

Retiree Activities Office
81st Training Wing/CVR
500 Fisher St-Room 102

**Retiree Appreciation Day
Friday, 6 November 2015**



Still Serving!



MILITARY RETIREE AND ANNUITANT NEWSLETTER

Fall 2015

Published by the Keesler AFB Retiree Activities Office (RAO) located in the Sablich Center, 500 Fisher Street, Room 102. Visit the RAO any duty day from 0800 to 1600 on M-TH or 0800 to 1500 on Fridays, or contact us at 228-376-8111 or 800-732-2894, Ext 376-8111, via email at rao.keesler@us.af.mil, or through our website at www.keesler.af.mil. DISCLAIMER: While every effort is made to verify the information in this newsletter, the RAO volunteer staff cannot guarantee the accuracy of information furnished by outside agencies.

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RETIREE APPRECIATION DAY (FRIDAY – 6 NOVEMBER 2015)

On Friday, 6 November, the Roberts Maintenance Facility on Keesler AFB will once again be the location for our Retiree Appreciation Day celebration. This facility is on Hangar Road. All gates will have highlighted maps directing you to the facility where you will find ample parking, including spaces for those with disabilities. Complimentary coffee and donuts will open the festivities at 0800 and the displays' area will open at 0830 with activities continuing throughout lunch.

ED'S MUSINGS

Director's Opinions and Items of Interest

Maximize Your Voice in Washington: The Military Coalition is comprised of 31 organizations representing more than 5.5 million members of the uniformed services (active, reserve, retired, survivors, veterans) and their families. www.themilitarycoalition.org. How many of the 31 have you joined? To preserve your benefits and have a voice in congressional deliberations, you need to JOIN, JOIN now!

Help Wanted: The Keesler Retiree Activities Office needs volunteers to assist fellow retirees and their spouses and dependents. Retirees/spouses from all services are welcome to participate. Most of our volunteers contribute four (4) hours per week. Come see us or call Charlie Partin, MSgt (Ret) at 228-376-8110.

E-Mail Updates from RAO: To receive important updates and pertinent information for retirees and annuitants by emails from our office, add your e-mail address to our contact list by contacting Charlie Partin, MSgt (Ret) at rao.keesler@us.af.mil.

National Cemetery Interment - Reminder for Retiree and Spouses

If the retiree and/or spouse is to be interred in a National Cemetery, the survivor/executor must have official source document(s) to provide to the funeral home for verification that he/she served in the Armed Forces. The most appropriate source document for retirees is the DD FORM 214 (Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty). *See "Need a copy of your DD Form 214?" below.*

Alternative documents for proof of service are: a discharge certificate with inclusive dates of service, a retirement order, or a service component "Record of Service." No pre-arranged service is allowed. Once eligibility is verified for either the retiree or spouse, a surviving spouse will automatically be covered for burial upon his/her death.

Of Interest to Retirees with Combined Military and Civil Service

Retirees—Your survivor(s) should immediately notify the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), Retiree Management Operations Center at P.O. Box 45, Boyer, PA 16107-0045, or call 1-888-767-6738 for assistance with the death claim, annuity, payments, etc.. Upon receipt of the death certificate and any other claim documents please call the RAO at 228-376-8111 to contact a NARFE Representative—(currently available on Wednesdays from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.)

Important Information of a Different Nature: The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) announced Thursday, June 4, 2015, that the following week they would begin sending 4 million current and former federal employees notifications that their personal information had been breached in a massive hacking incident that investigators discovered in April. In an announcement posted on its website, OPM said that beginning June 8 and continuing through June 19, the agency would send notifications to the millions of people whose personal data was compromised in the breach. "The email will come from opmcio@csid.com and it will contain information regarding credit monitoring and identity theft protection services being provided to those federal employees impacted by the data breach".

(SOURCE: Retvet-info-bounce@freelists.org on behalf of RETVET-INFO@freelists.org, June 5, 2015)

TRICARE AND DEERS

RETIREE DENTAL COVERAGE

If not currently enrolled, you can enroll in the TRICARE Retiree Dental Plan (TRDP). This dental plan is separate from TRICARE's health benefit and requires a separate enrollment. The TRICARE Retiree Dental Program is a voluntary dental plan. You can enroll if: a retired service member, family member of a retired service member, retired Guard/Reserve member, family member of retired Guard/Reserve member, medal of Honor recipient, family member of Medal of Honor recipient, or survivor. For details phone 1-888-838-8737.

