



April 1, 2008

SPECIAL EDITION

Volume 3, Edition 13

Congress returned to Washington yesterday concluding a 2-week spring recess. Capitol Hill is bustling with activity and over the next few weeks it will be clear where we have, and still need, support among elected officials on those issues most important to Airmen and their families. Health care is featured in this edition. Check out Top Issues under the Legislative tab on the AFSA web page for a complete list of legislative targets.

Protecting Military Retiree Health Care. Let's take a moment time to recap the situation regarding military retiree health care, and DoD's plan to significantly increase the cost for retirees under age 65. The net impact of DoD's proposals would be to increase the annual overall average cost of care and prescriptions by \$940 to \$1,400 per year (\$78.33 to \$116.67 per month).

One element of DoD's plan is to establish (for the first time) an annual enrollment fee for TRICARE Standard and increase its annual deductibles. The starting annual enrollment fee would be \$64 which would increase to \$141 by Fiscal Year 2011. Annual deductibles would increase from the current \$300 for all to between \$594 and \$1,147, depending on annual retirement income. There would be no guarantee of access or improvement of levels of care under the DoD plan—just a major cost increase.

DoD also wants to increase the annual cost of TRICARE Prime. The current annual \$460 family rate for all would increase to from \$1,086 to \$2,086, depending on level of retirement income. DoD would determine the rate based on three income tiers (\$0 to \$19,999; \$20,000 to \$39,999; and \$40,000 and above).

The DoD plan would effect the cost of prescription medicines too under the TRICARE Retail Pharmacy program. Co-payments for generic medicines would increase from \$3 to \$15; brand name formulary medicines from \$9 to \$25; and non-formulary medicines from the current \$22 to \$45 for each prescription.

After vigorous advocacy by AFSA and its military coalition partners, leaders of both Armed Services Committees have suggested they will prevent the DoD increases. Similarly, the budget committees have stated they will not support these plans.

AFSA is optimistic Congress will come through again and stop these DoD increases. We continue to maintain military members have already paid for their post-career health care through years of sacrifice, dedication, and submission to unlimited liability (death). We also maintain budget shortfalls should not drive military retiree healthcare decisions; our nation should view this as a national priority and a cost of doing business.

Finally, we urge all AFSA members who are concerned about military retiree health care benefits to contact their two senators and representative. Urge them to stop the DoD TRICARE cost-increase plans for military retirees, and to restore the \$1.2 billion cut by the Administration in its DoD spending plan.

Enrollment in Medicare Part B for "TRICARE for Life" Eligibility. The TRICARE Management Activity reminds retirees approaching age 65 to enroll in Medicare Part B to be eligible for TRICARE for Life.

Medicare is a health insurance program for people age 65 or older, those under 65 with certain disabilities, and people with end-stage renal disease.

Under federal law, if you are a TRICARE beneficiary eligible for premium-free Medicare Part A (due to one of the three categories listed above), you must have Medicare Part B coverage to remain TRICARE-eligible. If you're an active duty family member eligible for or entitled to premium-free Medicare Part A, you don't have to have Medicare Part B until your sponsor retires to keep your TRICARE benefits. You may enroll in Part B during a Special Enrollment Period. The Special Enrollment Period is available to you anytime your sponsor is on active duty or within the first eight months of your sponsor's retirement. If you enroll in Part B after your sponsor retires, you'll have a break in TRICARE coverage. To avoid this break, you should enroll in Part B before your sponsor's retirement date.

If you don't enroll during the Special Enrollment Period, your next opportunity to enroll in Part B is during the General Enrollment Period, which occurs each year January 1st through March 31st. Your Part B coverage will start on July 1st; meaning your TRICARE coverage won't be effective until July 1st. You may also be required to pay a 10 percent Medicare surcharge for each 12-month period you were eligible to enroll in Part B, but didn't.

Top Air Force Leaders Meet with Congress to Discuss Construction, BRAC, and Joint Basing. Air Force Chief of Staff General T. Michael Moseley and Major General Del Eulberg, the Air Force Civil Engineer, met with members of Congress to discuss military construction, base realignments and closures, and joint service basing issues. One of the highlights of the exchange was the congressional praise for Air Force civil engineering units who are leading the Iraq and Afghanistan reconstruction efforts. AFSA applauds the work of the men and women on the Air Force civil engineering teams. To read more, click [HERE](#).

