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Hearings are in full swing and it is time once again to rally support through writing letters and calling your elected officials.

Three specific areas need our attention; VA funding for Construction and Renovation, TRICARE Fee Increases, and the MGIB. We need the attention of all Senators and Representatives to achieve the desired effect. Without a doubt, we would like to improve funding for facilities supporting all veterans, halt the proposed fee increases for health care, and overhaul educational benefits for this generation of Airmen, active duty, Guard and Reserve. Let's put our collective pressure on from the grass roots.

We, from the most junior to the more 'seasoned' among us, can wield tremendous power through correspondence. For assistance in preparing letters, please check out the "Construct Letters" section under the Legislative tab in the Members Only section of the AFSA Webpage at <http://www.afsahq.org>. Thanks in advance for your help.

AFSA Testifies on Key Veterans' Issues. On March 6, AFSA Chief Executive Officer Richard M. Dean testified before a joint House-Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee Hearing. Mr. Dean's statement called for further progress toward settling veterans' claims, Montgomery G.I. Bill reform, funding of U.S. veterans' facilities, funding of states veterans home construction, funding for female-unique illnesses, and an educational program for VEAPers. As the testimony cycle continues on Capitol Hill, your AFSA representatives will speak out in support of your association's legislative platform.

AF Leaders Testify About 2009 Budget Request. Secretary of the Air Force Michael W. Wynne and Air Force Chief of Staff General T. Michael Moseley recently testified before Congress and emphasized this year's budget focus on the Air Force's top three priorities: winning today's fight, taking care of people, and preparing for tomorrow's challenges. To read more about the testimony of these key leaders, click [HERE](#).

Rumor Control – Proposed Changes to Active-Duty Retirement. Although many ideas have been suggested in the past, the final report by The Commission on the National Guard and Reserve (CNGR) and subsequent press releases have generated considerable interest in the report's proposed changes to the active duty retirement system, specifically when Airmen may begin drawing this earned benefit.

For the last 5+ years, various military associations, including AFSA, have been trying to get the point when Guard and Reserve members may begin drawing retirement pay lowered to age 55. Some progress, linked to deployed time, has been made, but there is still much more room for improvement. DoD has strongly resisted the lowering of the Guard and Reserve retirement age.

As AFSA has reported for many years, there are many in our government (Administrations, Congress, Office of Management and Budget, and within DoD) who believe the retirement system needs to be changed. Some are examining items such as is in this proposal as a cost-saving measure to align Active Duty, Guard, and Reserve retirement systems.

AFSA strongly believes retirement pay is earned through sacrifice and service and should not be deferred. We will continue working hard to ensure this proposed change isn't implemented. For the complete CNGR report click [HERE](#).

Joint Chiefs Chairman Visits Kirkuk Air Base, Iraq. More than 35 Airmen provided security for Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Mike Mullen during his recent visit to Iraq. To read about the Admiral's visit and the work of the 506th Expeditionary Security Forces Squadron personnel, click [HERE](#).

Airman's Roll Call. This week's Roll Call focuses on the need for Airmen to be aware of the unique needs of a joint war-fighting environment. The article suggests that Airmen take advantage of a periodical, the "Joint Force Quarterly," which is a great resource that discusses joint operations. To read this week's Roll Call, click [HERE](#).

More Education Benefits for Guard and Reserve members. Secretary of Veterans Affairs Dr. James B. Peake has announced that some members of the Guard and Reserves who serve multiple tours on active duty will see significant increases in their educational benefits. Secretary Peake pointed out that under new provisions, members who accumulate three years on active duty, regardless of breaks in service, may be eligible for the maximum payment under the Reserve Education Assistance Program (REAP). Previously, reservists and guardsmen had to serve two continuous years on active duty to receive the highest payment. To read more about the enhanced educational benefits, click [HERE](#).

RECENTLY INTRODUCED LEGISLATION

Noble Warrior Act Introduced. Rep. Steve Buyer, R-IN, and Sen. Richard Burr, R-NC, have introduced the "Noble Warrior Act." H.R. 5509 and its companion bill, S. 2674, would streamline the way DoD and the VA compensate and treat servicemembers with service-connected injuries. Disability determinations are currently done by both the VA and DoD with inconsistent results. The "Noble Warrior Act" would call for one disability determination to suffice for both DoD and VA purposes. To read more, click [HERE](#).

