Frequently Asked Questions
Regarding
Service Academy Nominations

1) What is a nomination?
Title 10 of the U.S. Code establishes two types of nominations: a) congressional, and b) military service connected.

A non-military candidate may seek a nomination from the following: a) a member of the U.S. House of Representatives, from the congressional district where the candidate resides b) both U.S. Senators from his or her state c) in addition, a candidate may apply directly to the Vice-President of the United States, who can nominate applicants from any part of the nation. Students whose parents are service connected may also apply for a Presidential nomination. For a Presidential nomination, apply after July 1 of the year prior to admission and before January 31 of the year of admission. For Vice Presidential apply by October 31st of the year prior to admission.

2) What are the basic eligibility requirements?
Each applicant for a nomination must meet the following eligibility requirements as of July 1st of the year of admission to an academy:

- You must be at least 17 years old, but not have passed your 23rd birthday.
- You must be a U.S. citizen.
- You must be unmarried, not pregnant, and without legal obligation to support children or other dependents.
- You must reside within the boundaries of the 1st Congressional District of Maryland.
- You must possess good moral character. It is assumed good moral character exists unless there is evidence to demonstrate otherwise.

3) When do I apply for a Congressional or Senate nomination?
You begin the process in the spring of your junior year with each U. S. Service Academy. In the fall of your senior year, submit Congressman Harris' application for nomination on or before (**preferably before**) October 30th.

4) What is the deadline for completing a nomination file?
Congressman Harris' deadline for returning materials is October 30th. Check with the Senators for their respective deadlines. **The most successful candidates apply to all available nominating sources: Congressman, both Senators, Vice-President and President.** See Academy catalogues for deadlines and criteria for the Vice-Presidential and Presidential nominations. The Presidential nominations are for military service connected families, but it is also highly recommended to apply for a Presidential and Congressional nomination, as the President only awards approximately 100 nominations

nation-wide. Candidates may be considered for both, and it is advantageous to seek the Congressional nomination in addition to the Presidential nomination when a candidate qualifies for a Presidential nomination.

5) What is a Letter of Assurance?
A Letter of Assurance (**LOA**) is a letter sent to the candidate from the Admissions Office by the Academy advising the Academy is offering a Conditional Appointment to the Academy **provided the candidate successfully completes** the application process, the medical review by the Dept of Defense, and the physical fitness assessment and receives a nomination from their Congressman or Senators. Letters of Assurance are conditional and subject to review throughout the entire application process.

Candidates receive Letters of Assurance based upon outstanding ACT/SAT scores early in the process, and other information the candidate has submitted to the Admissions Office. It is highly recommended candidates prepare well for ACT/SAT tests and take them "early and often."

6) What must be included in my nomination file?
A complete nomination file consists of the following items:

1) Application Packet
2) 3 Letters of Recommendation
3) SAT or ACT scores
4) Official High School or College Transcripts and a copy of your Senior Classes
5) Photograph of Applicant – in a single person photograph (can be an official school photo or a 4x6 snapshot)

7) What happens after I have completed my nomination application file?
Applicants who meet the basic eligibility requirements and complete a nomination file by **November 1st** will be reviewed by Congressman Harris' Service Academy Nomination Board. It is highly recommended the candidate's application to the Academy Admission Offices also be completed prior to December 1st. Top candidates will likely be interviewed, depending on the Congressman's schedule.

8) Why does Congressman Harris use a nominating board?
This board evaluates applicants and recommends candidates for nomination. This well-qualified, non-partisan board will ensure a fair and impartial process. Most members are academy alumni.

9) What criteria does the board use in selecting candidates?
Nominations are based on a "whole person" evaluation. Factors such as academic achievements, extra-curricular activities, leadership skills, physical aptitude, character and motivation are taken into consideration and compared with other applicants.

10) What is Congressman Harris' "method of nomination?"
The preferred method of nomination is the competitive nomination. This process allows Congressman Harris to nominate up to 10 qualified candidates for each available opening. The academy itself will make the final selection.

11) How do I open an admissions file with the academies?
All applicants must directly contact the academies they are interested in attending to open an admissions file. Please refer to the Service Academy Contact Information listed below for further information.

12) How many academies are there?
There are five.