Servicemember Protection Against Mortgage Foreclosures. Senator John F. Kerry, D-MA, introduced S.2764: A bill to amend the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act to enhance protections for servicemembers relating to mortgages and mortgage foreclosures, and for other purposes.

JPAC discusses POW/MIA Matters with Indian Government. According to the Joint Prisoners of War, Missing in Action Accounting Command (JPAC) the US and Indian governments are setting a timeline for recovery operations in India. There are more than 1,300 individuals missing from loss incidents--primarily aircraft crashes--in the region known as "the Hump" or the "China-Burma-India" theatre of operations in WWII. While it is unknown in which country a specific plane was lost, JPAC analysts estimate more than 400 Americans are unaccounted for in the Indian region. To read more about these recovery efforts, click [HERE](#).

GENERAL NEWS

Airman's Roll Call. This week's Roll Call is about the Voluntary Protection Plan, a program sponsored by the Department of Labor's Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA). In subscribing to the VPP, the Air Force urges all Airmen to create and maintain an environment of safety that provides an efficient, productive workplace and precludes accidents and injuries that can harm the Air Force mission. To read the Roll Call and learn more about this effort, click [HERE](#).

Air Force Officials Work to Resolve Child Care Issues. We reported earlier that Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force Rodney J. McKinley told Congress that quality, affordable child care is a major challenge facing the Air Force. In a recent statement, the Air Force Chief of Airman and Family Services, Eliza Nesmith, indicated there is a significant shortage. While acknowledging the Air Force is vigorously working this problem, Ms. Nesmith pointed to several expanded child care programs that Airmen should investigate. To read about these options and the challenge being faced by the Air Force, click [HERE](#).

New Air Force Electronic Evaluation Forms Require Close Attention to Detail. The Air Force Personnel Center is urging supervisors to pay close attention to the step-by-step instructions provided with the new electronic performance evaluation forms. Due to errors, more than 20 percent of the new forms, instituted in August 2007, have been returned to supervisors for correction. Common errors are unsigned forms, blank boxes, and wrong file names. Supervisors with questions should immediately consult with their Military Personnel Flight officials. To read more about the “growing pains” encountered with the new forms, click [HERE](#).

CMSAF Discusses Airman Battle Uniform and Other Matters. During a recent visit to Kunsan Air Base, South Korea, CMSAF Rodney J. McKinley said, “We haven’t had a uniform board since August 2005. However, right now every Airman can go to the virtual uniform Web site and provide input on what uniform changes they think the Air Force should make. We’ll compile all that data and then hold our uniform board to determine the right improvements.” He went on to say, “It’s 2008, and the ABU isn’t required to be worn until 2011. I think across the Air Force, Airmen can’t wait to get the ABU. That’s great news. Airmen want to be able to take it out of the dryer and put it on and not have to send it to the cleaners. This can cost about eight bucks for full dry-cleaning service. That gives time and money back to our Airmen.” To read more about the chief’s visit to Kunsan AB and other matters of importance he discussed, click [HERE](#).

VA Names New National Cemetery Near Bakersfield. The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has named the national cemetery to be constructed near Bakersfield, Calif., the “Bakersfield VA National Cemetery.”

The new cemetery is located on a 500-acre site donated by Tejon Ranch, a 426-square-mile agricultural and industrial complex along Interstate 5 in Kern County. The new cemetery will serve approximately 200,000 veterans in central California who are not currently provided burial space by a nearby national or state veterans cemetery. Click [HERE](#) for the rest of this story.

Supporting the Spouses of Those Deployed. Commanders and enlisted leaders around the Air Force have created programs to take care of the spouses and families of those who are deployed. One such program is at Moody AFB: the “Family and Loved Ones Appreciation and Information Committee.” This program is a collaborative effort among base agencies to develop programs and ideas to help families left behind to deal with challenges of various sorts. The committee also works to help returning Airmen readjust after deployment. To read more about this important program, click [HERE](#).

Airmen Teach Iraqis Firefighting and Rescue Skills. The 407th Expeditionary Civil Engineering Squadron recently graduated a class of nine Iraqi firefighters. During the six-week Basic Firefighter Skills Course, instructors taught Iraqi firefighters the basics of fire fighting, lifesaving skills, and search and rescue techniques. To read more about this course and its instructors, click [HERE](#).

