

## Issue 2007-10 — October, 2007

### Notices

#### **Korea Retirees' Schedule of Events**

**Oct 2** – For USAG-Red Cloud, your Retirement Services Officer will be at Camp Casey, Maude Hall, Room 139, from 0900-1300.

**Oct 6** – **YONGSAN RETIREE APPRECIATION DAY AT THE MAIN POST CLUB.**

**Oct 9** – For USAG-Yongsan, your Retirement Services Officer will be at Yongsan in the Soldier Support Center, Bldg 4034, Room 140, from 0900-1300.

**Oct 16** – For USAG-Daegu, your Retirement Services Officer will be at Camp Henry's Education Center, Bldg 1820, from 1000-1300.

**Oct 23** – For USAG-Yongsan, your Retirement Services Officer will be at Yongsan in the Soldier Support Center, Bldg 4034, Room 140, from 0900-1300.

**Nov 10** – **DAEGU RETIREE APPRECIATION DAY AT THE HILLTOP CLUB.**

#### **Yongsan Retiree Appreciation Day**

The Yongsan Retiree Appreciation Day will be held at Yongsan's Main Post Club on Oct 6. It starts at 0800 for sign-in, and the buffet breakfast begins after the Invocation at 0900. See the RSO's Corner for more information.

A letter with details of the event was mailed in mid-September to all Korea retirees based on addresses contained in the Retired Address Finder data base. If your address is not current in the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System (DEERS) you probably didn't receive the notification letter, so you need to update the address for next year's RAD notification. Also, it's just plain good sense to have a current address listed in DEERS.

*Korea Retirement Services Office*

#### **Social Security Briefing Added to RAD**

The daughter of a Korea retiree is visiting him this month. She is employed by the Social Security Administration and very knowledgeable in both retirement and disability benefits from Social Security.

She has prepared and brought with her a briefing on Social Security benefits that she has offered to present to Korea retirees. I have arranged for her to present the briefing during the Retiree Appreciation Day. It will take place 1030-1100 at the Main Post Club in The Underground following the breakfast buffet. For retirees unable to go down to The Underground, the RAD activities and this presentation will be provided to Reggie's via a closed circuit feed.

*Korea Retirement Services Office*

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## **Medical Care Matters**

### **Mayo Clinic Newsletters**

The following links are provided to articles carried in the September weekly newsletters provided by the Mayo Clinic. These articles are likely to be of interest to retirees living in Korea.

**Exercise takes the edge off chronic pain: When you're in pain, exercise is probably the last thing on your mind**

But it may be more important than you think.

**Cholesterol: The best foods to lower your cholesterol and protect your heart**

Discover the best foods to reduce your cholesterol.

**Prostate cancer prevention: What you can do**

Prostate cancer prevention resembles prevention of other chronic diseases – plus a few specifics.

**Anti-aging quiz: Secrets to a longer, healthier life**

No magic pill can delay aging. Find out if your daily routine is helping or hurting your chances for a long and healthy life.

*Retirement Services Office*

### **TMA Announces New Prices for Nexium**

NAUS Veterans Benefits Advisor Mike Plumer attended a meeting this week at the TRICARE Management Authority (TMA) where they announced that the medicine Nexium would now be the drug of class for all on Protein Pump Inhibitors (PPI). The reason that a previous Tier 3 (\$22 Co-pay) drug was now on Tier 1 (\$3 Co-pay) was that the manufacturer had given the Department of Defense (DoD) an extremely favorable price. PPI medicines treat people with Gastro Esophageal Reflux Disease and other serious "heartburn" problems.

RADM Thomas McGinnis (U.S. Public Health Service), Chief, Pharmaceutical Operations Directorate, TMA said that TRICARE has over 500,000 beneficiaries who are receiving PPI prescriptions. They all would be receiving a letter by October 1 to inform them that Nexium would now be the first drug prescribed for anyone who was determined to need a PPI medicine. If they were already prescribed Nexium the only change would be in the price. They would also be offered the option of trying the medicine Prilosec for no cost as it was now considered an over-the-counter medicine.

At the same meeting RADM McGinnis also announced that Express Scripts, the company that handles the TRICARE Mail Order Pharmacy program, has developed a new label for all drugs that they dispense.

The new label is tri-color and makes it much easier for beneficiaries to understand their prescriptions. The first panel, which is yellow, contains all the warnings that come with the particular drug. This eliminates the need for all of the small warning stickers that some medicines require. The second green panel contains all of the main information including patient's name, drug name, prescription number and refill information including the toll-free phone number. The third blue panel contains all of the legally required information. Look for the new labels starting with your next refill.

