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**DoD and VA Oppose Proposed Changes to G.I. Bill.** In previous updates, we have detailed legislative provisions that would significantly enhance the Montgomery G.I. Bill. The Departments of Defense and Veterans' Affairs have opposed each congressional proposal to improve the benefit for servicemembers primarily due to cost and impact on retention efforts. S. 22, sponsored by Sen. Jim Webb, D-VA; H.R. 2702, by Rep. Bobby Scott, D-VA; and H.R. 5651, by Rep. Harry E. Mitchell, D-AZ, would, in effect, pay for a full four-year education at an average college or university in this country, provide a monthly expense stipend, and even provide payment for tutoring. As expected, DoD and the VA were quick to lodge opposition to this legislation. DoD claims the improved benefit would most likely encourage military members to exit the Uniformed Services prematurely. The VA claims the enhanced benefit would present the VA with onerous administrative burdens. AFSA urges the Administration support reform of the current Montgomery G.I. Bill which falls short in terms of paying for education and recognizing the sacrifices of military service.

**AFSA CEO Dean Testifies Before VA Committees.** AFSA Chief Executive Officer Richard M. Dean recently testified before a joint session of the House and Senate Veterans' Affairs Committees. During that testimony, Mr. Dean urged Congress to provide annual mandatory funding for veterans' health care; allow Medicare-eligible veterans to use VA medical facilities regardless of disability level with Medicare reimbursing the VA; provide a seamless, effective transition from military to veteran status; reform the VA disability determination system; provide full care for women veterans; fully fund construction and renovation of VA facilities; and reform the Montgomery G.I. Bill. To read Mr. Dean's entire statement, click [HERE](#).

## NOTABLE LEGISLATION

**H.R. 5658**, by Representatives Ike Skelton, D-MO, and Duncan Hunter, R-CA; and S. 2787, by Senators Carl Levin, D-MI, and John McCain, R-AZ, are the Administration's proposed "FY 2009 National Defense Authorization Act." This legislation would authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2009 for military activities of the Department of Defense, prescribe military personnel strengths for fiscal year 2009, and address other defense-related matters. Note: These bills were introduced specifically at the request of the Administration, and represent the Administration's proposed FY 2009 NDAA. This legislation is not the congressionally developed version of the FY 2009 NDAA. That legislation is still in development separately by the House and Senate.

**H.R. 5663**, (No title) by Rep. Ciro D. Rodriguez, D-TX, would provide for an increase in the rates of basic educational assistance payable under the laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

**H.R. 5664**, (No title) by Rep. Ciro D. Rodriguez, D-TX, would direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to update at least once every six years the plans and specifications for specially adapted housing furnished to veterans by the Secretary.

## GENERAL NEWS

**Airman's Roll Call - Caring is Free.** CMSAF McKinley in his latest Enlisted Perspective states, "As Airmen, and especially the leaders of Airmen, it is important to remember we possess a valuable resource that is never-ending, abundant and valuable - the ability and responsibility to care for our Airmen and their families. Caring is a characteristic that endears us to each other and forms lasting relationships that bond us together." To read more Click [HERE](#).

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**President Bush Praises Airmen at National Museum of the U.S. Air Force.** On March 27, President Bush spoke for nearly 40 minutes at the National Museum of the Air Force near Wright-Patterson AFB in Ohio. The President spoke of the Air Force's instrumental role in combating terrorism and maintaining freedom. He said, "When the history of this era is written, it will show that the Air Force--and all of Americans' Armed Forces--performed with unfailing skill and courage. It will show that the United States of America prevailed, freedom advanced, and so did peace." To read more about the President's visit to Ohio and his speech, click [HERE](#).

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**24-Hour AFPC Contact Center Service.** The Air Force Personnel Center reminds Airmen that they may get help 24 hours a day, any day of the year. Most questions and concerns can be answered if Airmen will go on-line to the AFPC "Ask" Web site, click [HERE](#). This site contains comprehensive personnel information that would have only been accessible in the past at a base Military Personnel Center. However, if an Airman cannot find the answer to his/her question on-line, they may contact a customer service representative toll-free at 1.800.616.3775. To read more about this great service provided by AFPC, click [HERE](#).

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**Airmen in Iraq Remember the Price of Freedom.** At locations around the world, Airmen often pause to remember their fallen comrades. Their actions give occasions to reflect on the serious business of defense and the noble and honorable cause for which America's servicemembers fight. At a recent retreat ceremony at Ali Base in Iraq, the members of the 407th Air Expeditionary Group rendered honors to fallen Airmen and to the United States flag. The 407th repeats this remembrance retreat ceremony each week. To read more about this special effort to honor American servicemembers, click [HERE](#).

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**Airman Works With Army to Prepare Bodies of Heroes for Their Return Home.** An American Airman assigned to Bagram AB, Afghanistan, performs in-lieu-of tasking, working with an Army unit. Senior Airman Sekina Moye accomplishes the sobering task of preparing the bodies of fallen servicemembers. A services journeyman assigned to the 755th Air Expeditionary Group, Airman Moye works with Bagram's Mortuary Affairs unit. She views her work as ultimately being "All about the families." To read more about this important duty, click [HERE](#).

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**DoD Anti-Tobacco Program.** DoD's tobacco cessation campaign, "Quit Tobacco, Make Everyone Proud," is being marketed in 13 U.S. metropolitan markets which contain 28 major military installations. One focus of the campaign is to promote military members as role models, particularly to children. The message: smoking sets a bad example. On the "Quit Tobacco" Web site, Airmen can get information, establish a personal plan for quitting, listen to podcasts, play games, connect to Federal quit-smoking programs, and even communicate privately with a trained counselor from 8:30 p.m. to 2:30 a.m. (EDT). To read more about this comprehensive effort, click [HERE](#).