Military Motherhood Prize to be Awarded. Operation Homefront's new "Military Motherhood Award" is sponsored by Lockheed Martin. The award program is looking for inspirational stories of military wives and women in uniform who are successfully parenting children through the challenges of military life. These can include the military member's children, stepchildren, foster children, or others in unique circumstances.

The winner will receive \$5,000 and a free trip to an awards ceremony in Washington, D.C., where she will be honored by members of Congress and other dignitaries. Servicemembers can nominate themselves or others; entry forms must be received before March 31.

The winner will be notified in April. The award ceremony is scheduled for May 8 in honor of Mother's Day. To access the entry form, click [HERE](#).

ANG Launches New Recruiting Campaign. The Air National Guard has begun a new, year-long recruiting campaign--its first formal recruiting campaign in 10 years. In that time the recruiting slogan, which will continue to be used, has evolved to "Guarding America, Defending Freedom." The ANG will also launch a new recruiting web site: www.GoANG.com. The campaign will include ads for theaters, radio, television, magazines, and newspapers. To read more about the Air National Guard recruiting campaign, click [HERE](#).

Air Force Reserve Enlists Members at Miami Heat Game. Air Force Reserve Command recruiters from the 482nd Fighter Wing's recruiting office found a creative way to make young people aware of the importance of military service. At the half time of a recent Miami Heat basketball game, hundreds of audience members witnessed Homestead Air Reserve Base's 10 newest Airmen being administered the oath of enlistment. About 200 Airmen stood behind the enlistees as the Airmen were sworn in. To read more about this unique event, click [HERE](#).

New Feature - Growing AFSA

In late March 2008, Chapter F1660, Incirlik AB Turkey, had 202 members. The chapter established a goal of 300 active members by May 31, 2008—a 33 percent membership increase. Over a one and one-half week period, this is what chapter F1660 accomplished. During the base Women's Heritage Celebration they setup a membership booth. In 5 short hours they signed up 11 new members (3 for life), re-joined 6 (1 for life) and transferred two (who had PCSd but not changed their address/chapter assignment) into their chapter. This is in addition to their recent six new members and one transfer a week earlier. Chapter F1660 is well on their way to reaching their goal of 300 active members by May 31.

Congratulations to the entire chapter ...

Keep working to make AFSA stronger—ideas+ action = results!!

Submitted by Douglas Koonst

Note: To have your chapter highlighted in a future AFSA Newsletter, please tell us (in 150 words or less) your chapter's recruiting and retention goals, how well your team is doing, and "best practices" that work for you. AFSA HQ will periodically select and spotlight a chapter (i.e. percent of growth, best/unique practices, etc.).

Submissions must be received at AFSA HQ (e-mail staff@hqafsa.org, Subject: ATTN: Growing Our AFSA, M&F Dir) not later than Wednesday mornings, 8:00 AM Eastern Time.

Don't miss your opportunity to order your CMSAF CHALLENGE COINS!

After more than a year working with CMSAF (Ret) Paul Airey, and CMSAF (Ret) Sam Parish the first and only CMSAF Challenge Coin site has been launched!

With the sole purpose of raising funds for the CMSAF Scholarship program, these exceptional challenge coins and commemorative sets have the blessing of all of the former CMSAFs and CMSAF McKinley. Purchased as a complete set, or individually, these finely crafted coins will make a wonderful addition to any coin collection. To order your CMSAF coins, visit www.cmsafcoin.com

All proceeds from the coin sales will go to the CMSAF Scholarship (managed by the Airmen Memorial Foundation) program that provides scholarships to dependent children of AFAD, ANG, AFRC active and retired enlisted members.

AFSA Cobrand Career Center Program

We've partnered with Landmark Destiny to provide AFSA members with access to some of the best jobs, companies, transition advice, and content available. There are more than 194,000 jobs and access to more than 7,000 "Military Friendly" employers and 175+ franchisors available through our Career Center. Visit your AFSA website www.hqafsa.org. Or, go to <http://afsa.destinygrp.com>

For access to the "click HERE" links, please visit www.hqafsa.org