TRICARE PRESCRIPTION BENEFIT - BIG CHANGES COMING

For some time, DOD has stressed the value of Home Delivery (via mail) as a low-cost option for prescription service to beneficiaries (only prescriptions filled by military pharmacies have a lower cost to DOD). As an incentive to use Home Delivery, co-payment for generic drugs from home delivery was reduced to zero (no cost). Co-payments for the same generic drugs from the retail pharmacy network ranged from \$5 to \$8. Brand name drugs, whether formulary or non-formulary, were considerably less expensive via Home Delivery.

Perhaps you have been part of the TRICARE For Life Pharmacy Pilot. This Pilot program from the FY 13 defense spending bill requires you to fill prescriptions for select maintenance drugs through Home Delivery or at a military pharmacy. As established, the DOD guidelines for the Pilot offered an "opt-out" provision after the beneficiary uses the Pilot for one year.

In September, TRICARE will notify beneficiaries of **a significant change to the prescription benefit**. Effective 1 October, a provision of the FY15 defense bill will require all TRICARE beneficiaries, except active duty, to obtain selected maintenance medication via Home Delivery or from a military pharmacy. Beneficiaries will have 90 days to move all prescriptions to Home Delivery or military pharmacy or become responsible for 100% of the prescription cost. Unlike the Pilot program, there will be no provision to "opt-out" of this mandate. The retail pharmacy network can still be used for "acute" prescription needs - those medicines used short term such as antibiotics and pain medicines. Otherwise, the retail pharmacy network is no longer an option. (MOAA Legislative Update 14 Aug 15)

TRICARE FOR LIFE REMINDER. Upon reaching age 65, TRICARE For Life requires that you are enrolled in Medicare Part A and Medicare Part B. Part D (Prescription Coverage) is not required!

NEW EXPRESS SCRIPTS WEBSITE

The new website www.express-scripts.com/tricare contains enhanced features. Beneficiaries can see all of their current prescriptions, check their status, turn on or off the automatic refills feature, and order refills of their home delivery prescriptions. They can also see which prescriptions are on backorder, plus current and recent explanations of their benefits. A revamped user-friendly version of the formulary search tool is available on the TRICARE Formulary Search Tool webpage at <https://www.express-scripts.com/static/formularySearch/2.0.2/#/formularySearch/drugSearch>.

(SOURCE: JBLM McChord Field Retiree Activities Office for Air Force Retirees, their spouses and survivors, June 2015)

DEERS UPDATES REQUIRED

Remember to update your Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System (DEERS) information as needed. The Department of Defense uses your information to determine eligibility for TRICARE benefits and programs and your TRICARE region. When there is a change of information, each family member's DEERS record must be updated separately. For more information, visit www.tricare.mil/deers. (SOURCE: TFL Fact Sheet Nov 2014)

Marriage requires DEERS update - Bring a new spouse to a uniformed service identification (ID) card office to register him or her in DEERS. You will need the documents below to add your spouse to DEERS. All documents must be originals or certified copies. To find the nearest ID card issuing facility, visit <https://www.dmdc.osd.mil/rsl/appi/site?execution=e1s1> (For Keesler AFB go to Sablich Center, Room 125). Required documents: marriage certificate; spouse birth certificate; spouse Social Security card, and spouse photo ID. In the following scenarios, getting married will cause TRICARE benefits to end: surviving (widowed) spouse remarries; former spouse remarries; adult child enrolled in TRICARE Young Adult gets married. (SOURCE: JBLM McChord Field Retiree Activities Office for Air Force Retirees, their spouses and survivors, June 2015)

REMOVAL OF SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBERS (SSNs) FROM ALL MILITARY ID CARDS

The Department of Defense (DoD) is removing SSNs from Common Access Cards (CACs) and Uniformed Services Identification (USID) Cards to protect the personal identity information of cardholders. Cardholders will have their DoD ID Number printed on their ID Cards. This number also replaces the SSN as the Geneva Conventions serial number. Eligible beneficiaries will also have their DoD Benefits Number printed on their ID Cards. Medical providers will use the DoD Benefits Number on new ID Cards to validate eligibility and to process claims. Cards with the SSN remain valid until replaced. Changes to ID Cards will be made upon ID Card renewal.

