



AFSA NEWSLETTER



Protecting and Defending the Quality-of-Life Benefits for the
TOTAL AIR FORCE
Enlisted Corps and their Families Since 1961

July 11, 2008

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Medicare Reimbursement Rate Update. As we reported last week, Congress failed to reach agreement on the Medicare reimbursement crisis before the Independence Day Recess – what a difference 10 days makes – the Senate voted to invoke cloture on motion to proceed and it passed 69 to 30. The bill was sent to the White House July 9, 2008 for President Bush to sign (a White House statement of policy several weeks ago indicated if sent this bill, his advisors would recommend the President veto it due to cuts in ‘Medicare Advantage’ payments). We’ll see if that advice is followed. We extend a hearty thank you to all AFSA members that answered our urgent call to action and contacted their senators about this important issue. Senate staffers told us their message lines were flooded this week by military members and veterans concerned about TRICARE reimbursement rate cuts linked to Medicare. With your help, our collective enlisted voice was heard.

Post 9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2008. As reported last week, an improved veterans education benefit was included with the FY2008 Supplemental Appropriations Bill. AFSA closely examined the portion of the bill (41 pages) pertaining to the “Post 9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2008” and include it [HERE](#) again for reference. The Department of Veterans Affairs has prepared a quick reference tri-fold to explain this legislation click [HERE](#) to see it. The VA also provided a “frequently-asked questions” section on their website click [HERE](#) to find answers to many of the common questions. We ask for your patience as this ‘authorization’ is translated into policy. This will be a collaborative effort between the Department of Defense, Department of Veterans Affairs and the Military Services to determine implementation processes and procedures. This will take time. Many aspects of the bill don’t go into effect until 13 months from now (August 2009). While it may not have included everything for everyone, this education benefit is a huge step forward. Is there room for improvement? Absolutely and your AFSA team has already begun discussing with Capitol Hill staffers where potential adjustments should be made.

MGIB Value Increases. One change contained in the FY2008 Supplemental Appropriations Act that does take effect very soon—August 1, 2008—is the value of the current active duty portion of the Montgomery G.I. Bill (MGIB). Starting next month, the value of the MGIB will increase to \$1,321 per month—for a 36-month, full-time student that equals a total benefit value of over \$47,500. To view the MGIB benefit charts and other VA educational programs, click [HERE](#).

U.S. Air Force Names 2008 Twelve Outstanding Airmen of the Year. Exceptional leaders, warriors and professionals, these Airmen personify the best of the best:

Senior Master Sgt. Donna Goodno, San Diego Air National Guard Station, California
Master Sgt. Carla Curry, Randolph Air Force Base, Texas
Master Sgt. George Price, Jr., Patrick AFB, Florida
Tech. Sgt. James Caughron, McConnell AFB, Kansas
Tech. Sgt. Earl Covel, Jr., Fort Lewis, Washington
Tech. Sgt. Jason Hughes, Elmendorf AFB, Alaska
Tech. Sgt. Tammy Shaw, Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio
Tech. Sgt. James Weltin, Patrick AFB, Florida
Staff Sgt. Eric Eberhard, Hill AFB, Utah

Senior Airman Mary Bullock, Hurlburt Field, Florida
Senior Airman Alicia Goetschel, Royal Air Force Mildenhall, United Kingdom
Senior Airman Shawn Ryan, Sheppard AFB, Texas

To read the entire AFPC 12 OAY announcement, click [HERE](#).

U.S. Air Force First Sergeant of Year. A traditional reservist, Master Sergeant Jeffrey Gray was selected USAF First Sergeant of the Year for 2008. He will be honored at the Air Force Sergeants Association Air Force Honors Banquet in San Antonio in August. To read more, click [HERE](#).

RECENTLY INTRODUCED & UPDATED LEGISLATION:

H.R. 6438, the “National Guard Technician Recruitment and Retention Act of 2008,” by Rep. Joseph D. Courtney, D-CT, would amend title 10, United States Code, to lift restrictions on the availability of certain enlistment, reenlistment, and student loan benefits for military technicians, when membership in a reserve component is a condition of the military technician's employment and to repeal the prohibition in title 32, United States Code, against overtime pay for National Guard technicians.

H.R. 6439, the “Mental Health for Heroes' Families Act of 2008,” by Rep. Phil G. Hare, D-IL, would amend title 38, United States Code to expand the authority of the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to provide counseling for family members of veterans receiving non-service-connected treatment.

H. Con. Res. 388, by Rep. Roy Blunt, R-MO, is a concurrent resolution expressing the sense of Congress that the Department of Defense and the Federal Voting Assistance Program should take certain additional and timely measures to ensure that members of the Armed Forces and their dependents are provided with reasonable information on how to register to vote and vote in the 2008 general elections.

H.R.3329, the “Homes for Heroes Act of 2007” by Rep. Al Green, D-TX, would provide housing assistance for very low-income veterans. Related Bill: S.1084. This bill passed and agreed to in the House on July 9, 2008.

