



***"You are the best that America has to offer. My admiration and affection for you is without limit, and I will think about you and your families and pray for you every day for the rest of my life. God bless you."***

**~ Former Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates ~**

**Remember to fly your flag with pride on July 4!**

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## **WASHINGTON REPORT**

### **Debt-Ceiling Discussions Overshadow Legislative Agenda**

Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV) announced Thursday morning that he has canceled the July 4 recess, so lawmakers can continue to focus on deficit-reduction negotiations. Reid will schedule a vote on Tuesday, July 5, forcing Senators to cancel previous plans and show up to the Senate floor.

NAUS has serious concerns about growing pressure to reduce defense spending to meet agreements on the federal debt-ceiling. Reports indicate that defense cuts proposed by the White House are receiving more acceptance in key discussions to reduce spending.

NAUS firmly agrees with a reported statement from Rep. Duncan Hunter (R-CA), who said, "It's hard to make the case for defense cuts during wartime. And it's a bad idea to start cutting defense for the sake of cutting."

NAUS also fully supports, Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison's revived effort to guarantee military pay if the government shuts down before reaching a decision on the debt-ceiling. As Sen. Hutchinson said in a Senate floor speech Thursday, "We should start our work by making sure that we have a 'Plan B,' that our troops and their families won't be political pawns in the struggle between raising taxes and cutting spending."

### **Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee**

On Wednesday, the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee unanimously approved several bills to improve quality of life for veterans and their families. One bill, S. 277, the Caring for Camp Lejeune Veterans Act, would provide medical care for Marines and, in certain

circumstances, their families, who served at Camp Lejeune Marine Corps Base, North Carolina, and were exposed to contaminated water for many years. Earlier this year both DoD and the VA testified in opposition to this bill.

NAUS heartily applauds committee efforts to correct a tremendous wrong, however, we are concerned about the provision in S. 277 that provides the funding that pays for proposed care. In order to pay for medical care, the bill calls for consolidating the commissary system with the exchange systems, resulting in one military resale system.

Make no mistake about it; this funding proposal would seriously damage commissaries and exchanges. Stores will go out of business and leave military families with no benefit and higher costs. DoD has proposed, several times in the past, to combine exchange systems only to have numerous studies prove that it would not work. NAUS looks forward to working with Congress to find an alternative funding source.

### **Panetta Taking Over Pentagon**

Leon Panetta is scheduled to take his oath of office today as the next Secretary of Defense.

NAUS is concerned that during the confirmation hearing Mr. Panetta agreed with the Pentagon plan to increase TRICARE Prime rate 13 percent and called it a “first step.” The former CIA Director said, “The proposed healthcare efficiencies are sensible efforts to control DOD’s health care cost.” He also said, “I believe that we need to continue to explore all possibilities to control the costs of military health care.”

As reported last week, the House Appropriations Committee used \$330 million of surplus TRICARE funds to pay for 22 congressionally directed Pentagon medical research programs, most of which are unrelated to battlefield medicine or already funded at the National Institute of Health. NAUS can feel the breath on our back from the “camel’s nose in the tent” gaining additional ground, and we ask you to consider joining us to fight the good fight to protect earned benefits.

### **Gen Petraeus confirmed as CIA Director**

The Senate on Thursday, by a 94-0 vote, confirmed Army Gen. David Petraeus to be the next director of the CIA. Prior to the vote, senators from both parties lauded the four-star general who is currently serving as the top commander of coalition forces in Afghanistan. He is expected to take over the CIA in September.

### **Sen. Lieberman and Sen. Coburn Propose Extreme Medicare “Doc Fix”**

As our readers know, physicians who serve Medicare and TRICARE patients face, under current law, a nearly 30 percent cut in reimbursement for Medicare treatment next January. To avert the severe cut, Sen. Tom Coburn (R-OK) and Sen. Joe Lieberman (I-CT) have presented a proposal that would freeze doctors’ pay for 3-years and add a number of other changes to Medicare law to slow the growth of spending and “save” the government healthcare program for seniors.

While freezing physicians' pay for 3-years is radical enough, the Senators' proposal would also gradually raise the Medicare eligibility age from 65 to 67 years by 2025, require wealthier seniors to pay more for their share of the Part B medical program and the Part D drug program, and increase Part B premiums for all enrollees. The plan has not yet been submitted as legislation, but is scored to cut more than \$600 billion over 10 years.

With doctors already dropping from TRICARE or reducing the number of patients they see because of low payment rates under the program, NAUS finds it beyond understanding how stagnating physicians' reimbursement for 3-years would do anything but cause further harm to the provision of care under TRICARE. Should this proposal take root, NAUS looks forward to hearing from you and carrying your clear message to elected members of Congress on Capitol Hill.