(SOURCE: Guam Retiree Activities Office Newsletter – April 15/Vol 5, Issue 1.5)

TRICARE AND MEDICARE AT AGE 65

TRICARE For Life (TFL) is available to you when you turn 65 years of age and have both Medicare Part A and B. Once you have Part A and Part B you automatically receive TFL benefits. Keeping your information current in the Defense Eligibility Reporting System (DEERS) is key in ensuring your enrollment in TFL. Your birth date will determine when you become eligible and when you should contact the Social Security Administration office to sign up for Medicare Part A and Part B. TFL coverage begins on the first day that you have both Part A and B coverage.

- If born on the first day of the month, you become eligible for Medicare on the first day of the month before you turn 65 years of age. Signup for Medicare between two and four months before the month you were born.
- If born after the first day of the month, you become eligible for Medicare on the first day of the month that you turn 65 years of age. Signup for Medicare between one and three months before the month you turn 65 years of age.

(SOURCE: JBLM McChord Field Retiree Activities Office for Air Force Retirees, their spouses and survivors, June 2015)

DEFENSE FINANCE AND ACCOUNTING SERVICE (DFAS)

DIVORCE AND IMPACT ON SURVIVOR BENEFIT PLAN (SBP)

Retirees who are enrolled in the SBP should notify the Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS) of their divorce once it is finalized. Acting quickly after a divorce can avoid many pitfalls such as premiums being deducted beyond the date of divorce. If the divorce decree contains no language mandating the retiree's need to elect former spouse coverage, it is vital that he or she notify DFAS as soon as the divorce is final so SBP spouse coverage can be suspended and SBP premiums stopped. Retirees, within one year of a divorce, must elect to convert spouse coverage to former spouse coverage when mandated by a court ordered divorce decree. If no court ordered requirement is imposed, the retiree may voluntarily cover the former spouse under the SBP. Failure to maintain SBP as instructed in the divorce decree may lead to contempt of court charges and require a lengthy Board for Correction of Military Record review to correct. Retirees who have SBP coverage must be familiar with the rules. A lack of knowledge is rarely a justifiable defense should a dispute arise. Retirees with suspended spouse coverage who remarry may elect to resume his/her prior level of SBP coverage, increase SBP coverage, or terminate spouse coverage for the new spouse within one year of the remarriage. Failure to notify DFAS of the new marriage within one year of remarriage will result in the prior level of coverage being automatically reinstated effective the date the new spouse becomes an eligible beneficiary. For more information or help with changing SBP coverage, contact the SBP or Casualty Assistance Representative at the nearest military base (For Keesler AFB contact Mr. Ray Alexander at 228-376-8335).

(SOURCE: The Voice of the Enlisted, VOL.XXXIV, Number 5, May 2015)

DFAS/myPay UPDATES

Make Sure Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS) Has Your Email Address. DFAS uses the email address you provide in myPay to send you newsletters, breaking news, notifications when your account statements and 1099R tax statements are available, and your Password or Login ID if you forget it. Have you gotten a copy of the quarterly Retiree Newsletter in your inbox lately? If you haven't, you might need to update or add your email address in myPay. Log in to your account today to make sure your email address is current!

Visit <http://www.dfas.mil/retiredmilitary/newsevents/newsletter/createmyacct.htm>! to get an account if you do not have one.

Retired and Annuitant (R&A) Pay is part of the Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS), an agency under the Department of Defense (DoD). R&A Pay establishes, maintains, and pays military retirees and their surviving spouses and other family members. R&A Customer Service Representatives are available: Toll Free 1-800-321-1080 Option 1, Monday through Friday – 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. (Eastern Time). <https://mypay.dfas.mil>.