*NAUS Weekly Update, Sep 7*

### **Loss of Health Care Option Could Affect 170,000 Beneficiaries**

DoD is in the first stage of soliciting new bids for regional TRICARE contracts, and MOAA has expressed concern to DoD health leaders that the new contract plan could curtail coverage options for nearly 170,000 retired beneficiaries and their families.

Of retired members under age 65 who use TRICARE, roughly half use TRICARE Prime, the military managed care system, and half use TRICARE Standard, the insurance-type, fee-for-service option.

TRICARE Prime is the closest thing to what retired members had while on active duty and guarantees enrollees can see a participating doctor. Participants enjoy a modest annual enrollment fee, modest flat-rate copayments for doctor visits and prescriptions in the civilian system, and incur little other costs.

TRICARE Standard allows more flexibility to pick doctors and see specialists. However, it doesn't guarantee a participating doctor and carries an annual deductible and a 25 percent copayment for inpatient and outpatient care. Many purchase TRICARE supplement policies to protect against the risk of copayments and excess charges by non-participating doctors.

Contractors who won the current TRICARE contracts were offered incentives to establish TRICARE Prime options in areas with significant military populations, even if they weren't in the vicinity of a military installation where Prime must be offered. Nearly 170,000 retirees were enrolled in these Prime Service Areas (PSAs), which aren't located near a military base.

The new contract solicitation would drop that incentive, effectively limiting Prime enrollment to those who live near military bases and BRAC locations. This raises the real potential that 170,000 retired Prime enrollees could find themselves booted to TRICARE Standard as their only option.

Why is this change being proposed? The most obvious reason is Prime is more expensive than Standard, and the DoD is trying to cut health care costs.

MOAA thinks this service curtailment would be penny-wise and pound-foolish, and has written the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Health Affairs) to urge continuation of the PSA incentives in the new contracts.

We're certainly not bad-mouthing TRICARE Standard. Hundreds of thousands of military beneficiaries prefer that option's increased flexibility. But choice is a huge element of beneficiary satisfaction, and it allows beneficiaries to pick the option that best meets their needs. MOAA believes strongly that choice should be preserved wherever possible.

## *MOAA News Exchange, Sep 12*

### **DoD Releases Report on Autism**

The Department of Defense released its "Report and Plan on Services to Military Dependent Children with Autism". The extensive report goes over the services available for these children with autism including the TRICARE program, the Extended Care Health Option (ECHO) program and how they provide the Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) treatments that people desire today. If this is of interest to you please call the Washington Office. We can talk about the programs and I can e-mail you a copy of the report.

### ***TREA Washington Update, Sep 21***

***(RSO Added: The TREA Washington office toll-free phone number is 800-338-9337. Al Chellis reminds us that toll-free numbers can be dialed from a DSN phone by dialing 809-4-OFF DSN (809-463-3376), await the second dial tone, then dial the toll-free number. [Source: <http://www.disa.mil/gs/dsn/ops.html>])***

## **Pay Matters**

### **COLA to Dip in Korea**

Army Gen. B.B. Bell, commander of U.S. Forces Korea, has advised U.S. service members stationed in Korea and their families there to expect a major decrease in their cost of living allowances (COLAs). To ease the four-point drop, pay adjustments will be made by a two-point reduction Oct. 1, followed by another two-point deduction Nov. 1.

Bell explained that the reduction came from pricing surveys taken in May and June in Seoul, Pyongtaek, Taegu, Chinhae and at Osan Air Base.

The COLA compensates service members for costs of goods and services that are higher overseas than in the continental United States.

According to the May-June survey, the costs of goods and services rose more in the States than costs for similar items in Korea, triggering the COLA drop.

### ***Armed Forces News, Sep 7***

### **MOAA Talks Disability Issues with White House**

MOAA President VADM Norb Ryan, Jr. (USN-Ret) and selected other association leaders were invited to the White House on Wednesday to discuss the recommendations offered by the recent Dole/Shalala commission on wounded warriors.

Former Sen. Bob Dole, co-chair of the commission, participated in the discussion, as did a number of White House policy advisors.

The association leaders acknowledged the value of most of the commission recommendations, but expressed strong concern on two fronts.

First, disability, health and other benefits should not discriminate based on whether a servicemember's disability was incurred in combat. The commission and White House staff in attendance gave assurances that that is not their intent.

Second, all objected strongly to the commission recommendation that a portion of disability compensation should end once the disabled member attained eligibility for Social Security.

A White House staff member indicated that current disabled veterans would be grandfathered, but noted that many civilian benefit programs have such Social Security offsets. In response, VADM Ryan and the other association leaders highlighted the unique nature of military service in defense of the country vs. work for a civilian employer. There is a reason that Congress has specified that military retired pay, disability retired pay, and veterans disability compensation should not be offset by Social Security. And there is a reason why Congress recently enacted legislation to end the Social Security offset to military Survivor Benefit Plan annuities. And there is a reason why Congress has acted to reduce or eliminate other inequitable offsets to compensation that has been earned by service and sacrifice on the nation's behalf.