### **NAUS Joins Group Fighting a Portion of Healthcare Reform**

This week, NAUS joined The Healthcare Leadership Council (HLC) in release of a letter to Congress, signed by a broad coalition of more than 250 groups, calling for repeal of the Independent Payment Advisory Board (IPAB).

One of many panels created under the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA), the IPAB is required to recommend proposals to reduce Medicare spending to achieve a certain level of Medicare "savings." The Board will consist of 15 members, appointed by the President, and will have unprecedented power to cut physicians' payment rates for providing care under Medicare and TRICARE. Despite its power to literally change laws previously enacted by Congress, the Board has little oversight. Under the PPACA, IPAB decisions cannot be reviewed or overturned under either administrative or judicial review. And Congress can only change the decision by a super-majority vote of 2/3rds of the Senate and if successful, Congress is obliged to approve an equal amount of "savings" in other areas.

The letter states our concern about the power of IPAB decision-making and the high potential for serious adverse impact on patient access to quality health care in Medicare and TRICARE. To read the entire letter and see the list of groups [click HERE](#).

### **FBI Involved in Arlington Cemetery Investigations**

The scandals over the mishandling remains buried at Arlington National Cemetery continue and has now reached the Justice Department, with the FBI probing the issue and looking into contracting fraud and falsifying records. *The Washington Post*, citing sources familiar with the investigation, reports that a federal grand jury in Alexandria, Va., has been subpoenaing witnesses and records. The FBI and Army Criminal Investigation Command investigation began six months ago. Congress has also been looking into the issue since last year.

The investigations are based upon a June 2010 Army Inspector General's Office report which revealed misplaced and misidentified remains and millions wasted on information

technology contracts.

## HEALTH CARE NEWS

### **Survey of Former Camp Lejeune Residents**

Hundreds of thousands of people who lived or worked at [Camp Lejeune](#) in North Carolina more than 25 years ago are being asked to complete a detailed health survey to determine what diseases may be linked to contaminated water they drank and bathed in at the largest Marine base on the East Coast.

As many as 1 million people over three decades may have been exposed to well water that was contaminated by toxins, officials have said. Some of the toxins may have been present at levels as much as 40 times higher than current safety standards.

The [federal Agency for Toxic Substances & Disease Registry](#), a sister agency of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, is sending the [survey](#) to about 300,000 people who lived or worked at the Marine base and about 53,000 to those who lived and worked at Camp Pendleton, Calif., before 1986. The responses from Camp Pendleton are being used for comparison purposes, officials said.

For more information go to this [website](#).

### **TRICARE Sending Alerts on Home Delivery**

If you are in the TRICARE system and get at least two maintenance prescriptions, you will probably get a letter from TRICARE in the next few months. TRICARE wants to let beneficiaries know that you can save real money by switching to home delivery via mail instead of going to your local pharmacy.

The alerts focus on the convenience and lower cost of home delivery versus retail pharmacies, and include information on how to switch prescriptions over. The alerts also seek to alleviate possible concerns about home delivery by highlighting safety measures and 24/7 access to a pharmacist.

TRICARE Deputy Director Rear Adm. Christine Hunter said, "Providing service members and their families with an affordable, quality prescription drug benefit is a vital part of TRICARE's mission. When beneficiaries choose home delivery, they are using their benefit wisely."

Signing up for home delivery saves trips to the pharmacy and saves 66 percent of the prescription costs. In addition to the personal savings, DOD saved \$30 million in 2010 alone, when beneficiaries switched from retail to home delivery.

To sign up for home delivery beneficiaries should go to the Express-Scripts [Home Delivery website](#) or call the TRICARE Member Choice Center at [877-262-3390](#).

### **Smart Phone Application for Express-Scripts/TRICARE Prescriptions**

Express Scripts, the contractor managing the TRICARE prescription-drug benefit, released a new mobile app for TRICARE beneficiaries.

The new TRICARE *Express Rx* mobile app allows beneficiaries to manage prescriptions and access important health information anywhere they go. The TRICARE mobile-optimized website provides convenient and secure access for beneficiaries from their smart phones to many features designed to help them get the most value from the TRICARE pharmacy benefit.

