



AFSA ON CALL



September 15, 2011

Volume 6, Edition 24

Happy Birthday U.S. Air Force!

LEGISLATIVE UPDATES AND NEWS

Senate Panel Freezes DoD Funding for FY 2012

The Senate Appropriations Defense Subcommittee decided on Tuesday to keep DoD spending at current levels, allocating just \$513 billion in basic defense spending for FY 2012-\$26 billion less than the President requested earlier this year. Appropriators did however agree with the Administration on war-related funding and they are recommending that \$117.8 billion be provided for Overseas Contingency Operations.

This change in funding policy for a department who previously saw a decade of growth stems from the debt accord struck last month by Congress and the Administration. It directed \$350 billion in defense-related cuts over 10 years and the \$513 billion figure agreed to on Tuesday reflects those changes. The full Committee plans to consider draft measure sometime today.

According to Chairman Daniel K. Inouye (D-HI) the Senate measure fully funds requested military end strengths and a 1.6 percent authorized pay raise for military personnel. It also provides nearly \$40 billion for the defense health program, an increase of \$1 billion over FY 2011 levels.

AFSA observes the House-approved version of the bill, H.R. 2219 provides \$530 billion-a difference that will have to be resolved through a joint conference later this year. Additionally, the \$513 billion figure is \$20 billion less than authorizers agreed to in the upper chamber's yet-to-be completed version of the FY 2012 National Defense Authorization Act, S.1253. Deputy Defense Secretary Nominee Ashton Carter told SASC members on Tuesday

that DoD plans to send the Committee its recommendations how to bridge the gap between the two bills very soon.

Continuing Resolution in the Works

With virtually no chance lawmakers can pass FY 2012 appropriations legislation any time soon; congressional leaders are crafting a Continuing Resolution to keep federal agencies funded past September 30. House Majority Leader Eric Cantor (R-VA) told reporters late last week he anticipates the House bill will come to the floor for action during the week of September 19, and the bill will provide funding through "late fall." Cantor declined to provide a more specific timeframe but our sources tell us the goal of the measure is to carry government operations into the month of November.

House Committee Advances Veterans-Related Legislation

Last Thursday the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs favorably reported the following seven pieces of legislation for full House consideration.

H.R. 2433 "The Veterans Opportunity to Work Act of 2011," seeks to provide tax credits to small businesses that hire unemployed veterans and raise the number of service members benefiting from transition assistance programs. It would enable some 100,000 unemployed veterans of past wars to receive up to 1-year of Montgomery GI Bill benefits. This opportunity will allow veterans to acquire the skills to find employment in today's changing global market.

H.R. 2646 Veterans Health Care Facilities Capital Improvement Act of 2011 would, among other things authorize various VA medical facility projects and leases.

H.R. 2302 directs VA to notify Congress of conferences sponsored by the Department of Veterans Affairs, thus making the department and Secretary more accountable for such expenses and accountability.

H.R. 2349, the "Veterans' Benefits Training Improvement Act of 2011" requires VA to annually assess the skills of certain employees and managers of the Veterans Benefits Administration. This will help ensure VA maintains a trained staff and is held accountable for such areas as the backlog of

pending claims and completing tasks accurately and in a timely manner.

H.R. 2074, the "Veterans Sexual Assault Prevention Act" requires VA to establish a comprehensive policy on reporting and tracking sexual assault incidents and other safety incidents that occur at medical facilities of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and directs additional staff training to recognize sexual assault. H.R. 2074 also includes a provision for increased flexibility in establishing rates for reimbursement of State homes by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs for nursing home care provided to veterans. In some cases veterans are being turned away due to funding and their disability rating. This has been an ongoing concern of AFSA and we are pleased they are now focused on it.

H.R. 1025 recognizes the service in the Reserve components of certain persons by honoring them with status as veterans under law.

H.R. 1263 amends the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act to provide surviving spouses with certain protections relating to mortgages and mortgage foreclosures.

According to Committee staff, this legislation is expected to come up for vote in the House this fall. We will monitor its progress and provide updates as information becomes available.

ARE YOU BASED IN OR FROM ONE THE STATES LISTED BELOW?

The States of Arkansas, Georgia, Idaho, Minnesota, Montana, New Hampshire, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Wyoming, and the District of Columbia, have NOT yet fully enacted the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children.

The Compact works to correct the inequalities that military children face, as they transfer from one school (system) to another due to deployments or permanent change of station moves by their service member parent(s).

Schools are asked to exercise flexibility with military children and to understand their unique situations. With the average military student moving six to nine times during their school years (K-12), it is imperative

that schools quickly and smoothly transition students into the school system, so that they can begin to settle into a familiar routine. As an AFSA initiative, we will continue to pursue this compact until each state has signed on. Child education is a critical quality of life measure for Airmen and their families and directly impacts military recruitment, assignment satisfaction, retention, and readiness.

AFSA Congratulates ACC Enlisted Members for Order of Sword to General Fraser

AFSA congratulates General William M. Fraser, Air Combat Commander, who was inducted into the command's Order of the Sword, on September 12, 2011. In humbly accepting the honor, General Fraser expressed his gratitude and thanks to the enlisted men and women of ACC. "I am speechless - it's nothing I ever would have imagined," he said. "I am deeply honored to have this opportunity, but it's really about all of you. So thank you very, very much. This is huge - it really is."

"You are not Forgotten"

Friday, September 16, is POW/MIA Recognition Day; with September 11 through 17 being POW/MIA Recognition Week. During this timeframe we urge all AFSA chapters to take the lead in their communities in recognizing the important contribution of and our commitment to those who served but didn't make it home. In doing so, we will send a strong message to those who serve today that, should they not make it home, we will not rest until they are rescued or accounted for.

