishments or achievements of an employee. A time-off award scale, providing recommended time-off awards, can be found on the Code 66 Awards Portal Homepage. The total amount of time-off that may be granted to any one individual in any one leave-year is 80 hours. The maximum time-off that may be granted to an individual for a single contribution is 40 hours. Time-off awards must be scheduled and used within one year of the effective date of the award. At the end of that period, unused time is forfeited without compensation.
3. **Approving Cash and Time-off Awards.** At the beginning of each calendar year, Code 64 will disseminate award allocations to each AJAG, CoS, and CO who serves as the Approving Official for submissions. The Approving Official will determine how awards are distributed and awarded.
4. **Cash and Time-off Award Submission.** Monetary and time-off awards must be submitted to Code 66 using an OPNAV 12451/3 form, located on the Code 66 Awards Portal Homepage.
5. **Allocation and Disbursement.** Cash and time-off award allocations are determined and disseminated by Code 64. Award recommendation forms are disseminated by Code 66. Code 64 and Code 66 will provide guidance when monetary award allocations are available for disbursement. Due to Navy Reimbursable Work Order policy, employees who depart the command before distribution of their performance award, will no longer be eligible to receive the award.