MOAA believes strongly that a commission convened to right the wrongs inflicted on wounded warriors should not inadvertently have the effect of rolling back the clock to substitute separately earned Social Security benefits for service-earned military and disability-earned veterans compensation.

The White House staff attendees expressed appreciation for the inputs, and indicated their intent to meet with associations periodically to get additional feedback as the legislative and policy initiatives proceed.

*MOAA Update, Sep 14*

### **South Dakota Veterans Bonus**

The State of South Dakota is paying a veterans bonus of up to \$500 to certain servicemembers based on monthly service during qualifying dates.

Bonuses are available to servicemembers who:

- Were legal residents of the State for at least six months immediately preceding entry into the Armed Forces.
- Are currently on active duty or were honorably discharged from the Armed Forces.
- Served on active duty during one of the following periods.

For service between Mar. 4, 1991, and Sept. 10, 2001, payment will be made to those who served in an imminent danger pay area or were awarded the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal, Southwest Asia Service Medal, Kosovo Campaign Medal or any other United States campaign or service medal awarded for participation in combat operations against hostile forces.

All active duty service between the dates of Sept. 11, 2001, and a date to be determined qualifies for a bonus payment. This program also allows payment for active duty servicemembers during the Operation Desert Storm dates of Aug. 2, 1990, to Mar. 3, 1991.

Application forms may be obtained by writing to: SD Veterans Bonus, 500 E. Capitol, Pierre, SD 57501, or by calling 605-773-7251. Forms can also be requested by e-mail by writing to [john.fette@state.sd.us](mailto:john.fette@state.sd.us). Writers should include their service branch and dates of service, street or post office box number, city, State and zip code. South Dakota residents can apply through the nearest county or tribal veterans service officer.

*NAUS Weekly Update, Sep 21*

### **Fiscal Moves On The Hill**

Congress is focused on money matters as the beginning of the new fiscal year (Monday, October 1) fast approaches. The Senate passed its version of the National Defense Appropriations Act at \$598,320,329,000. This is the bill that pays for most of the personnel and retiree programs that are under the Department of Defense. Now the two Houses will quickly conference on the Bill (The House passed its version months ago). However, it is clear that few, if any, of the 12 Appropriation Bills that pay for the whole Federal Government will be finished and signed by October 1. So the House has passed a continuing resolution, H J Res 52, (CR) that runs until November 16 to keep the government running. A CR allows for the government to continue to run based on last year's budget. The Senate will also pass the CR sometime this week. The CR also included language condemning MoveOn.org's ad in the *New York Times* referring to General David H. Petraeus as "Gen. Betrayus." The Senate passed a similar sense of the Senate on September 20th.

*TREA Washington Update, Sep 28*

### **New Law Affects Employer TRICARE Plans**

Many military retirees who work for defense contractors, airlines, and certain state governments are getting letters from their employers that their health coverage options will change as of Jan 1. In many cases, it's a notice that the employer will no longer be able to offer a TRICARE supplement as one of its health plan options.

That's because a provision in last year's Defense Authorization Act (FY2007) bars civilian employers from offering their employees incentives to use TRICARE rather than the company's normal health plan. It specifically bars offering employees a TRICARE supplement.

Congress has no problem with retirees choosing TRICARE on their own initiative, since they earned the right to the TRICARE

benefit through their service. But the Defense Department and Congress developed extensive evidence that many employers – including several state governments – have been consciously working to shift their health care costs to TRICARE, sending letters to TRICARE-eligible employees urging them to use TRICARE rather than the employer's plan. And tens of thousands of TRICARE-eligibles across the country have taken up those offers in recent years.

This was part of the reason that the Defense Department proposed raising fees for TRICARE enrollees by up to \$1,000 a year – to help stem the tide of people opting out of employer-based plans. So far, Congress has agreed with MOAA that imposing steep TRICARE fee hikes isn't the appropriate reaction.

But the Armed Services Committees took a dim view of employers who seek to cut their costs at TRICARE's expense, and changed the law to try to discourage that behavior.

Initially, the law was interpreted as barring any reimbursement that could be used to cover TRICARE expenses. That strict interpretation would have barred TRICARE-eligibles from participating in company-sponsored cafeteria plans (under which employees can receive a specified amount of cash that can be used to purchase coverage) or plans that pay a flat monthly amount to any employee who elects to use alternative coverage, whether it's TRICARE or a spouse's employer plan.

At MOAA's urging, the Committees included language indicating that these kinds of initiatives should not be barred because they are not specifically aimed at TRICARE. But it's hard to argue that a TRICARE supplement isn't TRICARE-specific.