(SOURCE: Guam Retiree Activities Office Newsletter – Jan-Mar 15/Vol 5, Issue 1)

REPORT RETIREE AND ANNUITANT DEATHS AS SOON AS POSSIBLE TO DFAS

Death of a Retiree. DFAS officials advise reporting the death of a retiree as soon as possible by calling 1-800-321-1080, or completing a Notification of Death Fast Form on the DFAS website. (NOTE: For retirees living close to Keesler AFB, you may choose to call Mr. Ray Alexander at 228-376-8335 and set up an appointment to see him.) Timely notification will help avoid delaying any possible financial hardship to surviving beneficiaries, family members or executors, who will be required to return any unearned military retirement payments. Eligibility for military retired pay ends with the death of the retiree; therefore, if a retired pay payment was issued for the month in which the retiree died, the bank will be notified to return the payment upon notification of death. The beneficiary of the arrears of pay may be due a prorated amount for the month of death. The caller reporting the death will need the retiree's name, Social Security number, and date of death.

When an Annuitant Dies. Eligibility for SBP annuity pay ends with the death of the annuitant (beneficiary). Prompt reporting of a deceased military annuitant's death can help avoid delay and possible financial hardship to surviving family members or executors, who will be required to return any unearned payments of the decedent's annuity pay. Follow these steps to report the death of an annuitant:

Step 1 – Call DFAS at 1-800-321-1080 to report the death.

Step 2 – Mail or fax a copy of the annuitant's death certificate to:

DFAS – U.S. Military Annuitant Pay
P.O. Box 7131; London, KY 40742-7131
Fax: 1-800-982-8459

Step 3 – Inform the financial institution receiving payments about the death of the annuitant.

Step 4 – Contact the following agencies/departments as soon as possible:

Social Security Administration: 1-800-772-1213, www.ssa.gov.

Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System: 1-800-538-9552.

Department of Veterans Affairs: 1-800-827-1000 for annuitants receiving Dependency Indemnity Compensation., www.va.gov.

(SOURCE: Guam Retiree Activities Office Newsletter – Jan-Mar 15/Vol 5, Issue 1)

VETERANS AFFAIRS (VA)

VETERANS AFFAIRS (VA) BURIAL BENEFIT UPDATE – VA offers the following benefits and services to honor our Nation's deceased Veterans. The website for detailed information is www.va.gov :

- A monument to mark the grave of an eligible veteran.
- A Presidential Memorial Certificate for eligible recipients.
- An American flag to drape an eligible Veteran's casket.
- A burial allowance up to \$2000 to Veterans who die of service related causes.
- Burial in a VA National Cemetery for most veterans and some dependents

(SOURCE: Retvet-info-bounce@freelists.org on behalf of RETVET-INFO@freelists.org, June 5, 2015)

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS (VA) COMPENSATION AND RETIRED PAY

The law requires a dollar for dollar offset of VA compensation against retired pay. There are two programs that were established to restore the offset to retired pay, one of which is Concurrent Retirement and Disability Pay (CRDP). To qualify for CRDP, the retiree must be rated by the VA at least 50 percent and have 20 years of service unless you retired under the Temporary Early Retirement Authorization (TERA). There is no application process for this benefit; it starts automatically once the VA award reaches 50% or higher. Exception to this rule: If you retire as a Chapter 61 disability with under 20 years of service and your longevity percentage is less than your disability percentage, you may or may not be entitled to CRDP. The other program is Combat Related Special Compensation (CRSC). The retiree must apply for CRSC using DD Form 2860. In order to qualify for this program, the disability must be incurred as a direct result of armed conflict, while engaged in hazardous service in the performance of duty under conditions simulating war or through an instrumentality of war. This program can be for any disability percentage and less than 20 years of service. Even if a retiree is in receipt of CRSC or CRDP, and the retired pay is less than 50%, it is still offset for VA.