GENERAL NEWS

VA Promotes Health and Exercise. VA Secretary Peake urges veterans to increase their fitness levels through exercise, good nutrition and healthy lifestyles. "VA's patients should consider themselves partners with our health professionals in managing their own care," said Secretary Peake. "They need to ensure they eat right, exercise regularly and stay on the move." To read more, click [HERE](#).

AFMC to Implement Training/Safety Program for Sportbikes. Air Force Materiel Command safety officials are planning a command-wide safety course for Airmen under age 27 who ride sportbikes. AFMC traffic safety program manager Juan Vasquez explains a sportbike is a streamlined, light weight, high-performance, aerodynamically-designed motorcycle. To read more about this course which is expected to begin in July or August of this year, click [HERE](#).

AAFES "You Made the Grade" Program. Army and Air Force Exchange Service Commander Brig Gen Keith Thurgood has good news for the high achieving children of military members. The "You Made the Grade"

program provides coupons for discounts, free movies, meals at Burger King, and a chance to win savings bonds in the amounts of \$2,000, \$3,000, or \$5,000. The children must maintain at least a "B" average. The student simply has to go to the nearest AAFES exchange store, present a military ID Card and a report card showing their scholastic achievement. To read more, click [HERE](#).

Transitional Medical Benefits Available. AFSA has long worked with Congress to promote a seamless transition from military to veteran status. Of course, one major issue of concern is continuing health care coverage. DoD officials recently emphasized there is support to help servicemembers and their families meet their health care needs. The Deputy Director of the TRICARE Management Activity, Army Major General Elder Granger, said, "As our warriors transition from the sacrifices of serving their nation, we don't want them to have to worry about having health coverage. These programs are here to help bridge the gap between military health benefits and a civilian health plan." The Transitional Assistance Management Program (TAMP), provides 180 days of transitional health care benefits to certain servicemembers and their families. To read about the TAMP program and to whom it applies, click [HERE](#).

Airmen Continue With Peacekeeping Work in Kosovo. Despite being overshadowed by the wars being fought in Iraq and Afghanistan, the nearly nine-year-old Kosovo peacekeeping mission continues for many servicemembers. To read about more than a dozen Airmen serving to complement the work of about 1,400 American soldiers, click [HERE](#).

Audio Tour of the Air Force Memorial is Now Available at 800-217-7740 Ext 11. Listen to a historical narration about the Air Force Memorial through your cell phone – free of charge – or download it onto a MP3 player by clicking [HERE](#). An excellent way to learn about the different design elements and significance of this memorial honoring the service and sacrifices of the men and women of the United States Air Force and its predecessor organizations. For more information on the Air Force Memorial click [HERE](#).

SCHOLARSHIP SUBMISSION DEADLINE: MARCH 31, 2008, FAST APPROACHING

AIR FORCE ENLISTED MEMBERS DEPENDENT CHILDREN AND AIR FORCE SERGEANTS ASSOCIATION INTERNATIONAL AUXILIARY MEMBERS: The Air Force Sergeants Association (AFSA), the Airmen Memorial Foundation (AMF), and the Chief Master Sergeants of the Air Force (CMSAF) join together annually to conduct a scholarship program to financially assist the undergraduate studies of eligible, dependent children of Air Force Active Duty, Air National Guard, Air Force Reserve Command enlisted members, and Air Force Sergeants Association members in active, retired, or veteran status. To date, the AFSA Scholarship programs have granted \$1.5 million to dependents of the Total Air Force enlisted members. Dependent youth who have a grade point average of 3.5 or higher and a minimum combined SAT score of 1650 or minimum combined ACT score of 24 are encouraged to submit an application. More criteria and application package information is available on the AFSA website: www.afsahq.org. All completed applications packets must be received at AFSA Headquarters no later than Monday, March 31, 2008. Incomplete packages are ineligible for the competition.

IDENTITY THEFT PROTECTION: Enroll in LifeLock. Identity theft cost Americans over \$1.2 billion last year. An estimated 9 million Americans are victimized annually. LifeLock is a leader in proactive identity theft prevention. And they back their clients with a \$1 million service guarantee. All for just \$10 a month or \$110 annually. AFSA members enjoy 30 days FREE, and 20% OFF for life! It's easy... click [HERE](#) or call 800-LifeLock (543-352), and use the promotional code "AFSA" to receive this special offer.

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