So what can TRICARE-eligibles do if they get a letter notifying them that their employer is terminating a company-offered TRICARE supplement?

The first option is to ask the employer to offer a flat-rate payment in lieu of the supplement. If the company was willing to pay the cost of a supplement, one would think they'd be willing to pay up to the cash equivalent. But to be allowed under the new law, the payment needs to be non-TRICARE-specific. That is, it should be the same amount for an employee who chooses TRICARE as it is for an employee who chooses coverage under a spouse's employer plan. Many employers already offer such cash payment plans; it's just a matter of including TRICARE-eligibles in them.

Another alternative is to enroll in TRICARE Prime, if Prime is available in your area.

***MOAA Update, Sep 28***

### **VDBC Update**

Two years of extensive work and research, by the Veterans' Disability Benefits Commission, (VDBC) are coming to fruition this next week with the official release of their final report. It will be released to the public during a conference at 2pm on October 3rd in room 334 of the Canon House Office Building in Washington. Immediately after the press conference, VDBC Chairman LTG Terry Scott, along with the other commissioners, will brief Washington area Veterans and Military Service organizations and other stakeholders.

The House Veteran's Affairs Committee will receive testimony from the Commission at a hearing on October 10th. The Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee will be briefed on October 17.

NAUS will continue to monitor the situation and in the coming weeks will report in both this Update and in the next issue of our magazine, the Uniformed Services Journal, many of the recommendations presented. We understand that the Commission may recommend elimination of the SBP/DIC offset for survivors and Full Concurrent receipt for all military retirees to include medically discharged and retired (Chapter 61) members. We will of course be watching Congress for possible introduction of legislation tied to the final recommendations.

***NAUS Weekly Update, Sep 28***

### **COLA Count Drops a Bit**

With one month to go in the counting period for the January 2008 federal retiree COLA, the count stands at 2.2 percent, following a drop of 0.2 percentage points in August in the inflation index used to set the COLA.

***FEDweek Weekly Newsletter, Sep 28***

## **Community Matters**

## **2008 Election Dates**

If all of the news concerning many states moving their primary dates has confused you, NAUS has located a chart listing 2008 State primary and general election dates in all 50 States; the District of Columbia and U.S. Territories; primary runoff dates (if applicable); states with U.S. Senate races; number of U.S. Representative seats up for re-election; and Gubernatorial. This chart is located on the Federal Voting Assistance Program webpage at <http://www.fvap.gov/pubs/vin/pdf07vins/sep07vin.pdf>. We encourage you to find this site to become and continue to be involved in our government. Voting in primaries and general elections is important.

*NAUS Weekly Update, Sep 7*

## **Pentagon Plans to Drop ID Card SSAN**

Last year, MOAA urged the House and Senate Armed Services Committees to explore options to protect servicemembers from identity theft by removing the Social Security account number (SSAN) from military ID cards.

The fallout was a provision in the FY2007 Defense Authorization Act that tasked the Pentagon for a report and recommendations on how to address this pressing issue.

The Pentagon report, forwarded to Congress in July by Under Secretary of Defense (Personnel and Readiness) David Chu, cited the difficulties of moving entirely away from use of the SSAN, which is fundamental to all of the services' personnel records and innumerable embedded networks of security and record-keeping systems.

However, it acknowledged that the current system poses problems that need to be addressed and said the Defense Department intends to phase out the use of the printed SSAN on ID cards over the next several years.

The plan is to move to an ID card that would print only the last four digits of the SSAN, with the full SSAN electronically encrypted on the card. This would provide additional protection to the individual members while still preserving data deemed essential for hundreds of purposes, from validating commissary check purchases to confirming the identities of prisoners of war.

The reason for the multi-year phase-out is to allow time to convert the large numbers of hardware and software systems to conform to the new card, and also to allow a phased replacement of more than three million ID cards of current members, retirees, family members, and survivors so ID card facilities aren't overwhelmed.

MOAA recognizes that making changes on such fundamental data elements is never easy or quick. We commend the Armed Services Committees for pressing the issue and defense leaders for acknowledging the problem and initiating a plan to address it.

*MOAA Update, Sep 7*

## **Keep Retired Pay Records Current**

It is important to review your retired pay account information to ensure that it is current; items such as your mailing address, marital status and designated beneficiaries should be kept up to date. Failure to update retired pay records when the retiree married, divorced, remarried, became widowed or related family changes could result in SBP, life insurance or other benefits being denied or going to an unintended recipient.

In the case of divorce with SBP coverage involved, there is a one-year notification period to DFAS for benefits to stay in force for a former spouse. Make sure your spouse or designated beneficiaries know what benefits to expect by maintaining a file of information that will be needed upon your death.

