



"A rigid economy of the public contributions and absolute interdiction of all useless expenses will go far towards keeping the government honest and unoppressive."

~ Thomas Jefferson, letter to Lafayette, 1823 ~

WASHINGTON REPORT

Congress on Two-Week Easter Break, President Calls for Steep Defense Cuts

The Senate and House remain on Easter break and will continue in recess next week, as well. Prior to departure April 15, Congress approved a fiscal year 2011 appropriations bill that funds the Defense Department and the federal government through September. The President signed the legislation last Friday, April 15.

Also last Friday, the House passed its fiscal year 2012 budget and sent it to the Senate for consideration. The House proposal calls for an overall increase in defense spending.

Both chambers return on the first Monday of May to consider the debt ceiling, agreement on the fiscal year 2012 budget, and initial proposals for the 2012 National Defense Authorization Act, among other measures and legislative activities.

DoD Continues to Press for TRICARE Fee Increase, Joined by Several Military Groups

As the Department of Defense and a number of military organizations continue to press for increases in TRICARE fees, the federal government just doled billions of dollars in improper payments. According to the Government Accountability Office, in just 2010, erroneous payments by the federal government totaled \$125 billion in unnecessary, improper payments.

Despite these fraudulent payments and the apparent unwillingness of our federal government to attend to efficiency, the Defense Department cannot seem to find appropriate levels of resources for its overseas contingency operations, weapons procurement programs and related defense costs. According to the Pentagon, national security is under threat from those who once wore the uniform. It points the finger of blame on what is termed spiraling personnel and healthcare costs "crippling," according to SecDef Gates, the military weapons modernization programs and related costs of fighting the expensive wars in Iraq and Afghanistan (and now Libya).

The question for our federal government is whether to rein in these billions of fraudulent payments or look to military earned benefits as a possible resource to secure our defense.

Military Associations Press for TRICARE Increase on “Working Age” Military Retirees

In all candor, NAUS is not comfortable with the direction we are headed under the recommendations submitted by our Pentagon leadership and now being strongly recommended by several military associations.

It is not only the Pentagon that is headed toward higher TRICARE fees. As NAUS has previously testified ([March 16 testimony](#)), the Pentagon plan to increase TRICARE Prime fees 13 percent, something it calls “a modest increase on working age retirees,” has successfully divided the military/veteran community. And, several associations have made public statements in that regard.

As an example of the split in the military community, let’s take a look at the April 13 statements submitted by several military organizations before the Senate Armed Services Personnel Subcommittee, chaired by Virginia Senator Jim Webb.

The National Military Family Association (NMFA) statement said: “Our Association approves of DoD’s modest increase to TRICARE Prime enrollment fees for working age retirees.”

The Association for the United States Navy (AUSN) statement said: “AUSN membership believes the President’s FY 2012 proposed enrollment fee increase can be accepted as a one time increase of 13 percent.”

The Reserve Officers Association (ROA) and Reserve Enlisted Association (REA) written statement said: “ROA and REA agree that the proposed \$30 increase for individuals and \$60 for families is a modest proposal, and can accept this as a first step.”

The Military Officers Association (MOAA) called the new proposal (for a 13 percent increase in TRICARE fees) acceptable as long as Congress approves a (non-binding) Sense of Congress statement that recognizes “the bulk of what military people pay for their healthcare isn’t paid in cash, but is paid upfront through decades of service and sacrifice.”

In regard to the Pentagon plan to raise TRICARE fees, Senator Webb (D-VA), chairman of the Personnel Subcommittee, former SecNav, and Vietnam combat veteran, who is not running for another term, said April 13, “I think most of you know that I start from the presumption that lifetime health care for career military personnel is part of a moral contract between our government and those who step forward to serve.”

“In my view,” the Chairman said, “they have earned this benefit through their years of service, and it would be wrong to change that benefit after they’ve held up their end of a moral contract. I’ll keep an open mind about discussion on this and other initiatives to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of our military healthcare benefits.”

NAUS, too, opposes the Pentagon plan and remains encouraged with Chairman Webb’s current position to “hold the line.” In a recent TRICARE Cost Survey, members of the National Association for Uniformed Services responded with appeals to hold the line on TRICARE fees for retirees and active duty families. More than half—62 percent—of members said they were not willing to pay even a “modest” TRICARE cost increase, though 25 percent said they might be willing to pay more. A vast majority of members—84 percent—agreed that TRICARE is an earned benefit and no fee or cost increases should be expected from those who completed a career in uniform. And practically all members—93 percent—said keeping costs as they are is a way for the government to honor its promises of lifetime health care, particularly when the country is at War.

