

# Air Force Sergeants Association



Friday, January 27, 2006

Founded at Bolling AFB, DC on May 3, 1961.



***Protecting and defending the quality-of-life benefits of the "TOTAL AIR FORCE" Enlisted Corps and their families since 1961***

This is AFSA's new electronic publication. Capitol Hill Update, bulletins, and other news items have been combined into this one e-publication. It will be available every Friday in the Members Only section of AFSA's web site.

## LEGISLATIVE NEWS AND UPDATES



**BILL STATUS:** As the second session of the 109th Congress begins to get underway, this is a good time to update members on the status of pending legislation. As we previously reported, all pending legislation from last year will carry over, meaning AFSA can continue to build on established levels of support. Recently we provided an update on legislation that addresses key education issues. The bills listed below address the three key retiree and survivor issues that generate the most inquiries to AFSA Headquarters.

**KEEP OUR PROMISE TO AMERICA'S MILITARY RETIREES ACT:** This legislation would restore free lifetime health care to military retirees that enlisted prior to December 7, 1956. Other provisions in the bill allow eligible retirees the option of enrollment in the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program (FEHBP) and reimbursement of pharmaceutical cost for drugs purchase from non network pharmacies. The two long-standing champions on this issue are the bills authors, Rep. Chris Van Hollen, (D-MD), and Sen. Tim Johnson, (D-SD). The House bill, H.R. 602 currently has 236 cosponsors and the Senate companion bill S. 407 has 11.

**CONCURRENT RECEIPT:** The principal House bill which would authorize full concurrent receipt to all longevity retirees, regardless of disability level is H.R. 303. Rep. Mike Bilirakis (R-FL) reintroduced this bill at the start of the 109th Congress and it currently has 210 Cosponsors. In May of last year Rep. Jim Marshall (D-GA) introduced House Res. 270, a Discharge Petition to H.R. 303. H. Res. 270 currently contains 191 Signatures and a minimum of 218 signatures is required for this effort to be successful. S. 558, the Senate companion bill to H.R. 303 was introduced by Sen. Harry Reid, (D-NV). S. 558 currently has 31 cosponsors. Members may recall that Rep. Bilirakis also introduced legislation that would ex-

### **Newsletter Spotlight**

**PROTECT THE TRICARE BENEFIT FOR MILITARY RETIREEES, THEIR FAMILY MEMBERS AND SURVIVORS. YOU NEED TO ACT NOW TO SUPPORT THE EFFORT OF AFSA LOBBYISTS AND THEIR COALITION PARTNERS TO STOP THIS LATEST ADMINISTRATION PLAN TO INCREASE COSTS AND DRIVE RETIREEES TOWARD EMPLOYER-SPONSORED HEALTH CARE PLANS. CONTACT CONGRESS NOW!**

**MORE HEADLINES OF IMPORTANCE TO AIR FORCE ENLISTED MEMBERS APPEAR ON THE FOLLOWING PAGES.**

tend concurrent receipt to individuals who served less than 20 years and were medically retired (Chap 61). That bill, H.R. 2076, currently has 40 cosponsors and a Senate companion bill S. 845, introduced by Sen. Reid has just one cosponsor.

**SBP/DIC OFFSET/PAID UP PROVISION:** Members who monitor AFSA updates on a regular basis know that we came pretty close to getting these issues resolved in the FY 2006 NDAA. Language to repeal the offset and accelerate the paid up provision were included by the Senate in their version of the bill. Unfortunately both provisions were dropped out of the final bill during the joint House-Senate conference. Since the lack of funding was cited as the reason for striking the provision from the document, we can expect a tough fight this year as lawmakers tighten their budget belts. Even though these issues weren't addressed in the defense bill, three principal bills remain active. They are S. 185 by Sen. Bill Nelson, (D-FL), and H.R. 986 by Rep. Jim Saxton, (R-NJ). Both measures address the paid up provision. S. 185 has garnered 30 cosponsors and H.R. 986 has 126. S. 185 also contains language which would repeal the requirement to reduce SBP survivor annuities by Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) payments from the VA. A separate House measure introduced by Rep. Henry Brown, Jr. (R-SC) addresses the same issue. That bill, H.R. 808, has 188 supporters.

## LEGISLATIVE AND NEWS HEADLINES

**PROPOSED TRICARE RATE INCREASES.** We just want to remind members that DoD plans to triple the cost of TRICARE Prime for retired officers and double it for enlisted retirees are still on the table. DoD also wants to establish (for the first time) an enrollment fee for TRICARE Standard (up to \$400 per family by 2008); significantly increase the annual deductibles under TRICARE Standard and TRICARE Extra; and increase the cost of TRICARE prescriptions. It's going to take a major upswelling from the military to bring DoD's plans to a halt. Hopefully you've already contacted your elected officials to weigh in on the matter. If not, please click on this link to familiarize yourself with this issue <http://www.afsahq.org/docs/tricare-fees-increase.pdf>. Although the letter contains a sample letter, at this stage we recommend you phone your elected officials first, and follow your call with a brief message (letter or fax) urging them to oppose a rate increases.

