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As Congress completes the first of its 2-week Spring Recess, please remember your elected officials are typically home visiting constituents. This is a great opportunity, and we encourage you, to attend town hall meetings and other forums where you can voice your opinion on key issues. As a voter, you are important to them and you shouldn't hesitate to ask them to support matters related to your benefits that are important to you. AFSA legislative platform issues can be found on the AFSA Web site at www.afsahq.org and click on "Legislative" then "Top Issues."

Senate and House Budget Plans Seek to Protect Military Retiree and VA Programs. Senate Concurrent Resolution 70 and House Concurrent Resolution 312 are the House and Senate versions of the Fiscal Year 2009 Budget Plan. Both proposals overrule several controversial Administration plans that would have put a financial strain on veterans and their families. The congressional budget plans would add over \$3.2 billion to VA programs and \$1.2 billion to military health care programs.

For the third straight year and as reported earlier by AFSA, when the Administration submitted its budget, it planned to cut military health care by approximately \$1.2 billion based on the assumption the Department of Defense would increase the cost of TRICARE Prime, establish a TRICARE Standard annual enrollment fee, and increase prescription medicine costs. Those affected most by these proposals would be military retirees under the age of 65.

The Administration Budget plan also sought to cut \$3.2 billion from veterans' programs by implementing an annual enrollment fee for those who use the VA health care system. It also would have increased co-payment levels for prescriptions at VA facilities.

AFSA maintains it is simply wrong to cut spending/programs for veterans, retirees, and their families especially while is sending its young men and women off to war. We should be doing everything possible to bolster confidence and care for those serving.

When Congress returns from its Easter recess, it will work to reconcile the two budget resolutions and come up with a single congressional budget resolution.

Legislation to Honor Women in the Military. On March 14, 2008, Rep. Susan A. Davis, D-CA, and 31 original cosponsors introduced House Resolution 1054 honoring the service and achievements of women in the Armed Forces and female veterans. In the bill, Rep. Davis pointed out women have historically been an important part of all United States war efforts, voluntarily serving in every military conflict in United States history since the Revolutionary War. She reported 34,000 women served in World War I; 400,000 in World War II; 120,000 in the Korean War; over 7,000 in Vietnam; and more than 41,000 in the first Gulf War.

More than 185,000 women have deployed for Operations Enduring and Iraqi Freedom and other missions since 2001. Over 350 service women have given their lives for our Nation in combat zones since World War I and more than 85 have been held as prisoners of war. Finally, Rep Davis indicated women serving in

the Armed Forces make up almost 15 percent of active duty personnel and over 17 percent of the National Guard and Reserve forces.

Top Education & Training Commander Offers Insights Into Recruiting Challenges and the Future Enlisted Leadership. In late February, Air Education and Training Command (AETC) Commander General William R. Looney offered the following insights on recruiting challenges. He said, “The target population that we’re going after is the 18 to 24 year group. Of all the individuals that belong to that year group, 75 percent are not, let me reemphasize not, qualified for military service . . . either because of aptitude, a medical condition, drug use, moral character problems, or criminal records. Seventy-five percent. So all four services are going after the other 25 percent. As you can imagine, along with industry and our commercial sector. So it’s pretty challenging out there these days, and I’m very proud of the work that our recruiting service has done, because we’ve been able to meet our goals and get our numbers and maintain the quality required.”

Reflecting on future military leaders, General Looney said, “Sometime this year, I don’t know when and I don’t who, but someone will walk into Basic Military Training, and that someone in the year 2035 will become the Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force. I don’t know who he or she is, but I know they’re coming to Lackland this year. Along with them will come all of our major command chiefs, and all of our other chiefs. . . We at Air Education and Training Command are the first command to touch these folks, and we will be engaged with them throughout their entire careers, providing them the training and the education they need to be able to handle the roles and responsibilities that we will place on them sometime within the next 10, 20, or 30 years.”

Air Force Assistance Fund Sponsor Programs that Help Airmen. The Air Force Assistance Fund’s annual fundraising effort is in progress. The AFAF seeks to raise money for the Air Force Aid Society, the Air Force Village Foundation, the Air Force Enlisted Village, Inc., and the General and Mrs. Curtis E. Lemay Foundation. To read about this effort and the good works accomplished by these programs, click [HERE](#).

RECENTLY INTRODUCED LEGISLATION

H.R. 5595, the “Make Our Veterans Smile Act of 2008,” by Rep. Christopher Carney, D-PA, would direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to provide dental care to veterans with service-connected disabilities.

H.R. 5609, No title, by Rep. Sanford Bishop, D-GA, would provide for transitional health care for members of the Armed Forces separated from active duty who agree to serve in the Selected Reserve of the Ready Reserve.

H.R. 5621, No title, by Rep. Ginny Brown-Waite, R-FL, would extend concurrent receipt authority to members and former members of the Uniformed Services who are entitled to voluntary separation incentive payments and are also entitled to veterans’ disability compensation.

H.R. 5651, the “Student Veterans’ College Affordability Act of 2008,” by Rep. Harry E. Mitchell, D-AZ, would establish a program of educational assistance for servicemembers who serve in the Armed Forces after September 11, 2001. It would pay for the full tuition and fees at an average college or university, provide a monthly expense stipend, fund tutorial assistance programs, and allow students to “buy up” to a more expensive university with the government paying 50 percent of the additional cost.