(SOURCE: Retvet-info-bounce@freelists.org on behalf of RETVET-INFO@freelists.org June 5, 2015)

NEW VA SURVIVING SPOUSE WEBSITE

The Department of Veteran Affairs has created a new internet website for surviving spouses and dependents of military personnel who died on active duty and for survivors and dependents of veterans who died after leaving the service. The site is organized into two broad categories—death in service and death after service. It provides visitors with information and about a wide range of benefits for surviving spouse, dependent children, and dependent parents of deceased veterans and active duty personnel. The site also has information from, and links to, other federal agencies and organizations offering benefits and services to survivors and dependents. There is even a link to Frequently Asked Questions to answer most of your questions or concerns, including how to contact the VA directly.

The new web-site can be found at <http://www.vba.va.gov/survivors>. Topics include:

Benefits

- Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC)
- Parents' Dependency and Indemnity Compensation
- Survivors' Pension
- Dependents' Educational Assistance Program (DEA)
- Marine Gunnery Sergeant John David Fry Scholarship
- Home Loans

Services

- Educational and Vocational Counseling
- Beneficiary Financial Counseling
- Civil Service Preference
- Commissary and Exchange Privileges
- Children of Vietnam Veterans with Certain Birth Defects
- Fiduciary Services

(SOURCE: Guam Retiree Activities Office Newsletter – April 14/Vol 5, Issue 1.5)

VA EXPANDS DISABILITY BENEFITS FOR AIR FORCE PERSONNEL EXPOSED TO CONTAMINATED C-123 AIRCRAFT

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has published a new regulation that expands eligibility for some benefits for a select group of Air Force Veterans and Air Force Reserve personnel who were exposed to the herbicide Agent Orange through regular and repeated contact with contaminated C-123 aircraft that had been used in Vietnam as part of Operation Ranch Hand (ORH). VA published this regulation as an interim final rule so that it could immediately begin providing benefits to eligible Air Force veterans and Air Force Reserve personnel who submit a disability compensation claim for any of the 14 medical conditions determined by VA to be related to exposure to Agent Orange.

Under this new rule, Air Force and Air Force Reserve flight, and medical and ground maintenance crewmembers who served on the contaminated ORH C-123s are presumed to have been exposed to herbicides during their service, thus making it easier for them to establish entitlement for some VA benefits if they develop an Agent Orange-related presumptive condition. In addition, for affected Air Force Reserve crew members, VA will presume that their Agent Orange-related condition had its onset during their Reserve training. This change ensures that these reservists are eligible for VA disability compensation and medical care for any Agent Orange-related presumptive condition, and that their surviving dependents are eligible for dependency and indemnity compensation and burial benefits.

VA also has identified several active duty locations where ORH C-123 aircraft may have been used following their service in Vietnam. Active duty personnel who served in a regular USAF unit location where a contaminated C-123 was assigned and who had regular and repeated contact with the aircraft through flight, ground or medical duties during the period 1969 to 1986, and who develop an Agent Orange-related disability, also are encouraged to apply for benefits. For more information on applying for these benefits, including the affected units, Air Specialty Codes and dates of service for affected crew members, and a listing of Agent Orange-related conditions, visit www.benefits.va.gov/compensation/agentorange-c123.asp.

(SOURCE: JBLM McChord Field Retiree Activities Office for Air Force Retirees, their spouses and survivors, June 2015)

SURVIVAL GUIDE

Do you have your *Survival Guide* available for free from the Keesler Retiree Activities Office? This guide has been assembled by volunteers in the Keesler Retiree Activities Office in conjunction with the Casualty/SBP office. Its content does not reflect the position of the Department of the Air Force or Keesler AFB. The *Survival Guide* is a planning document that can be used by the majority of retirees and/or their spouses. Once completed, the *guide* will serve to help or assist your beneficiary or next-of-kin to know where all your important papers and financial resources are located and hopefully point them in the right direction to locate agencies or individuals that may assist or guide them in the settlement of your affairs. We recommend you stop by our Retiree Activities Office on your next visit to Keesler and pick up a copy of this *Guide*. We are located in the Sablich Center (same street as the Medical Center), Room 102.

NATIONWIDE TELEPHONE SCAMS

Scams affecting TRICARE beneficiaries: TRICARE beneficiaries need to be aware of a nationwide telephone scam affecting beneficiaries over 65 years of age and on Medicare . Callers will usually identify themselves as being an official Medicare vendor, and will then offer to sell you back braces. The caller may have specific information that makes the call seem official, typically your address, phone numbers and doctor's name. The caller is hoping this will convince you they are a legitimate vendor and that you will give them your social security number and additional personal information.