Federal Employees Owe \$1 Billion in Back Taxes

Here’s another idea for the Defense Department. If you’re looking at making a request to the Office of Management of Budget for additional funds to secure our nation’s defense (and that’s where it all begins), there are now well over 2 million federal employees who owe an estimated \$1 billion in back taxes. Federal employees are paid by our government. They owe taxes to the same government. Why isn’t it possible to make an arrangement, within the federal government pay system, to resolve the tax delinquency or simply fire the scofflaws as proposed in legislation (S. 376) introduced by Senators Tom Coburn (R-OK) and Claire McCaskill (D-MO). Let’s collect these unpaid, delinquent taxes.

As for our association, NAUS will continue its strong advocacy to ensure our troops have everything they need to successfully carry out their missions and return home safely. And, we will work to see earned benefits are protected from unwarranted increases, especially when lower priority programs continue to flourish, fraud is left unattended and failure is the norm on corrective actions toward reasonable, common sense decision-making.

HEALTH CARE NEWS

TRICARE Beneficiaries Asked to Consider Link Between Kidney and Heart Disease

TRICARE beneficiaries are encouraged to check with their doctor about getting tested for kidney disease if they have cardiovascular (heart) disease or a mother, father, sister or brother has had kidney failure. The earlier kidney disease is found, the sooner you can start medical treatment and take other steps that can keep your kidneys healthier longer. See [this article](#) in TRICARE’s Featured Stories Section.

National Medication Take Back Day

National Medication Take Back Day will be observed April 30 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at many police departments, universities, hospitals and military installations across America. This one-day event, sponsored by the Drug Enforcement Administration, provides a venue for people to safely dispose of unwanted, unused and expired prescription drugs. To find a collection site near you, click [here](#).

ACTIVE DUTY NEWS

ThanksUSA Scholarships

ThanksUSA is a non-profit organization that provides financial need-based scholarships to children and spouses of US military personnel.

Now starting its sixth year, ThanksUSA has awarded 2,200 scholarships worth almost \$6.5 million and plans to award 500 scholarships at \$3,000 each in 2011. ThanksUSA's scholarship program accepts applications from April 1st to May 15th.

Awards granted to dependent children and spouses are for first-time undergraduate study at an accredited two- or four-year college, university, or vocational-technical school. Spouses may also use the award for non-degree licensure/certification programs regardless of whether an undergraduate degree has already been completed.

Kaplan University is funding through ThanksUSA a full scholarship as well as a number of partial scholarships for spouses. The partial scholarships provide for reduced tuition of up to a 50% and are renewable until they graduate.

For eligibility requirements and application, visit the [ThanksUSA website](#).

Navy Medical Commissioning Program

The board for the Navy FY-12 Nurse Corps (NC) Medical Enlisted Commissioning Program (MECP) will convene between Oct. 10 and Nov. 18, 2011. MECP provides a path for active-duty enlisted sailors and Marines, including full-time support and active-duty reserve sailors, in any rating or military occupational specialty who already have some college credit to obtain a baccalaureate degree in nursing and a commission in the Nurse Corps. All applications must be postmarked by Sept. 9, 2011. For more information, visit the [Medical Enlisted Program webpage](#) or contact Ms. Kemp, Navy Medical Education and Training Command at [\(301\) 319-4520/DSN 285](#).

Transferring GI Bill Benefits

Service members who want to transfer post 9-11 G.I. Bill benefits to their dependent children must do so before retirement and before children turn 23 years old. The dependents must be registered in DEERS (Dependent Enrollment Eligibility System) and must be full-time college students. Requests to transfer benefits start by using the DoD Transferability of Education Benefits (TEB) [website](#). Upon receiving approval from

DoD, you then apply using the Veterans Affairs online application on the [VA website](#) and use Form 22-1990E. For more information, contact the Department of Veterans Affairs (Education) at [1-888-442-4551](tel:1-888-442-4551) or visit the VA GI Bill [website](#).

Power of Attorney Requirements by DFAS

Trying to contact the Department of Accounting and Finance (DFAS) while your spouse or family member is deployed? Before any information for another person is provided, DFAS requires a valid general or limited power of attorney. It's the law. Otherwise, the military member is the only one allowed to discuss individual pay issues with a finance officer or a DFAS customer service representatives.

VETERANS NEWS

VA/DoD Smart Phone App Helps Veterans Manage PTSD

VA Press Release - Veterans dealing with symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) can turn to their smart phones for help anytime with the PTSD Coach application created by the VA) and the Department of Defense.

