



AFSA International Legislative Committee Bulletin 2012-004
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1. Following the State of the Union Address. The President will present his annual State of the Union Address tomorrow night; this is an essentially political speech and does not promise to offer any specifics on the future of quality-of-life programs for military members, retirees, and their families. The President is scheduled to release his proposed FY 2013 Budget Plan on February 6th. While this is a non-binding plan, the defense portion of that plan will give us a good indication of the Administration's intent in the areas of military compensation, military retirement, military health care, etc. Congress will begin the real work of the Second Session of the 112th Congress following that budget submission. The Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, Rep. Howard "Buck" McKeon, R-Calif., has indicated hearings in his committee will focus on the impact of the already-approved \$485 billion in upcoming DoD Budget cuts (over the next 10 years) which were passed last August—and the possible additional \$600 billion in cuts that would result from sequestration. The planned reductions, in accordance with the law, starts with \$55 billion for 2013. According the Chairman of the House Committee on Veterans Affairs, Rep. Jeff Miller, R-Fla., his committee will focus on best managing the \$122.2 billion Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) budget for 2012 to meet the needs of the possible flood of new veterans needing care who will return from current wars and consequent to the looming military force reductions. And the committee will, of course, work to develop the 2013 programs to continue to build on that effort. Your legislative team at AFSA Headquarters will "work the Hill" to make sure your interests are protected. If you have any questions on specific matters, you can communicate with AFSA Headquarters' Military and Government Relations Directorate at 1-800-638-0594 or via e-mail at staff@hqafsa.org

2. Congressional Schedule. Congress has published its intended schedule for the months leading up to the November 2012 general elections. Its intended official recesses include:

Senate:

February 20-24
April 2-13
April 30-May 4
May 28-June 1
July 2-6
August 6-September 7

House:

February 10-13

February 18-26

March 9-18

March 30-April 15

April 20-23

April 28-May 6

May 11-14

May 19-29

June 9-17

June 22-25

June 20-July 8

July 13-16

July 27-30

August 4-September 9

September 15-18

September 22-30

October 6-November 12

During these dates, your elected officials and those seeking office will be in their home-state, home-district areas. AFSA members can take advantage of those time periods to set up one-on-one visits with these officials to express your specific matters of concern and to spell out your expectations. Remember, unless unopposed, all 435 voting members of the House face reelection this fall, and one-third of the members of the Senate are in the same situation.

AFSA members can get guidance for such visits through your local trustee for legislative affairs and/or on the AFSA Web site. Go to the “Your Hill Visit” tab at:

<http://www.hqafsa.org/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Capwiz&Template=/CM/HTMLDisplay.cfm&ContentID=8392>

That will provide you with information for congressional visits you make in your local area or if you come to the Washington, D.C., area.

3. DoD-VA Progress toward a Joint Electronic Health Record. In earlier bulletins we detailed how the Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs were moving toward a Joint Electronic Health Record. Such a record would serve 9.7 million active duty personnel, retirees, and their families, and 6 million veterans. It would facilitate a seamless transition from military to veteran status and simplify the claims process faced by military members filing for a service-connected disabilities. A recent article in *Nextgov* explains, “The Veterans Affairs Department will start to move data center operations that support its Veterans Health Information Systems and Technology Architecture (VistA) electronic health records to data centers operated by the Defense Information Systems Agency in March. Officials expect to complete the transition in slightly more than a year. . . VA already has [already] shifted data

center operations that support the Veterans Benefits Management System and the post-9/11 GI Bill to commercial data centers operated by Terremark Worldwide, a subsidiary of Verizon Communications.” To read more, go to:

http://www.nextgov.com/nextgov/ng_20120120_1682.php?oref=topstory

4. VA Offering Credit Monitoring to 2,200 Veterans. More than 2,200 veterans had their personal information accidentally posted on a genealogy site, Ancestry.com, last year. According to a *Stars and Stripes* article, “The Department of Veterans Affairs said all affected by the mistake will receive one year of free credit monitoring services to help mitigate any damage. The information posted online included veterans’ names and Social Security numbers, but not any health information. . . VA officials supplied the information to Ancestry.com in March 2011 as part of a Freedom of Information Act request.” But they clearly failed to provide the information in the proper way. To read more, go to:

http://www.stripes.com/veterans-personal-information-accidentally-posted-on-ancestry-com-1.166409?localLinksEnabled=false&utm_source=Stars+and+Stripes+Emails&utm_campaign=8389c8d15b-Daily+Headlines&utm_medium=email

The VA explanation of the situation can be read at:

<http://www.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=2250>

5. Calcium Associated with Lower Risk of Prostate Cancer. An article in *HealthDay* reports, “Dietary calcium intake is inversely associated with prostate cancer risk, according to a study published online Jan. 12 in the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's *Preventing Chronic Disease*. . . "Our findings suggest that, among men with diets that have moderate to low calcium intake, adequate calcium intake may reduce the risk for prostate cancer, particularly among black men, and reduce the risk for high-grade prostate cancer among all men." To read more, go to:

http://www.mdnews.com/news/hd/2012_04/hd_660822

6. BCG Glasses Out—Except for Retirees. According to an *Air Force Times* article, military recruits will no longer be issued S9 Glasses, more commonly known as “BCGs” which stands for Birth Control Glasses. However, the BCGs will continue to be standard issue for retirees. To read more, go to: <http://www.airforcetimes.com/news/2012/01/military-eyeglasses-recruits-012012w/>

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