Three reside within the Department of Defense:

- The U.S. Military Academy at West Point, NY
- The U.S. Naval Academy at Annapolis, MD
- The U.S. Air Force Academy at Colorado Springs, CO

One resides within the Department of Transportation:

- The U.S. Merchant Marine Academy at Kings Point, NY

One resides within the Department of Homeland Security

- The U.S. Coast Guard Academy at New London, CT

13) Are the requirements the same for all of the service academies?
No. Although many of the qualifications are similar, each academy operates under its own admissions guidelines. Refer to the Service Academy Contact Information for the academy of your choice and contact them directly for an academy catalog. Each academy will outline its particular admissions qualifications. You may also discuss this matter with the member(s) of the Service Academy Board who represents your academy choice(s). Congressman Harris' nominating board does not represent the U.S. Coast Guard Academy. It is not necessary to seek a nomination to the Coast Guard Academy. U.S.C.G.A. accepts candidates based on their own testing criteria.

14) Can I have family members submit letters of recommendation?
No. All recommendations must come from outside your immediate or extended family. Typical recommendations are from:

- Principals & Teachers – Especially teachers of Math and Science
- Counselors Clergy Employer
- Scout Leaders Coaches Others of your choosing

Letters of recommendation must be submitted with the application prior to the deadline.

15) Do I have to have all of the required paperwork collected before submitting it to Congressman Harris?
Yes, it is preferred to receive a complete candidate packet, however, the Congressman will accept ACT/SAT scores directly from the testing agencies.

16) How should I submit my SAT/ACT scores?
Test results must be sent directly to Congressman Harris' office by the testing service. The institution code for SAT scores is 5158 and for ACT scores the code is 7107. Applicants must have a cumulative SAT score of at least 1000 in order to meet minimum academic qualifications. It is recommended to take the ACT/SAT test "early and often". Also see Question 19 for more information.

17) When will I receive my nomination?
Nominations must be delivered to the academies by January 31st. You will be notified sometime following the interviews or close to the January 31st deadline, once the nominations are completed.

18) Will I automatically be selected by the academy after I receive a nomination?
No. You will be placed among a select group of nominees, and the academy of your choice will make the final decision. If selected, you will receive a letter of appointment directly from the academy.

19) What if I choose more than one academy? Will I be limited to a single nomination?
No. You can be nominated to multiple academies depending on how well you have competed among this year's pool of candidates. It is also possible to win multiple appointments. It is recommended to apply to at least two academies and it is also recommended to apply to the Merchant Marine and Coast Guard Academies in addition to the Air Force, Naval and Military Academies. **The most successful candidates apply to three academies, thereby giving themselves the most options of earning an appointment to one of the academies.**

20) When will I know if I have been offered an appointment by an academy?
Academies will begin to notify candidates of their admissions status in February. All offers of appointment are generally sent out by May 1st. The Academies will award appointments after the candidate file is reviewed and the candidate is determined "fully qualified". **Academies review files weekly, so it is in the candidate's best interest to have their file at the Admissions Offices completed by early January if the ACT/SAT scores are where the candidate wants them.** As these scores weigh heavily in the appointment process, it is recommended to take ACT/SAT tests early and often. It is also recommended to complete the candidate's file at the Academy when the scores are where you want them, otherwise the candidate may be reviewed and not found "fully qualified" on their competitive point basis.

Service Academy Contact Information

United States Military Academy
Director of Admissions
United States Military Academy
606 Thayer Road
West Point, NY 10996-9902
Director of Admissions (845) 938-4041
Toll Free Number (800) 822-2769
Website: http://www.usma.edu

United States Naval Academy
Candidate Guidance Office
United States Naval Academy
117 Decatur Rd.
Annapolis, MD 21402-5018
Candidate Guidance Office (410) 293-4361
Toll Free Number (800) 638-9156
Website: http://www.usna.edu

United States Air Force Academy
USAFA/RRS
2304 Cadet Drive, Suite 200
USAF Academy, Colorado 80840-5025
Toll Free Number (800) 443-9266
Website: http://www.usafa.af.mil

United States Merchant Marine Academy
Director of Admissions
U.S. Merchant Marine Academy
Kings Point, New York 11024-1699
Toll Free Number (800) 732-6267
Website: http://www.usmma.edu

United States Coast Guard Academy
Director of Admissions
15 Mohegan Ave
New London, CT 06320-4195
Toll Free Number (800) 883-USCG
Website: http://www.cga.edu/

It is not necessary to seek a nomination to attend the USCG Academy. USCGA accepts candidates based on their own testing criteria.