PTSD Coach lets users track their PTSD symptoms, links them with local sources of support, provides accurate information about PTSD, and teaches helpful individualized strategies for managing PTSD symptoms at any moment. The free PTSD Coach app is now available for download from the iTunes store and will be available for Android devices by the end of the spring.

The PTSD Coach is primarily designed to enhance services for individuals who are already receiving mental health care, though it is certainly helpful for those considering entering mental health care and those who just want to learn more about PTSD.

The application is one of the first in a series of jointly designed resources by the VA National Center for PTSD and the Defense Department's National Center for Telehealth and Technology to help service members, veterans, their families and friends manage their readjustment challenges and get anonymous assistance. Given the current popularity of mobile devices, VA and DoD hope to reach tens of thousands of veterans, service members, and their family members with the new suite of apps.

More information on the PTSD Coach app is available on the VA's National Center for PTSD [website](#). More apps from [DoD's National Center for Telehealth and Technology](#) can be found [here](#).

New Program for Wounded Warriors in New Jersey

The Medical Society of New Jersey and the New Jersey Department of Military and Veterans Affairs have launched a new program called "Healers and Heroes." This program will match veterans and returning service members with physicians who have military experience. The goal of the free program is to help returning service members and veterans find the services needed to cope with the "invisible" wounds of war such

as traumatic brain injuries and post-traumatic stress disorder. For more information visit the [Healers and Heroes website](#) or telephone (609) 896-1766, ext. 203.

New 'Atomic Veterans' Website

Atomic Veterans are troops who were stationed as ground troops or POWs near the detonation sites in Hiroshima and Nagasaki or participants in above ground nuclear tests conducted from 1945 to 1962 in the Pacific Ocean and southwest U.S. Some conditions (mostly cancers) are considered "presumptive conditions" for Atomic Veterans. The VA is encouraging all Atomic Veterans to visit the new website for the [Veterans' Advisory Board on Dose Reconstruction](#) (VBDR). Also, the VA offers an evaluation, known as the Ionizing Radiation Registry (IRR), free-of-charge to all eligible "Atomic Veterans." Information is available on the VA's [Radiation page](#).

VA Reaches Out to Rural Vets

Nearly 40 percent of veterans enrolled in Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) healthcare programs live in rural areas of our country. Like other individuals living in rural areas, veterans often have difficulty in obtaining access to quality health care. The VA out-patient healthcare system emphasizes prevention and patient-centered care using the electronic health record and patient aligned care teams. The Veterans Health Administration (VHA) [Office of Rural Health](#) was created in March 2007 to bring this model of care to veterans in rural and highly rural areas. For more information, visit the VHA [Office of Rural Health website](#).

Stop Loss Special Pay Extension

If you're eligible and still haven't claimed your Retroactive Stop Loss Special Pay, you now have until Oct. 21, 2011. Visit DoD's [Stop Loss Page](#) for more information on how to apply.

Veterans Crisis Line is Here for You

The confidential Veterans Crisis Line is here for you. Millions of veterans across America recognize their symptoms, get treated and get better without risking their careers, relationships, or sense of pride. It's your call. [1- 800- 273-8255](#) (Press 1).

NAUS NEWS

NAUS Scholarships - Only One Week Left to Apply

The application for the annual NAUS Scholarship Program remains open. Application and supporting information (available on the [NAUS Scholarship Page](#)) must be submitted to NAUS by April 30, 2011.

We will be awarding four \$2,000 undergraduate scholarships for the 2011-2012 School Year!

Here are the requirements for eligibility:

- Applicant must be a member of NAUS in good standing, or the spouse, child or grandchild of a NAUS member in good standing.
- Applicant must also be enrolled, or accepted for enrollment in, an undergraduate degree- or certificate-granting program from an accredited institution of higher learning on a full- or part-time basis. (If part-time, applicant's course load must be at least 12 semester hours or 24 quarter hours annually.)
- If in high school, applicant must have a minimum GPA of 3.0 (on a 4.0 scale) during the most recent two semesters, or if applicant is enrolled in college, must have a minimum GPA of 2.5 (on a 4.0 scale).

Not a NAUS Member Yet? [Join online.](#)

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Our Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines and Coast Guardsmen stand in harm's way around the globe to defend our nation and our cherished liberties. NAUS asks you to please pray for their continued strength and protection—and pray as well for their families, who daily stand in support of their spouses, fathers and mothers, sons and daughters, and brothers and sisters.

GODBLESSAMERICA

[1-800-842-3451](tel:1-800-842-3451)

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