The features include:

- Start TRICARE Pharmacy Home Delivery – allows beneficiaries to save time and money by transferring available maintenance medications to TRICARE Pharmacy Home Delivery
- Order Home Delivery Refills – allows beneficiaries to schedule prescription refills from TRICARE Pharmacy Home Delivery
- Check Home Delivery Order Status – allows beneficiaries to check to see if their TRICARE Pharmacy Home Delivery order has shipped and the ship date
- Find a Pharmacy – locate a nearby retail pharmacy and map it using the GPS technology built into smart phones
- Drug Information – access a vast database to look up important drug information, common uses and possible side effects

The new TRICARE *Express Rx* mobile app is available for both iPhone® and Android™ devices, and can be downloaded for free by visiting iTunes App Store or the Android Marketplace. Those with a Blackberry®, Windows® or other device with web browsing capabilities can access these same features by visiting the Express Scripts mobile-optimized site at this [website](#).

To ensure the security and data protection of beneficiaries, a beneficiary must first be registered through the Express-Scripts.com/TRICARE member portal before being able to log-in to the TRICARE *Express Rx* mobile app or mobile-optimized site. A beneficiary can easily register for an account by visiting the [Express-Scripts/TRICARE website](#). Once registered, beneficiaries can access the TRICARE *Express Rx* app and mobile-optimized website.

## **ACTIVE DUTY NEWS**

### **Navy Expanding Health Study**

Navy Medicine's Millennium Cohort Study (MCS) research team has announced that it working to expand its number of study participants by 50,000 this year and is currently seeking new volunteers to participate.

The MCS is designed to combine survey data with vaccination, personnel, deployment, and military health system information, to evaluate the impact of military service,

including deployment, on various health measures. The study is the largest prospective military health study in the U.S. For more information, visit the [Millennium Cohort Study website](#).

### **Farewell Message, Secretary Robert M. Gates, The Pentagon, Wed., June 29, 2011**

“To the Men and Women of the United States Armed Forces: ...

“It has been a difficult time for you and for your families, from long and repeated deployments for those in all four services -- and the associated long separations from loved ones -- to the anguish of those of you who have lost friends and family in combat or those of you who have suffered visible and invisible wounds of war yourselves. But your dedication, courage and skill have kept America safe even while bringing the war in Iraq to a successful conclusion and, I believe, at last turning the tide in Afghanistan. Your countrymen owe you their freedom and their security. They sleep safely at night and pursue their dreams during the day because you stand the watch and protect them.

For four and a half years, I have signed the orders deploying you, all too often into harm's way. This has weighed on me every day. I have known about and felt your hardship, your difficulties, your sacrifice more than you can possibly imagine. I have felt personally responsible for each of you, and so I have tried to do all I could to provide whatever was needed so you could complete your missions successfully and come home safely -- and, if hurt, get the fastest and best care in the world.

You are the best that America has to offer. My admiration and affection for you is without limit, and I will think about you and your families and pray for you every day for the rest of my life. God bless you.”

As part of his retirement ceremony on Thursday, President Obama presented retiring Secretary Gates with the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

## **VETERANS NEWS**

### **VA Expands Definition of Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma**

The VA recently expanded eligibility for disability compensation due to non-Hodgkin's lymphoma (NHL) for veterans who served in Vietnam's offshore waters.

This is good news for Blue Water veterans whose claims for compensation benefits have been denied under earlier more restrictive definition of the disease.

Under 38 CFR, veterans who served in Vietnam, including service in the waters offshore, are entitled to a presumption of service connection for non-Hodgkin's lymphoma.

If you have NHL, or know a veteran who has the disease, and a previous claim was denied NAUS recommends you find a Veterans Service Officer to assist you in re-

opening your claim.

### **New Arlington Cemetery Call Center**

The Executive Director (ED) of the Army National Cemeteries Program has established a call center in order to immediately address family member concerns regarding burial discrepancies at Arlington National Cemetery. Families with questions or concerns regarding their loved ones buried at Arlington National Cemetery should call [\(703\) 607-8199](tel:7036078199). The call center will be open Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. To 5 p.m. (ET).

In addition, a toll-free phone number has been established to ease the burden for people who may be calling long distance to make funeral arrangements at Arlington National Cemetery. The new toll-free number is [1 \(877\) 907-8585](tel:18779078585).

For more information on funeral arrangements and eligibility, visit the [Arlington, National Cemetery website](#).

## **NAUS NEWS**

### **NOVA Chapter Meeting**

The Northern Virginia (NOVA) Chapter of the National Association for Uniformed Services will hold its next meeting on July 12<sup>th</sup> from 11:30 am to 1:00 pm at the American Legion Post #176, Amherst Ave, Springfield, VA. A lunch meal will be available for purchase. The program will feature new NAUS President LtGen Jack Klimp, USMC, (Ret). President Klimp will layout his vision for NAUS. For more information please contact Mr. [Wayne Gatewood](#), VP for Membership, cell: [703-405-9565](tel:7034059565). And “Bring a Buddy” to join NAUS and take advantage of our [I Got Mine! member-get-a-member campaign](#).