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**Air Force Enlisted Maintainers Team up with Japanese and South Korean Counterparts.** U.S. Air Force NCO aircraft maintainers teamed up with their counterparts from the Japanese Air Self-Defense Force and the South Korean Air Forces during a Coalition Maintenance Exchange Program to keep deployed C-130 Hercules aircraft ready for combat. The exchange program promotes mutual defense while enhancing closer relations among coalition air forces who jointly fight the Global War on Terrorism. To read more about his important, collaborative effort, click [HERE](#).

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**AFSO 21 in Action—Reducing Performance Report Processing Time.** Members of the 86 Airlift Wing, the 435th Mission Support Squadron MPF, and the USAFE Communications Directorate recently met at Ramstein AB, Germany, to apply the principles of Air Force Smart Operations of the 21st Century (AFSO 21) to the accomplishment of performance reports. The team brainstormed different ideas on how to save time on officer and enlisted performance reports to meet MPF deadlines. The result? According to this AFSO 21 team, the average “touch time” for a report is now reduced from approximately 312 hours to five hours. The process is set to be implemented April 1. The team was also able to initiate corrective measures such as providing an up-to-date writing guide and an electronic acronym dictionary. To read more about this time-saving, quality effort, click [HERE](#).

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**Combat Truckers Haul Cargo Through Treacherous Territory.** Deployed to the battle field, Airmen from the 586th Expeditionary Logistics Squadron have performed distinguished service as vehicle operators, ferrying passengers, bags, and cargo to and from the flightline. In doing so, they have earned 10 Purple Hearts, 110 Bronze Stars, and a host of other medals. This group is like others who have faced enemy ambushes, improvised explosive devices (IEDs), and explosively formed penetrator attacks alongside Army soldiers since they began in-lieu-of taskings in February 2004. They also deliver vehicles, supplies, equipment, and other materials to forward operating bases. To read more about this dangerous duty and the accomplishments of those who perform it, click [HERE](#).

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## **New Benefits Handbook Updates for Veterans and Dependents**

A new edition of the popular handbook Federal Benefits for Veterans and Dependents by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) updates the rates for certain federal payments and outlines a variety of programs and benefits for American veterans.

Most of the nation's 24 million veterans qualify for some VA benefits, which range from health care to burial in a national cemetery. In addition to describing benefits provided by VA, the 2008 edition of the 153-page booklet provides an overview of programs and services for veterans provided by other federal agencies.

Federal Benefits for Veterans and Dependents includes resources to help veterans access their benefits, with a listing of toll-free phone numbers, Internet addresses and a directory of VA facilities throughout the country. The handbook can be downloaded free from VA's Web site, click [HERE](#).

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## **REAP Participants Must Now Verify Their Attendance Monthly**

Effective April 1, 2008 all REAP participants attending school must verify their attendance each month in order to receive payment. You can do this online by clicking on "Information for Benefit Recipients" on the left hand side of this page and then clicking on "Verify Your Attendance (WAVE)", or by calling our automated verification line at 877-823-2378 (877 VA-ECERT). For more information click [HERE](#).

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## VA's New Suicide Prevention Hotline

Suicide is the 11th most frequent cause of death in the United States, accounting for approximately 30,000 deaths annually. It is estimated that someone dies from suicide every 16 minutes. To ensure that veterans who may be contemplating suicide have immediate access to trained personnel who can help, the VA has established a 24-hour national suicide prevention hotline: 1-800-273-TALK (8255). ). For more information click [HERE](#).

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## A MOMENT OF REMEMBRANCE

The White House Commission on the National Moment of Remembrance was established by Congress as an independent government agency. The Commission encourages Americans to honor the sacrifices of America's fallen and the families they left behind. It promotes acts of remembrance throughout the year and asks Americans to pay our debt of gratitude in memory of our fallen by giving something back to the Nation. The Commission is dedicated to educating this and future generations of Americans to remember the sacrifices and costs in human life made to preserve our liberties, and to instill in them an understanding of what it means to be an American.

Each year at 3:00 p.m. on Memorial Day, Americans unite in a National Moment of Remembrance which honors America's fallen and their families. During this Moment, 200 Amtrak trains blast their whistles, approximately 500,000 Major League Baseball fans are joined in silence, and countless other participants make a vow to remember.

***We'd like to hear your thoughts.*** Air Force Sergeants Association (AFSA) members and newsletter readers, tell us what Memorial Day means to you personally; who or what you will be remembering, and how you plan to observe the National Moment of Remembrance at 3:00 p.m. (your local time) on Memorial Day, May 26, 2008.

Send an email (200 words or less) to: [marketing@afsahq.org](mailto:marketing@afsahq.org). We'll publish a sampling of reader's letters in our May Newsletters, through our member email program, and on our website. All essays must include a contact name, phone number and e-mail address for verification.

For additional information, please contact Andrea Sanford, Manager, Marketing and Public Relations, Air Force Sergeants Association [marketing@afsahq.org](mailto:marketing@afsahq.org), 301.899.3500, 800.638.0594. To visit the White House Commission of Remembrance website click [HERE](#).

For access to the "click [HERE](#)" links, please visit [www.hqafsa.org](http://www.hqafsa.org)