If you receive a call like this, DO NOT give any of your personal identifiable information, such as birth date, social security number or banking information. TRICARE never asks beneficiaries for this information when calling for an official Department of Defense survey.

The Defense Health Agency (DHA) Program Integrity Office is closely monitoring this situation. If you receive a call of this nature, please do not provide your information and contact the DHA Program Integrity Office directly. "TRICARE will never contact you to ask for your financial information. Only give personal information when you have made the contacts for example calling one of the TRICARE toll-free customer service numbers or visiting a TRICARE Web site." For more information on fraud and abuse reporting visit, www.TRICARE.mil/fraud. (<http://www.tricare.mil/ScamAlert101714>).

Be Aware of Pension Poaching Scams: The VA pension program exists solely to help financially disadvantaged wartime veterans and their survivors. The VA is warning everyone of potential pension poaching scams. Be cautious if someone offers to move your assets around in order for you to qualify for VA pension. This type of scam is often directed toward veterans and family members who do not actually qualify for VA pensions. Other examples are: 1) organizations who cold-call veterans or survivors, charge money for assisting with a VA pension claim, and take credit card information from veterans over the telephone; 2) people who charge as much as \$6,000 upfront to represent claimants before VA, with a percentage of any eventual back payment from VA as a portion of the ultimate fee. Individuals and organizations are available to help you file a VA pension claim free of charge. A searchable list of VA-accredited representatives, including Veterans Service Organizations, agents, and attorneys is available at the VA Office of General Counsel website: www.va.gov/ogc/apps/accreditation/index.asp
(SOURCE: Guam Retiree Activities Office Newsletter - Jan-Mar 15/Vol 5, Issue 1)

AIR FORCE HAS NEW WEB SITE FOR RETIREES

The Air Force has a new Web site just for its retiree community that is full of news and information, plus it is easy to access and navigate. The Air Force Retirees Service site is located at www.retirees.af.mil<<http://retirees.af.mil/>>. The public Web site offers the retiree family in-depth information on the Survivor Benefit Plan, plus a list of Air Force Retiree Activities Offices worldwide and various other resources. There are also sections dedicated to the Afterburner and Air Force Retiree News Service. Visitors can access the sections by using the top navigation bar on the home page. The home page also features the latest Air Force headline news and video clips. There is even a special icon for quick access to the Combat Related Special Compensation information page. Subscribing to the electronic version of the Afterburner and AFRNS is now much easier: just click on the word "Subscribe," found on the top navigation bar; find "Afterburner/AFRNS" near the top of the second column and click in the circle to subscribe; enter the required e-mail address; then click on the submit button. (SOURCE: <http://www.eglin.af.mil/news/story.asp?id=123093333>, June 13, 2015)

REQUEST DD FORM 214 AND SERVICE RECORDS ONLINE, BY MAIL, OR BY FAX

Military Personnel Records: Military personnel records can include DD 214s, separation documents, and service records, and medical records found within the Official Military Personnel File (OMPF). Military personnel records can be used for proving military service or as a valuable tool in genealogical research. Please note that The National Personnel Records Center (NPRC) holds historical Military personnel records of nearly 100 million veterans. The vast majority of these records are paper-based and not available on-line.

Online Requests Using eVetRecs: You may use this system if you are: a military veteran, or next of kin of a deceased, former member of the military. The next of kin may be any of the following: surviving spouse that has not remarried, father, mother, son, daughter, sister, or brother. The National Personnel Records Center (NPRC) provides the following website to request a copy of DD FORM 214 online: <http://vetrecs.archives.gov/>. According to this National Archives website, the response time is within 10 days about 92% of the time. (This website does not allow you to see or print a copy of your DD FORM 214 but does allow you to print the request form needed to mail or fax to NPRC to obtain a copy of your DD FORM 214). Please note that requests which are sent by Priority Mail, FedEx, UPS, or other “express” services, will only arrive only at the NPRC sooner. They will not be processed any faster than standard requests. If emergency assistance is required, please refer to www.archives.gov/veterans/military-service-records/ concerning emergency requests, costs (if applicable), deadlines, and more specific information prior to initiating your request.