Members of the AFSA staff will be sponsoring, and the Andrews Chapter 102 will be hosting a POW/MIA remembrance ceremony at the headquarters building on Friday at 9:00 a.m. AFSA staff will also be participating in a similar observance at the Air Force Memorial in Arlington, Virginia, at 9:00 a.m. Both ceremonies are open to the public, and everyone who is in the area at these times is invited to attend.

VETERANS NEWS

VA Announces Expansion of Virtual Lifetime Electronic Record Pilot

A single electronic medical record that stays with a Veteran from induction into the military through burial is something DoD and VA have been working on for many years now. Last week, VA announced plans to expand a current electronic record pilot program from five medical centers to 11.

Launched in 2009, the Virtual Lifetime Electronic Record (VLER) program is a multi-faceted business and technology initiative designed to share Veterans' health information electronically, safely, and privately between VA, Department of Defense (DoD), and selected private health care facilities that are members of the secure Nationwide Health Information Network. VA is on track to implement health information exchange at 11 VA medical centers and to partner with both DoD and private health care entities by fall 2011. The 11 existing and expansion sites are as follows:

Existing Sites:

- * San Diego VA Medical Center and Kaiser Permanente San Diego, in operation since winter 2009
- * Hampton VA Medical Center in Virginia, MedVirginia and DoD, in operation since fall 2010
- * Spokane VA Medical Center in Washington, Inland Northwest Health Services and DoD, in operation since spring 2011
- * Hunter Holmes McGuire VA Medical Center in Richmond, Va., and MedVirginia, in operation since spring 2011
- * Richard L. Roudebush VA Medical Center in Indianapolis, and Indiana hospitals, in operation since summer 2011

Expansion Sites:

- * Grand Junction VA Medical Center in Colorado, and rural Utah hospitals, first in Moab, Utah, then through the Utah Health Information Network by fall 2011;
- * Asheville VA Medical Center in North Carolina and Western North Carolina Health Network by fall 2011
- * VA Western New York Healthcare System in Buffalo, New York, and Buffalo area hospitals through the HEALTHeLINK Health Information Exchange by fall 2011
- * Ralph H. Johnson VA Medical Center in Charleston, South Carolina and Charleston area hospitals through the South Carolina Health Information Exchange by fall 2011
- * Minneapolis VA Health Care System and Minnesota hospitals through the Community Health Information Collaborative Health Information Exchange by fall 2011 and
- * VA Puget Sound Health Care System in Washington and MultiCare sites by fall 2011

HEALTH CARE

Military Pathways

Military Pathways provides service members, veterans and their families with 24/7 access to free, anonymous online self-assessments. Learn more by clicking HERE <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Em3fk0eVh8I&feature=youtu.be>> , then click "Share" to spread this important message.

TRICARE Help For Parents of School-bound Children

As military parents and guardians prepare to send their children back to school, TRICARE has launched a back to school resource webpage (<http://tricare.mil/mybenefit/home/LifeEvents/BackToSchool>). It includes everything from getting your child immunized to packing healthy lunches. Click on the link provided to learn more.

WANT INSTANT UPDATES? FOLLOW AFSA ON TWITTER

Be the first in getting the latest updates and follow AFSA ON CALL. We are now posting daily and weekly updates on Twitter. As you may already know, Twitter allows for instant updates and happenings around the world, either on computers or your portable devices.

Sign up for your AFSA Twitter updates at - <http://twitter.com/#!/afsahq>
<<http://twitter.com/#!/afsahq>>

AFSA MEMBER BENEFITS

AFSA Insurance

For information and applications on any of these insurance plans please contact Marsh Affinity Group Services toll-free at (800) 882-5541, or online HERE <<http://www.afsainsurance.com/>> . Coverage may vary or not be issued in all states.

- Accidental Death & Dismemberment Insurance Plan
- Cancer Expense Insurance
- Group Dental Insurance

- Long-Term Care Insurance
- Short-Term Recovery Insurance Plan
- TRICARE Supplement Insurance
- Life Line Health Screenings
- Trip Cancellation Insurance

We want to hear your thoughts and opinions. Complete the sentence below!
What's your top 10 list for AFSA? Go ahead. Don't be bashful. Send it.

"I THINK AFSA SHOULD _____."

© 2011 Air Force Sergeants Association. All rights reserved. AFSA and the AFSA logo are registered trademarks of the Air Force Sergeants Association. Headquarters AFSA is located at 5211 Auth Road, Suitland, Maryland 20746.

Sign-up to get your own copy

subscribe@hqafsa.org?subject=Subscribe%20to%20%22AFSA%20on%20Call%22%20&body=%20Click%20SEND%20to%20subscribe%20 | Change your email

address

subscribe@hqafsa.org?subject=Change%20Email%20Address%20&body=Old%20Email%20Address:%0D%0A%0D%0ANew%20Email%20Address:%0D%0A%0D%0AClick%20SEND

| Unsubscribe

unsubscribe@hqafsa.org?subject=Unsubscribe%20to%20%22AFSA%20on%20Call%22%20&body=%20Click%20SEND%20to%20UNsubscribe%20

Follow us on

Twitter <<http://twitter.com/afsahq>> Facebook
<http://www.hqafsa.org/AM/Template.cfm?Section=AFSA_Newsletter&Template=/CM/HTMLDisplay.cfm&ContentID=7787>