

AFA's Personnel Policy Agenda for 2012

In this current budget environment the US military community is entering a new era. Drawing down, cutting budgets and finding efficiencies are at the top of every policy agenda and personnel policy is no exception. After 10 years of increases in benefits and compensation showing the appreciation of Congress and the nation for those serving their country, the military community is now operating on a smaller budget. Suddenly the tide has turned, and the military member, veteran and retiree are facing decreasing budgets and eroding benefits.

AFA believes it can be most effective by engaging in all these issues up front, informing the process as the dialogue happens. AFA will work closely with the USAF and other Associations by building relationships in Congress and working the following agenda in 2012 for those currently serving and for those who have served:

For those serving:

--Suicide Prevention and Mental Health

- Monitor existing programs and highlight problems and needed changes with possible legislation.
- Work closely with the USAF in reducing the stigma of mental health counseling and treatment.
- Educate policymakers on military suicide and urge an increase of mental health professionals.

--Education and Quality of Life Benefits

- Monitor and counter any proposed cuts in Tuition Assistance.
- Counter the effect of some "for-profit colleges" targeting military members.
- Monitor and counter any changes to the Post 9/11 GI Bill.
- Support military families and defend benefits such as child care and spouse employment programs.
- Encourage states to enter the Interstate Compact for Military Children.
- Preserve and defend Commissary and Exchange benefits.

--Retirement Reform—there is *no comparison* between military service and civilian work therefore retirement benefits should not be compared.

- Fight any proposal that doesn't "grandfather" current service members and retirees into the current system.
- Monitor proposals aimed at changing the retirement system for future retirees with an eye on readiness, recruitment and retention.
- Monitor and counter proposals aimed at changing earned benefits for military members.
- Engage with policymakers on reform as a helpful partner for solutions.

For those who have served:

--Health Care—AFA believes health care is an earned and promised benefit.* Service members paid their premiums through a full career of sacrifice, family separations, hardships and serving in harm's way. Cost-shares should be weighed against this extraordinary sacrifice.

- AFA will counter proposals aimed at raising health care costs above increases in CoLA for military retirees.
- Oppose the President's proposal to create TFL fees.
- Monitor and oppose pharmaceutical co-pay increases.
- Ensure adequate reimbursement for doctors who accept TRICARE and Medicare patients.

--Veterans Affairs/Wounded Warriors

- Urge VA to end the Claims Backlog—"A claim delayed is a claim denied."
- Urge an increase in care for Wounded Warrior and their Caregivers.
- Monitor implementation of recent veteran employment legislation.
- Work with VA to end Veteran Homelessness.
- Work with VA and DoD for greater collaboration and a seamless transition from active duty.

*USAF Medal of Honor winner Col (Ret) Bud Day brought a class action lawsuit against the United States government on behalf of military retirees stripped of their medical benefits at age 65. This eventually captured the attention of Congress, which established "TRICARE For Life," restoring military medical benefits for career military retirees over the age of 65. Retirees are now eligible for Medicare (primary payer), and TRICARE (secondary payer).