Required Information: Your request must contain certain basic information to locate service records. This information includes: The veteran’s complete name used while in service; service number; social security number; branch of service; dates of service; date and place of birth (especially if the service number is not known). If you suspect records may have been involved in the 1973 fire, also include: place of discharge; last unit of assignment; and place of entry into the service, if known. All requests must be signed and dated by the veteran or next-of-kin. If you are the next -of- kin of a deceased veteran, you must provide proof of death of the veteran such as a copy of death certificate, letter from funeral home, or published obituary.

Where to Send Your Request: Mail or fax your signed and dated request to the National Archives’ National Personnel Record Center (NPRC). Be sure to use the address specified by eVetRecs or the instructions on the SF 180.

NPRC Fax Number is 1-314-801-9195

- MPRC Mailing Address is:

National Personnel Records Center

Military Personnel Records

1 Archives Drive

St. Louis, MO 63138 ph 1-314-801-0800

(SOURCE: <http://www.archives.gov/veterans/military-service-records/>)

BATTLEGROUND FOR THE MILITARY COALITION

Organizations within the military coalition (see Director's Musings above) face critical battles on several fronts. Member organizations of the coalition have opposed the privatizing of Veteran Affairs. Senator John McCain (R-Ariz.) has introduced legislation that would allow any veteran enrolled in the VA to seek private care any time they'd like by getting rid of criteria like the 30-day wait time to get an appointment at their local facility or needing to live more than 40 miles from a VA facility. McCain's legislation would essentially make the "Choice Card" pilot program permanent. This pilot program has a three-year limit due to the extremely high costs associated with healthcare from private physicians. (The House has passed legislation that would make the "Choice Card" a permanent option, but keep the existing criteria of wait time and distance.) Member organizations have opposed privatizing VA health care but the crisis in wait times that were revealed in the last two or three years made it clear that offering certain veterans the option of going to private doctors was needed. However, a concern is the effect the McCain legislation would have on the VA. Would it erode VA infrastructure or would it rob from some veterans to pay for private care for other veterans?

On another front members of the coalition are working to preserve commissaries as we have known them. As of this writing, the House and Senate are trying to reach an agreement on funding for commissaries in the next fiscal year. A current Senate bill would reduce the commissary benefit by resulting in likely increases in the costs of groceries. However, even if these changes can be thwarted, DoD plans to ask Congress to let them change the formula that is used to determine the prices of goods sold in commissaries. The new formula would allow prices to vary from store to store, and the costs for groceries in high-cost areas would be greater than in low-cost areas.

A long-standing battle has been the repeal of the law that deducts Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) payments from military Survivor Benefit Plan SBP annuities. According to coalition member MOAA, "THE QUESTIONS ARE STRAIGHTFORWARD: Did disabled retirees earn their retired pay by service, independent of any service-caused disability? Further, when military service causes a servicemember's death, does the survivor deserve to receive the \$1,215 a month VA indemnity annuity in addition to, rather than subtracted from, normal military benefits? MOAA strongly believes the answer to both questions is "yes" and supports the following legislation to complete fair treatment for disabled retirees and servicemembers' survivors: House and Senate bills for both MILITARY WIDOWS RELIEF and DISABLED RETIREES RELIEF."(editor's note: this battle has a long history with the Coalition and its members also support this legislation)

Another long-standing battle is elimination of the "off-set" of Veterans Affairs (VA) Disability Pay from Military Retirement Pay. The Coalition supports the legislation (MILITARY WIDOWS RELIEF AND DISABLED RETIREES RELIEF) that would change the law by expanding the existing concurrent retirement and disability pay (CRDP) eligibility to all disabled retirees, regardless of years of service or disability rating.

Coalition organizations also work hard on behalf of active duty, guard, and reserve members and their dependents. In so-doing, they help insure that members of today's military are appropriately compensated with the pay and benefits they deserve.

(SOURCE: MOAA brochure *Undue Sacrifice*, TREA FROM WASHINGTON: News for the Enlisted August 10, 2015)