GENERAL NEWS

Airman's Roll Call. This week's Roll Call addresses environmental issues. It speaks of the need to transform the Air Force culture to one that always seeks to conserve energy and help the environment. It lists ways that individual Airmen and work centers can work toward that important cultural change. To read this week's Roll Call, click [HERE](#).

Retired Doolittle Raider Dies. SSgt (Ret.) Jacob DeShazer, one of the famed "Doolittle Raiders" has died. Sergeant DeShazer, who enlisted in the Army Air Corps in 1940, was a corporal and bombardier of Crew Number 16, flying the "Bat Out of Hell, which launched from the USS Hornet on April 18, 1942, and completed its famous bombing run over Tokyo. DeShazer and his crew were captured by the Japanese after being forced to parachute into enemy territory in China when their B-25 ran out of fuel. He spent 40 months in captivity. To read more about Sergeant DeShazer, click [HERE](#).

Air Force Smart Operations for the 21st Century (AFSO 21). A group of Air Force officers and senior NCOs from the Pentagon took a tour of a local coffee company to learn about improvement efforts in a civilian company using tools similar to those in AFSO 21. This program systematically improves processes and production by eliminating waste and maximizing value for the Air Force. It depends on Airmen and leaders at every level continually examining processes from beginning to end, throughout the Air Force, and question how each can be performed more effectively and efficiently. To read more about AFSO 21 and its importance to future Air Force operations, click [HERE](#).

Bagram Airman Acts Quickly to Prevent Catastrophe. As F-15 crew chief SSgt Jonathan Billie and another Airman were prepping an F-15, Billie saw the small motor that starts the fighter's engines blow up. Pieces of the machine flew across the flight line. While helping police the shrapnel on the ground, Sergeant Billie noticed flames flickering from the engine compartment. He quickly cleared the area and extinguished the flames using a Halon fire extinguisher. His actions possibly prevented the ignition of live explosives. To read about Sergeant Billie's immediate actions under pressure, click [HERE](#).

The Challenge of Military Family Members. Military family members face lives of uncertainty, loneliness, challenges, and sacrifices. They also play an important role in the day-to-day mission of the Air Force. An article out of PACAF takes a quick look at the role of one enlisted family during an Operational Readiness Inspection at Kadena Air Base, Okinawa, Japan. To read more, click [HERE](#).

BRAC 2005-mandated Joint Basing Plan Takes Shape in Texas. Fort Sam Houston, Randolph AFB, and Lackland AFB will form what may be the largest joint base in the Department of Defense when it is completed in 2011. This is one of 12 locations joint bases will be formed as required by the 2005 Base Realignment and Closure Commission. More than 40 support functions will combine to form the joint base wing to deliver safety and public affairs; natural and built environment functions such as public works (also known as civil engineering) and housing; community services and morale programs, such as police, fire, chapel, youth activities, lodging and dining facilities, and resource functions like supply, transportation, finance and information technology. To read more click [HERE](#).

Web-based Assignment Management System Improved. According to the Air Force Personnel Center, Airmen who log on to AFPC's Assignment Management System (AMS) after March 13 will find a new web application that makes navigation faster and easier. "Content hasn't changed on the website," said Steve Hicks, senior programmer with the 554th Electronic Support Group at Randolph, "but users will be amazed

at the increase in efficiency. Why click your cursor three or four times to reach your objective when you can click on a drop-down menu and go straight to your destination?" To read more about the new AMS click [HERE](#).

Enlisted Airmen Controlling UAVs. A small group of Airmen, all below the grade of TSgt, are responsible for launching RQ-11 Raven Unmanned Aerial Vehicles. These important miniature aircraft, primarily used for surveillance, weigh less than 5 pounds, but fly as fast as 60 mph and as far as 10 kilometers. To read more, click [HERE](#).

Sather Air Traffic Controllers Practice Quick Exit. Sather Air Base, located adjacent to Baghdad International Airport, southwest of Camp Victory, is the gateway to Iraq for most servicemembers, civilians, cargo, and equipment. The 447th Expeditionary Operations Support Squadron ensures all functions are carried out efficiently and professionally. Controllers at the control tower at Baghdad International Airport recently trained for contingency tower evacuation. To read more about these controllers and some challenges they face, click [HERE](#).

Balad Firefighters Teach Government Contractors Lifesaving Skills. Airmen serving in Iraq recently provided refresher training to U.S. government-contracted personnel who routinely recover military vehicles throughout Iraq. The training focused on using the hydraulic tools designed to tear metal and to open damaged vehicles. To read more, click [HERE](#).

VA's New "Travel Nurse Program" Hits the Road Program Offsets Personnel Losses, Improves Quality. To deal with a nationwide shortage of nurses and improve the quality of care for veterans, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has created a "Travel Nurse Corps" to enable VA nurses to travel and work throughout the Department's medical system. "VA is committed to putting health care facilities closer to veterans," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Dr. James B. Peake. "The Travel Nurse Corps will make it easier to bring our world-class health care professionals closer to veterans, too. And it will make it easier for us to shift personnel during times of crisis." To read more, click [HERE](#).

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. 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, 301.899.3500, 800.638.0594.

To visit the White House Commission of Remembrance website click [HERE](#).

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 a lifetime enrollment! It's easy... simply 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