Some account information can be updated yourself through myPay. Other changes and notifications should be mailed or faxed to:

Defense Finance and Accounting Service  
U.S. Military Retirement Pay  
P.O. Box 7130  
London, KY 40742-7130  
Fax: (800) 469-6559 or (800) 982-8459

Please include your Social Security number or that of deceased member and sign the request.

### ***NAUS Weekly Update, Sep 14***

***(RSO Note: The situation reported above about insurance going to someone other than intended happened here when the widow of a Korea retiree lost the life insurance to a former spouse. This is probably not what he intended, but he failed to update the beneficiary designation.***

*Another important reason to keep your information updated was discovered with the mailing of the Retiree Appreciation Day newsletter to all Korea retirees. The address information was obtained from the Retired Address Finder based on your DEERS information. As of this writing, about 10% of the letters were returned as undeliverable. It's important for you to keep both DFAS and DEERS updated for many reasons.)*

### **Army Retired Soldiers Pin Update**

Army retired pin packets have been mailed to retired soldiers receiving or eligible to receive retired pay who retired up to Jan. 2007. They also have been mailed to "gray area" reserve retired soldiers not yet age 60 and not yet eligible to receive retired pay as of Jan. 2007. Soldiers retired after Jan. 2007 should have received their pins from their retirement services officer. Addresses for the mailing came from the DFAS Retired Pay Center in Cleveland and Human Resources Command in St. Louis.

Army retirees who did not receive a packet can write to Army Retirement Services, Attn: DAPE-HRP-RSO (Retired Pins), 200 Stovall St., Alexandria, VA 22332-0470.

### ***Armed Forces News Issue, Sep 14***

### **Retirees Uphold American Tradition Through Volunteerism**

Volunteering is an America tradition. Two volunteers for the retiree activities office here [at Seymour Johnson AFB, N.C.] are examples of that tradition.

Retired Col. Ray Kleber and retired Senior Master Sgt. Louis Hiedelmeier are among several RAO volunteers here who recently received the Presidential Call to Service Award for their commitment.

"Each volunteer gave more than 4,000 hours of community service," said retired Senior Master Sgt. Elmer Bryans, RAO director. "Every volunteer had over 20 years of 'still serving' and this award provided a signature by the president honoring their volunteerism so they will not be forgotten."

Colonel Kleber and Sergeant Hiedelmeier are examples of people inspiring people by staying active in their retirement years and volunteering for the base RAO and the local community.

"Volunteering and helping others gives me the opportunity to give something back and still be part of the Air Force," said Colonel Kleber.

For the past 23 years, the two men have volunteered for the RAO by working at the base pharmacy and many other facilities. They help by assisting staff with opening the facility, issuing medication bags, and providing extra manpower as military members go on temporary duty or deploy.

"It's very important wherever we volunteer, that we are treated as part of the team," said Sergeant Heidelberg. "That's what motivates us, knowing how we can help. We can do whatever we're asked to do because volunteers have no limits to giving."

Both agree that with a little training, they could help pharmacy technicians more by processing paperwork, completing orders and completing computer entries.

"It's an indescribable feeling knowing you're still needed, you're looking out for one another and still being that wingman for others," Sergeant Heidelberg said.

Besides volunteering on base, they also support the local community by donating blood to the American Red Cross.

"So far I have donated 139 pints of blood to date, which is 186 pounds of blood, which is more than I weigh right now," said

Colonel Kleber.

Regular blood donations remain as critical to the nation as volunteering for Civil Air Patrol missions, according to Colonel Kleber.

"Since 1941, the CAP put me in contact with younger members with whom I shared my enthusiasm for flying and took part in many exercises, actual search and rescue, counter drug, cadet orientation flights and hurricane damage missions," Colonel Kleber said. "This is my 69th year of flying and I still enjoy it."

To emphasize the national and local impact of volunteering for the CAP, he and a community friend combine their aviation expertise and personal aircraft to fly two to three Angel Flights, (non-emergency flights for financially and medically needy people), that are conducted each month.

"Recently, Dr. Harold Berk and I flew to Chesterfield, Va., to pick up a 10-year-old child with cancer," Colonel Kleber said. "She wanted to go to Greensboro to be with her family and we made sure she got home."

By partnering with base and community members, he hopes to inspire others to give freely of their time in areas where needed and appreciated.

"In all my years of volunteering, Seymour and this community have the best community relations I've ever seen," Colonel Kleber said.

When both retirees were asked what they would say to encourage more people to volunteer, they replied with sincerity.

"You don't know what you're missing until you do it. It keeps your mind active and your soul alive," Sergeant Heidelmeier said.

According to Sergeant Bryans, the RAO always needs more volunteers and projects to add to its list.

"We would like all base organizations to identify what type of help you need and we'll match the right volunteer to your individualized needs," Sergeant Bryans said.