**KEEP THEM FLYING:** As budget dollars become more scarce, DoD leaders plan to keep B52s flying for another 10 years. See the story at <http://aimpoints.hq.af.mil/display.cfm?id=8994&printer=yes>

**AIR FORCE CASUALTIES IN IRAQ:** On Tuesday the Department of Defense identified two Airmen from Elmendorf Air Force Base, Alaska who were killed January 22, 2006, while supporting Operation Iraqi Freedom. They are Technical Sergeant Sgt. Jason L. Norton, 32, of Miami, Oklahoma and Staff Sergeant Brian McElroy, 28, of San Antonio, Texas. Both Airmen were assigned to the 3rd Security Forces Squadron at Elmendorf. Our thoughts and prayers go out to the family and friends of these two Security Forces members. Related links are attached. <http://aimpoints.hq.af.mil/display.cfm?id=8971> <http://www.af.mil/news/story.asp?id=123015761>

**LEAD:** The Leaders Encouraging Airmen Development, or LEAD, program allows commanders to nominate highly qualified Airmen for direct entry to the Air Force Academy or Preparatory School, with the intention of an Air Force Academy appointment to follow. The deadline to apply for this program is rapidly approaching. Applications for this program must be submitted by January 31, 2006. Information about LEAD is available at base education offices.

**BRAC PROGRAM:** The Air Force Reserve Command has created a new program which allows Reservists and civilians to track Base Realignment and Closure, or BRAC, changes. The program includes a BRAC guide, member-tracking codes, two clearing houses, e-mail boxes, and an archive. Further details can be found by going to <http://www.af.mil/news/story.asp?id=123014676>.

QUADRENNIAL DEFENSE REVIEW: Every four years Congress directs DoD to conduct a thorough review of the department to ensure the armed forces have sufficient personnel and resources to meet current and future needs. The next Quadrennial Defense Review is expected to be delivered to Congress next week with uncertainty and unpredictability as dominating themes. See the story at <http://www.af.mil/news/story.asp?id=123015765>.

VOTE!: Voting is characteristic of responsible citizenship. Later this year, 34 senators, the entire House of Representatives, 37 state governors, and hundreds of state and local officials are up for re-election. Of course all members are encouraged to register and vote. The DoD's Federal Voting Assistance Program webpage provides members of the military voting community with comprehensive information on federal and state voting issues. Click here <http://www.fvap.gov/> for a link to the site and add it to your favorites section so you can view the page on a regular basis.

## **AFSA MEMBER BENEFITS and SERVICE PROVIDERS**

Following are just some of the benefits of being an AFSA member.

FTD.com

Have you given any thought to the special occasions and holidays you'll need to recognize in 2006? Now you won't be caught empty-handed on Mother's Day, Father's Day, birthdays, etc. AFSA members can automatically save 15% on floral AND gift purchases by clicking the FTD.com link on the AFSA Web site at [www.afsahq.org](http://www.afsahq.org) or by calling 1-800-SEND-FTD and using promo code 4578. Be prepared and don't leave anyone out in 2006. Take advantage of a great discount from FTD.com!

Orion International

Are you planning what you'd like to do and where you'll be working after you retire? Maybe you are looking for some great employees with prior military experience. No matter the situation, AFSA members can look for and post job opportunities on the Orion International "job board" by clicking on the "Orion" icon on AFSA's Web site at [www.afsahq.org](http://www.afsahq.org). The best part about it—it's FREE! Find your niche after retirement, or the employee you've been looking for with Orion International.

## **Enlisted Quote**

"I was attending a Junior College, racking up debt, and feeling like I was going no where. So I made the choice to join the Air Force to take advantage of their educational opportunities. Since joining 4 1/2 years ago I am 30 credits away from a Bachelor of Science degree. It was the best decision that I ever made." – SrA Levitica A. Byington, USAF

## **AFSA: YOUR ENLISTED VOICE**

AFSA works to gain and protect the quality of life benefits of the *Total Air Force* (Active Duty, Air National Guard, Air Force Reserve Command) enlisted personnel in active, retired, and veteran status and their families. AFSA does this through visits to congressional leaders, visits with Presidential staff members, visits with DoD personnel, and others who may have an influence upon the decisions that could affect the enlisted Airmen.

AFSA was founded on May 3, 1961, as a private, not-for-profit organization in Washington D.C. It was founded by four enlisted personnel, for enlisted personnel. It was federally chartered in 1998. Since its founding, AFSA has had one mission—to protect the enlisted Airmen's quality of life. It has never wavered from that mission. It is the only association with the word "SERGEANTS" in its title because the word sergeant means "to serve," and that is what AFSA does for its members.

If you are not a member, go to our Web site at [www.afsahq.org](http://www.afsahq.org) or call 1-800-638-0594. ext 0 and ask to speak to someone in Member and Field Relations. If you are a member, we greatly appreciate your professionalism in supporting your Association and would appreciate you helping to build your voice by recruiting a new member today!