H.R.6268, the “Honoring Our Nation's Obligation to Returning Warriors Act,” by Rep. Mark Udall, D-CO, would improve and enhance the mental health care benefits available to members of the Armed Forces and veterans, to enhance counseling and other benefits available to survivors of members of the Armed Forces and veterans, and for other purposes. This bill offers scholarships to those studying to be Behavioral Health Care Specialists in return for serving in a Vet Center. Related bills: S. 2963, S. 3008. Referred to House Subcommittee on Military Personnel July 2, 2008.

H.R.6331, the “Medicare Improvements for Patients and Providers Act of 2008,” by Rep. Charles Rangel, D-NY, would extend expiring provisions under the Medicare Program, to improve beneficiary access to preventive and mental health services, to enhance low-income benefit programs, and to maintain access to care in rural areas, including pharmacy access, and for other purposes. This was cleared for the White House on July 9, 2008. (See first entry in this newsletter).

GENERAL NEWS

Airman's Roll Call. This week's Roll Call emphasizes the need for expeditionary Airmen to maintain excellent physical fitness at all times. To read this week's Roll Call, click [HERE](#).

Enlisted Perspective. CMSAF Rodney J. McKinley draws upon his love of the Air Force and the game of football stating, "There is one thing that is common to all successful teams, they all practice and perform the basics very well; the blocking and tackling" and concludes his message with, "what we accomplish is no game - our actions matter for our children, our grandchildren, our Nation and the preservation of democracy." To read his entire perspective, click [HERE](#).

Uniform Change Announcements. Each time a new uniform is implemented, Airmen have numerous questions. To read an article from SAF/PA explaining the announcement and implementation procedure, click [HERE](#).

DoD Standardizes Enlistment Criteria. A two-year process recently culminated in a standard set of criteria to determine who may enter the All-Volunteer Force. To read about this process and the standardized criteria for enlistment, click [HERE](#).

Changes to Military Leave System. An Air Force article details several recent DoD-announced changes to the leave system. To read more, click [HERE](#).

NATO Year of the NCO. General Bantz J. Craddock, the current Commander, U.S. European Command and the Supreme Allied Commander Europe for NATO has declared this the Year of the Non-commissioned Officer for NATO. To read more about some extraordinary NCOs serving in Europe, click [HERE](#).

Economic Stimulus Payments. Millions of disabled veterans and retirees who qualify for the economic stimulus payment authorized earlier this year by Congress have not yet filed to claim a rebate check. Recipients of Veterans Affairs (VA) benefits who do not normally file a tax return must file a tax return before Oct. 15, 2008, to receive their economic stimulus payments. The stimulus payment is not taxable and will not impact other federal benefits currently being received by veterans and retirees. For more information, click [HERE](#).

Record-Breaking Reenlistment Ceremony. On the Fourth of July, 1215 servicemembers from around Iraq took the oath of reenlistment. To read about this General Petraeus-officiated ceremony, click [HERE](#).

SECVA on Research Safety. In testimony before the House Veterans Affairs Committee, VA Secretary Dr. James B. Peake pledged a complete focus on safety when the VA engages in research. To read about the Secretary's comments, click [HERE](#).

GROWING AFSA: GIVE THE GIFT OF MEMBERSHIP

Are you unable to recruit but want to help our organization grow? If you know an enlisted Air Force Active Duty, Air National Guard, Air Force Reserve Command member in active, retired or veteran status, military spouse or dependent child who could benefit from an Air Force Sergeants Association/Auxiliary membership, give the gift of membership now! Your gift recipient will receive a new member kit that includes a welcome letter, a membership card, and a gift note card to let them know who to thank for their thoughtfulness. Your AFSA gift membership will continue delivering benefits throughout the entire year, from up-to-date Legislative news and support on issues that matter most, to exclusive members-only discounts on products and services. Simply call, toll-free to **800-638-0594**.

AFSA Member Services/Benefits

Your Air Force Sergeants Association has partnered with a wide range of service providers, retailers, and suppliers to create exclusive members-only specials and extended services. Take advantage of the benefits of your AFSA membership today! Log onto www.hqafsa.org for a complete list of "Exclusive Member Services"

The Gateway to the Air Force... Join your AFSA in San Antonio, Texas

The Air Force Sergeants Association Professional Airmen's Conference will take place at the Grand Hyatt San Antonio -- Saturday, August 23 through Wednesday, August 27, 2008. For additional information click [HERE](#). Visit our website to make your reservations now: www.hqafsa.org. For Info Expo exhibitor and event sponsorship opportunities, please email to marketing@hqafsa.org.

Automobile Rentals

AFSA members receive special discounts from Alamo and Enterprise Rent-A-Car. In most cases, rates are lower than those available with a government ID card.

- **Alamo:** Code 93804 (800) 354-2322
- **Enterprise:** Code 16WAFSA (866) 279-9963

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