The four other RAO retirees and retiree spouse who received the presidential award included Lt. Col. Russell Keen; Cols. Homer Hayes, Michael Todaro and William Bizzell; and Donna Goodridge. [Source: 4th Fighter Wing Public Affairs] *Air Force Retiree News Service, Sep 17*

### **Retired ID Card Replacement Update**

A single form of identification is no longer sufficient for retiree ID card renewals at issuing sites using updated software for the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System/Realtime Automated Personnel Identification System. Retirees and their dependents need to provide a primary photo form of identification and a secondary non-photo form of identification.

Examples of photo IDs: military ID card; driver's license; federal, state or local government ID; U.S. or foreign passport; and foreign national ID. Examples of non-photo IDs: Social Security card; voter registration card; birth certificate; U.S. citizen ID card (INS I-97); school record or report card; clinic, doctor, or hospital record; and a day care or nursery record. ID cards for retirees need updating only if the card was lost, stolen or damaged, or if the retiree undergoes a change in status.

Retirees' family members and survivors age 75 or over may receive a permanent ID card. *Armed Forces News Issue, Sep 21*

### **Veterans' Disarmament Act Would Bar Some Veterans from Owning Guns**

Hundreds of thousands of veterans – from Vietnam through Operation Iraqi Freedom – are at risk of being banned from buying firearms if legislation that is pending in Congress gets enacted.

The Veterans Disarmament Act – which has already passed the House – would place any veteran who has ever been diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) on the federal gun ban list.

This is exactly what President Bill Clinton did over seven years ago when his administration illegitimately added some 83,000 veterans into the National Crime Information System (NCIC) – prohibiting them from purchasing firearms, simply because of afflictions like PTSD.

The proposed ban is actually broader. Anyone who is diagnosed as being a tiny danger to himself or others would have his gun rights taken away forever. It is section 102(b)(1)(C)(iv) in HR 2640, that provides for dumping raw medical records into the system. Those names – like the 83,000 records mentioned above – will then, by law, serve as the basis for gun bans.

The Military Order of the Purple Heart is opposed to this legislation. The House bill, HR 2640, is being sponsored by one of the most flaming anti-Second Amendment Representatives in Congress: Carolyn McCarthy (D-N.Y.). Another liberal anti-gunner, Sen. Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.), is sponsoring the bill in the Senate.

Proponents of the bill say that helpful amendments have been made so that any veteran who gets his name on the NCIC list can seek an expungement. But whenever you talk about expunging names from the Brady NCIC system, you're talking about a procedure that has always been a longshot. Right now, there are no expungements of law-abiding Americans' names that are taking place under federal level, because the expungement process which already exists has been blocked for over a decade by a "funds cut-off" engineered by another anti-gunner, Sen. Charles Schumer (D-N.Y.).

So how will this bill make things even worse? Well, two legal terms are radically redefined in the Veterans Disarmament Act to carry out this vicious attack on veterans' gun rights. One term relates to who is classified a "mental defective." Forty years ago, that term meant one was adjudicated "not guilty" in a court of law by reason of insanity. But under the Veterans' Disarmament Act, "mental defective" has been stretched to include anyone whom a psychiatrist determines might be a tiny danger to self or others. The second term is "adjudicate." In the past, one could only lose one's gun rights through an adjudication by a judge, magistrate or court – meaning conviction after a trial. Adjudication could only occur in a court with all the protections of due process, including the right to face one's accuser. Now, adjudication in HR 2640 would include a finding by "a court, commission, committee or other authorized person" (namely, a psychiatrist).

Forget the fact that people with PTSD have the same violent crime rate as the rest of us. Vietnam vets with PTSD have had careers and obtained permits to carry firearms concealed. It will now be enough for a psychiatric diagnosis (a "determination" in the language of the bill) to get a veteran barred for life from owning guns.

Think of what this bill would do to veterans. If a robber grabs your wallet and takes everything in it, but gives you back \$5 to take the bus home, would you call that a financial enhancement? If not, then we should not let HR 2640 supporters call the permission to seek an expungement an enhancement, when prior to this bill, veterans could not legitimately be denied their gun rights after being diagnosed with PTSD.

Veterans with PTSD should not be put in a position to seek an expungement. They have not been convicted (after a trial with due process) of doing anything wrong. If a veteran is thought to be a threat to self or others, there should be a real trial, not an opinion (called a diagnosis) by a psychiatrist.

If members of Congress do not hear from soldiers (active duty and retired) in large numbers, along with the rest of the public, the Veterans' Disarmament Act – misleadingly titled by Rep. McCarthy as the NCIC Improvement Amendments Act – will send this message to veterans: "No good deed goes unpunished."

