



AFSA Division 12 Legislative-Retiree Affairs Bulletin 2011-030
Division 12, the Cacti Division
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1. President Signs another CR. With the continuing disagreement between the Republican-controlled House and the Democratic-controlled Senate (supported by the President) on the budget for the remainder of FY 2011, President Obama today signed another 3-week continuing resolution. Congress is now in recess until the week of March 28th.

2. TRICARE for Life. As we have detailed in the past, the Administration has proposed increasing the annual enrollment fee for TRICARE Prime and then annually increasing the fees. There is much concern about the long-term plans of the Obama Administration. Perhaps the greatest concern is that they will be going after TRICARE for Life (TFL) which is a program that protects our most vulnerable retirees—those who are Medicare eligible. Signals from Secretary Gates and his underlings are that the Obama administration will most likely eventually try to attack nearly every aspect of TRICARE.

TRICARE for Life was passed during the Clinton Administration. We worked very hard for its passage. Shortly after President George W. Bush and his Defense secretary, Don Rumsfeld, came into office, Senator John Warner told me that one of the first things Secretary Rumsfeld did was go to Sen. Warner and chastise him for allowing Congress to pass TRICARE for Life. Rumsfeld told Warner that with that program starting, they wouldn't be able to stop it, DoD will be stuck in the healthcare business, and the costs will continue to rise.

It must be remembered that the creation of TRICARE for Life was based on the broken free-lifetime healthcare promise. Congress at that time was very verbal about having a moral obligation to pass the TFL program for our oldest retirees. Clearly, the greatest impact of the Administration's TRICARE plans, if successful, will be on enlisted retirees. For that reason, associations like AFSA are working hard to protect these programs.

3. CBO Report Outlines Budget-Saving Measures. According to a recently released report from the Congressional Budget Office, trimming pay and benefits for government civilians, military, and retirees could save billions of dollars over the next few years. To read an article from the *Federal Times* that outlines several of the CBO recommendations, go to:
<http://www.federaltimes.com/article/20110314/BENEFITS01/103140303/>

4. Women in Combat? In a recent report, the Military Leadership Diversity Commission recommended that DoD eliminate its policies that prevent women from serving in specialties

that are specifically combat-related. It has long been noted that the prevention of women serving in these specialties and in combat itself puts them at a significant career advancement disadvantage. You can read the commission's report and its recommendations at: <http://mldc.whs.mil/>

5. Bills of Interest March 8-17.

H.R. 938, by Rep. Ted Poe, R-Texas, would establish a commission to ensure a suitable observance of the centennial of World War I and to designate memorials to the service of men and women of the United States in World War I.

H.R. 943, by Rep. Mazie Hirono, D-Hawaii, would establish a grant program to encourage the use of assistance dogs by certain members of the Armed Forces and veterans.

H.R. 948, by Rep. David Loebsack, D-Iowa, would require the provision of behavioral health services to members of the reserve components of the Armed Forces necessary to meet pre-deployment and post-deployment readiness and fitness standards.

H.R. 961, by Rep. C. A. Dutch Ruppersberger, D-Md., would amend title 18, U.S. Code, with respect to the prohibition on disrupting military funerals.

S. 514, by Sen. Ron Wyden, D-Ore., would provide that fathers of permanently disabled or deceased veterans shall be included with mothers of such veterans as preference eligibles for treatment in the civil service.

H.R. 985, by Rep. Gregorio Kilili Camacho Sablan, D-Northern Mariana Islands, would require the Armed Forces to display the flags of the District of Columbia, Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, United States Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, and Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands whenever the official flags of all 50 States are displayed.

S. 536, by Sen. Jim Webb, D-Va., would provide that utilization of survivors' and dependents' educational assistance shall not be subject to the 48-month limitation on the aggregate amount of assistance utilizable under multiple veterans and related educational assistance programs.

H.R. 1003, by Rep. Don Young, R-Alaska, would authorize space-available travel on military aircraft for reserve members, former members of a reserve component, and unremarried surviving spouses and dependents of such members and former members.

H.R. 1014, by Rep. Robert E. Latta, R-Ohio, would recognize the dependent children of members of the Armed Forces who are serving on active duty or who have served on active duty through the presentation of an official lapel button.

H.R. 1019, by Rep. Thomas J. Rooney, R-Fla., would ensure that members of the Armed Forces and civilian employees of the Department of Defense who were killed or wounded in

certain attacks in 2009 and 2011 directed at members or employees outside of a combat zone are treated in the same manner as members and employees who are killed or wounded in combat zones.

H.R. 1025, by Rep. Timothy J. Walz, D-Minn., would recognize the service in the reserve components of certain persons by honoring them with status as veterans under law.

S. 542, by Sen. Mark Begich, D-Alaska, would authorize space--available travel on military aircraft for members of the reserve components, a member or former member of a reserve component who is eligible for retired pay but for age, widows and widowers of retired members, and dependents.

S. 551, by Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., would improve procedures for the detention and review of status of detainees of the United States in connection with the continuing armed conflict with al Qaeda, the Taliban, and affiliated groups.

H.R. 1046, by Rep. Steve Cohen, D-Tenn., would authorize a member of the Armed Forces to designate anyone as the person authorized to direct disposition of the remains of the member if the member dies while on active duty.

H.R. 1089, by Rep. Rush D. Holt, D-N.J., would direct the Secretary of Defense to provide members of the Individual Ready Reserve, Individual Mobilization Augmentees, and inactive members of the National Guard who served in Afghanistan or Iraq with information on counseling to prevent suicide.

H.R. 1092, by Rep. Walter B. Jones, R-N.C., would prohibit certain increases in fees for military health care.

S. 579, by Sen. Frank R. Lautenberg, D-N.J., would direct the Secretary of Defense to provide members of the Individual Ready Reserve, Individual Mobilization Augmentees, and inactive members of the National Guard who served in Afghanistan or Iraq with information on counseling to prevent suicide.

H.R. 1110, by Rep. Jerry McNerney, D-Calif, would increase the maximum monthly rate for the military special pay known as hostile fire pay, imminent danger pay, or hazardous duty pay, to increase the maximum monthly rate for the family separation allowance paid to deployed members of the Armed Forces.

H.R. 1130, by Rep. Rodney Alexander, R-La., would provide authority for certain members of the Armed Forces who have served 20 years on active duty to transfer entitlement to Post-9/11 Educational Assistance to their dependents.

H.R. 1133, by Rep. Bob Filner, D-Calif., would authorize the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to enter into agreements with States and nonprofit organizations to collaborate in the provision of case management services associated with certain supported housing programs for veterans.

H.R. 1142, by Rep. Allen B. West, R-Fla, would ensure the equitable treatment of members of the Armed Forces and civilian employees of the Department of Defense who are killed or wounded in an attack, occurring outside of a combat zone, that targeted the members or employees on account of their status as members of the Armed Forces or civilian employees of the Department of Defense.

H.R. 1154, by Rep. John R. Carter, R-Texas, would prevent the Secretary of Veterans Affairs from prohibiting the use of service dogs on Department of Veterans Affairs property.

H.R. 1178, by Rep. Jeff Fortenberry, R-Neb., would extend military commissary and exchange store privileges to veterans with a compensable service-connected disability and to their dependents.

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