

From: "Director CPC" <Director.CPC@noaa.gov>
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SERVICEMEMBERS' CIVIL RELIEF ACT

On December 19, 2003, President Bush signed into law H.R. 100, the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act. The bill significantly amends and renames the Soldiers' and Sailors' Civil Relief Act. The new legislation updates and strengthens current civil protections enacted during World War II. Additional information will be provided in a subsequent Cyberflash.

NEW MEMBER OF THE CPC STAFF

Gregory Raymond has joined CPC as the new Human Resource Specialist (Military). Greg brings 11 years of military human resource experience. Officers with last names beginning with A-L may begin to contact Greg directly at (301) 713-3453 x102. Officers with last names beginning with M-Z should continue to contact Neavaly Edoja at (301) 713-3453 x128.

MARKETING YOURSELF FOR SECOND CAREER

Attention Officers in the Washington DC Area: "Marketing Yourself for a Second Career" is a free, 2-1/2 hour, professional lecture for officers who plan to leave the service in the next one to five years. Colonel Jerry Crews, USA (Ret.) lectures on topics from planning your job search to salary negotiations and benefit packages. The lecture will be held on Tuesday, January 20, 2004, from 0830 - 1100, in the Pentagon, Room 5A 1070. No reservations are required and spouses are cordially invited. For further information, please call Judy Bennett at (703) 838-0547.

MOAA 2003 LEGISLATIVE SCORECARD

2003 was an excellent year from almost any legislative standpoint. We certainly didn't achieve all of our legislative goals, but Congress provided substantial relief on a long list of initiatives that we have sought for many years. Here's a summary of selected 2003 accomplishments:

Medicare Bill

* Reversed 4.5% Medicare/TRICARE rate cuts and substituted 1.5% increases for January 2004.

* Waived Medicare Part B late enrollment penalty for Medicare-eligible military enrollees, effective in 2004.

- * Ended \$1500 annual cap on Medicare payments for physical therapy.

Military Tax Relief Bill

- * Raised gratuity for survivors of members who die on active duty from \$6,000 to \$12,000 and made it tax-free.
- * Restored authority for Guard/Reserve members to claim tax deductions for drill-related expenses, starting with the 2003 tax year.
- * Restored capital gains tax equity for military homeowners.
- * Exempted Homeowner Assistance Program payments from federal income taxes (paid to those whose home values are reduced by base closure actions).

Defense Authorization Act

- * Expanded Combat-Related Special Compensation (CRSC) to cover all operations-related disability ratings, for members with 20 or more years of service.
- * Authorized "real" concurrent receipt for 20-year and drawdown-related retirees with at least 50% disability ratings.
- * Expanded CRSC and concurrent receipt authorities above to include Guard and Reserve retirees.
- * Authorized a one-year trial of TRICARE coverage for Selected Reserve members who don't have employer-provided health coverage.
- * Required explicit DoD actions to expand doctor participation in TRICARE Standard, inform beneficiaries of TRICARE benefits, and assist beneficiaries in finding participating providers.
- * Authorized 4.15% average military pay raise for 2004 (vs. 3.2% private sector wage growth).
- * Repealed permanent law that would have capped future military pay raises below private sector wage growth, starting in 2007.
- * Authorized Survivor Benefit Plan coverage for survivors of Guard/Reserve members who die during inactive duty for training.
- * Extended full commissary privileges to Selected Reserve and gray area Reserve retirees.
- * Authorized government long-term care coverage for gray area Reserve retirees.
- * Authorized full replacement cost coverage for household goods damaged during military moves.

Iraq Supplemental Appropriations Act

- * Increased Family Separation Allowance and Imminent Danger Pay.
- * Eliminated the food surcharge for injured troops in military hospitals.

Veterans Legislation

- * Authorized continuation of VA survivor annuity for qualifying widows who remarry at age 57 or older.

- * Increased VA education benefits for survivors and dependents of members who die of service-connected causes.
- * Substantially improved Soldiers/Sailors Civil Relief Act protections for servicemembers.
- * Made the VA home loan authority permanent for Guard and Reserve servicemembers.

We look forward to building on these successes in 2004, with special emphasis on:

- * Improving the military Survivor Benefit Plan;
- * Authorizing full concurrent receipt of military retired pay and VA disability compensation;
- * Expanding Guard/Reserve health coverage and upgrading retirement programs; and
- * Increasing military force levels to meet mission needs and ease retention and readiness stresses on active duty, Guard and Reserve members and families.

This message was generated for the Director of Commissioned Personnel