*News of the Force (Page 1), Sep 26*

### **Free SAT-ACT Software for Military Families**

For the second year, a group of NFL, NFL Europe, AFL and CFL football players have sponsored several million dollars worth of \$199 SAT and ACT test prep programs to every family in the U.S. Military (all branches-active or retired). Specifically, the sponsorship allows any military person (active or retired) to request as many programs as they need for the students in their lives. The Department of Defense has created a secure website to quickly confirm a person's military status. Personnel can access the confirmation and request pages through several military related associations and organizations, including: Military Home Front website for families, offers access to the forms to confirm military status and process the order. Programs ship to domestic U.S. addresses and APO addresses. The sponsorship covers the regular purchase price of \$199 and the family pays only the S&H. To learn more about the program and the NFL/CFL players who are providing this offer visit <http://sat.eknowledge.com/military.asp>.

*provided via Daegu Retiree Council*

## Federal Service Matters

### **Alternative Personnel Systems Up in Air**

Among the major policy decisions still pending of significant importance to federal employees is the fate of the two major alternative personnel systems approved years ago but still in the implementation stages at DHS and DoD. For DHS, the House has voted as part of both an authorization bill and the appropriations bill to repeal the authority there. The Senate hasn't written its DHS authorization measure but in its DHS appropriations bill would allow just \$5 million for the program--probably enough to keep it alive but not to expand it significantly. Currently only about 10,000 DHS headquarters and top managerial employees are under that system, and at that only under its performance ratings system. DHS earlier this year said it was going to shift its emphasis to a pilot project involving intelligence employees, but has announced nothing on that score since then.

### **NSPS Dispute Also Lies Ahead**

Similarly, the House in voting on a DoD appropriations bill just before the August recess acted to cut off funds for the national security personnel system there by barring the department from spending to operate outside certain standard parts of civil service law. That followed narrower language in the House-passed DoD authorization bill to repeal the labor relations and adverse action and appeal rights provisions of NSPS while requiring bargaining on other aspects, such as the classification, job evaluation and pay for performance provisions, for union-represented employees. The appropriations vote also could potentially affect other alternative personnel systems already operating at DoD, such as the demonstration projects at many facilities, since they also operate under waivers of those parts of the law. The Senate has not taken up either the authorization or appropriations bill for DoD, but its version of the former also would restrict NSPS, although not as severely as either House measure.

### **Contracting Disputes Also Coming**

Another issue of wide interest to be debated in the appropriations bills is contracting-out policy, what the administration prefers to call competitive sourcing. Numerous restrictions have been written into spending bills barring cost studies for certain components of agencies, including: wildland firefighting at Interior; Bureau of Prisons jobs at Justice; certain jobs at the Army Corps of Engineers; certain immigration-related jobs at DHS; farm loan jobs at Agriculture; and a moratorium at Labor pending a GAO review.

In addition, several bills would continue past language restricting the conditions under which contracts can be granted, expand the right of employees to appeal contracting decisions, and bar contractors from gaining an advantage by spending less on employee health or retirement benefits than the government does per employee.

The White House opposes all of those provisions but has accepted similar language many times in the past and has not threatened to veto any of the measures over such restrictions.

*FEDweek Weekly Newsletter, Sep 5*

### **Use of Incentives Up in 2006**

Federal agencies made greater use of recruitment, relocation and retention incentive payments--the so-called 3Rs--in calendar year 2006, OPM has reported, although the incentives are concentrated in certain agencies and in certain occupations. Those incentive payments are one of the major tools agencies have at their disposal to attract and keep desired employees, especially in occupations where the basic salary does not stack up well against what individuals could command elsewhere. In 2006, 47 agencies paid 22,764 recruitment, relocation, and retention incentives to employees that were worth more than \$140 million. That's up from the 5,998 incentives to employees of 34 agencies worth more than \$51 million in 2005, but OPM cautioned that the numbers are not directly comparable since the 2005 data include only the last eight months of that year, after certain changes to the program took effect under terms of a 2004 law.

### **Retention Incentives the Most Widely Used**

Of the three types of incentives, retention incentives were the most widely used, OPM said, accounting for about 17,800, compared with about 3,900 recruitment incentives and about 1,000 relocation incentives. However, the value of relocation incentives on average was the highest of the three--about \$11,500, compared with about \$8,300 for recruitment incentives and about \$5,400 for retention incentives. By agency, the heaviest users are Defense, VA, DHS, State and HHS--the former two alone accounted for about two-thirds of the payments made.

*FEDweek Weekly Newsletter, Sep 12*

### **Another Blow to Outsourcing Tax Collection**

As it has in the past, an independent Taxpayer Advocacy Panel has called on the IRS to scrap its use of contractors to collect on certain delinquent accounts.

"The IRS should abandon all plans to outsource any taxpayer debts and restrict collection activities to properly trained and proficient IRS personnel," according to the panel, which consists of about 100 members throughout the country who are appointed by the Treasury secretary.

