

# FROM THE CMLDP TO THE SECTION 809 PANEL

BY RYAN POLK

NCMA CREATED ITS CONTRACT MANAGEMENT LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM (CMLDP) TO DEVELOP AND PREPARE THE NEXT GENERATION OF ACQUISITION LEADERS THROUGH A YEAR-LONG PROGRAM COMPRISING INDIVIDUAL ASSIGNMENTS, GROUP PROJECTS, MENTORING, AND NETWORKING EVENTS WITHIN THE NCMA COMMUNITY.

Although the intensive curriculum is indisputably valuable, I think my classmates would agree that the greatest value of the program is the relationships that it fosters among participants and the acquisition community. For me, that value-added experience came in the form of an introduction and eventual detail to the Section 809 Panel.

Created by Section 809 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2016, the Section 809 Panel is a congressionally mandated panel charged with making recommendations that will shape the Department of Defense (DOD) acquisition system into one that is bold, simple, and effective. The panel recognizes that today, DOD is facing an increasingly diverse global strategic reality:

- To ensure the United States retains technological, military, and economic superiority over its adversaries, DOD's acquisition system must be one that is agile and flexible enough to deliver diverse capabilities to the warfighter when and where needed;
- Our nation's strategic needs must dictate the acquisition system, not the other way around; and
- DOD must adjust to a dynamic defense marketplace that has evolved substantially in recent decades.

To improve the status quo, bold, innovative, and fresh ideas are required, and the panel is committed to engaging those folks willing to submit such recommendations for change. The Section 809 Panel currently has 10 teams looking at a diverse set of acquisition topics. My role has been supporting Team 2 and Team 4. Team 2 seeks to streamline acquisitions valued at less than \$15 million to enable DOD to meet its acquisition needs for smaller contracts more quickly. We've found there are over 431 provisions and clauses in existing *Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR)* Part 13 procedures. As one stakeholder said, perhaps it's time to "put the 'simplified' back in 'simplified acquisitions.'" Team 4 is reviewing the myriad barriers to entry that limit new entrants into the dynamic defense marketplace. We've talked to companies with innovative new technologies that made a business decision to not work with DOD because of the associated cost, time, and complexity of the current acquisition system. There are companies that take advantage of existing socioeconomic policies to maintain a presence within the dynamic defense marketplace. So, we ask ourselves—if the ultimate mission is national security, is our acquisition system helping or hurting DOD to achieve that goal?

Working on the Section 809 Panel has been an amazing experience. I'm encouraged that they recognize the need for bold and innovative ideas. The panel regularly meets with industry leaders, association members, agency representatives, and other stakeholders who have an interest in bolstering national security through acquisition reform. The status quo of long acquisition lead times and companies declining business with DOD is entirely unacceptable in today's increasingly complex global strategic landscape. 



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## SECTION 809 PANEL

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