The agency hopes its initiative to outsource collections it does not have the capacity to otherwise pursue, could bring in over \$7 billion, but the panel called debt collection a "core function" of the IRS, and called for "appropriate staffing" to achieve collection objectives.

"If IRS does not have adequate staffing, it should reduce costs by outsourcing functions that do not involve interface with taxpayers or provide opportunities for identity theft," the report said.

It also noted that the timing is iffy for such an initiative because taxpayers are concerned about identify theft, loss of jobs to outsourcing, as well as performance irregularities and the ethics of government contractors.

One panel member offered that after his organization outsourced accounts receivable, the managing of contractor collection activities became more time consuming than handling the function internally, something that seems to be the case at IRS given that as of last year there were nearly as many employees overseeing the program as contracting personnel.

The House Ways and Means Committee recently approved legislation that would prevent the agency from using contractors to collect taxes, and the Senate appropriations committee has passed legislation that would limit funding for it.

The National Treasury Employees Union, an outspoken critic, praised the report and vowed to continue fighting the initiative. *Fed Manager's Daily Report Issue, Sep 18*

### **FEHB Premiums Rising about 2 Percent on Average**

Average premiums in the FEHB plan will rise 2.1 percent in 2008, the second straight year of minimal increases overall, OPM has said, although as in the past there will be significant variation among plans. Due to accounting rules, the average enrollee share will be up by 2.9 percent. Increases have been moderating steadily since the 12.7 percent average for 2002 over 2001, with the actual average increase for 2007 over 2006 working out to be 1.6 percent.

The average biweekly enrollee premium will rise by \$1.58 to \$59.69 for self-only coverage and by \$4.11 to \$135.13 for family coverage.

However, premiums in the largest plan, Blue Cross-Blue Shield Standard – which has about half of all FEHB enrollees – will increase by more than 8 percent. Nine-tenths of enrollees will see an increase of less than 10 percent and a third will see an increase of less than 5 percent, officials said.

*FEDweek Weekly Newsletter, Sep 19*

## **Laughing Matters**

### **Wise Like an Owl**

A first grade class teacher, for the "Natural World" section of her class, had a lesson about owls.

She explained to the class about how they are nocturnal, how they can swivel their heads so far in either direction that it looks like they can turn them completely around, etc. Then she described how the birds swoop down to get their prey for dinner.

Following the lesson, she asked the children to draw a picture of one of the fascinating things owls do.

Looking over the pictures, she praised and applauded each child on their efforts. She was puzzled, however, by one drawing. It was of an owl with its wings neatly folded, its eyes closed and a dead mouse nearby.

"Exactly what is this showing?" she asked.

The little girl explained, "It's just like you said "The owl swoops down and prays before dinner"!"

*Christian Voices, Sep 10*

### **The Bird Whistler**

There's a story about an MIT student who spent an entire summer going to the Harvard football field every day wearing a black and white striped shirt, walking up and down the field for ten or fifteen minutes throwing birdseed, blowing a whistle, and then walking off the field.

At the end of the summer, it came time for the first Harvard home football game, the referee walked onto the field and blew the whistle, and the game had to be delayed for a half hour to wait for the birds to get off of the field.

The guy wrote his thesis on this, and graduated.

*Christian Voices, Sep 13*

## **Director's Corner**

### **Retiree Appreciation Day Preparation**

The RAD takes place this week, and I've been deeply involved in planning and preparing for it. As a result, there was little time left to attend to issues with the retirees and widows. That will end with the completion of the RAD and I'll be returning to more active, direct and individual assistance to the retirees and the widows.

Much of the planning and decision-making was mine, and I take full responsibility for any problems that you find. There are deficiencies and I recognize that. I simply had to allocate my time to those RAD activities that would have the "biggest payoff" for you.

Before leaving the subject, I want to publicly thank Steve Carpenter, the Director of Human Resources for U.S. Army Garrison Yongsan. Without his invaluable assistance, particularly in guiding me through the Yongsan environment to get things done, I would have been lost. Thank you, Steve.

*Jack Terwiel*

Action may not always bring happiness; but there is no happiness without action. — Benjamin Disraeli

### **The Slide Show**

One of the more rewarding projects in preparing for the Retiree Appreciation Day was to build a slide show to be shown before the breakfast and during the first half hour until the guest speaker talks. The images come from my rao-osan.com web site and from the kalaniosullivan.com web site. I want to thank Kalani O'Sullivan for generously sharing his images with me. They greatly expanded the scope of the slide show. To pique your interest, the title is "60 Years in Korea: From Occupation to Transformation."

And, for those who might not see the slide show in its entirety in The Underground, I plan to have it running in the Uptown Lounge for the entire three hours the information booths are in operation. There are 320 slides and it's timed to run 53 minutes, then restart.

*Jack Terwiel*