



# COLUMBIA VOYAGER

<http://www.TriCitiesMOAA.org>

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June 2016

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## Tri-Tech Skills Center

The June meeting will feature Tony Milewski from the Tri-Tech Skills Center. Tri-Tech is a branch campus of all local high schools and is also open to home schooled students who are registered with their local school district. The center offers training in skills needed in today's job market; the training is conducted in parallel with high school classes at their assigned high school. As with other public high schools in the area, there is no tuition charge. The chapter met in November 2007 at the center for a dinner put on by their culinary arts students. The skill center fills a vital role in providing meaningful education to all students in our area.

Tony Milewski graduated from Kamiakin in 1976; over the next 25 years he continued his education collecting college credits and degrees to include an AA in Arts and Science at CBC, an AA in Industrial Design at Prove Institute of Technology, a Bachelors in History with a minor in social anthropology at WSU and a Master's in Education at WSU.

Tony taught the carpentry apprenticeship course at CBC and the journeyman class for the United Brotherhood of Carpenters on the regional and national level. More recently Tony has taught the Construction Trades Class at Tri-Tech for the past 8 years; during this

time his classes have built a total of 18 houses for Habitat for humanity.

His students also do community impact projects for the elderly, which are a home improvements to their existing home. These annual projects are conducted working in concert with Habitat for Humanity. Tony's classes also construct a wheelchair ramp each year with the Columbia Valley Daybreak Rotary Club.

Tony enjoys his job because he gets to teach our Millennials what it feels like to do something good for others without asking for anything in return.

The meeting will be at the Country Gentleman, on Clearwater just west of Steptoe. The meeting will be on June 21, reservations to Bob Allen by Thursday, June 16. This is our last meeting before we take a summer break, try to attend—particularly if you haven't been for a while.

## COLA Watch

The April CPI is 0.3% below the FY 2014 COLA baseline. The cost of living in 2015 declined, so the 2014 baseline is used. The trend has been upward since last December, when the index was 1.25% below the baseline. If the trend continues, we may see a COLA raise next year in both military retirement and Social Security payments. Of course, that means our cost of living has also gone up.

The military retiree COLA is calculated based on the CPI for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers, not the overall CPI.

### **Hq MOAA sends . . .**

#### **Senate Panel Raises Fees and Caps Pay, but Helps Survivors** (This article as of May 20)

The Senate Armed Services Committee approved its version of the FY 2017 Defense Authorization Bill, and it's considerably different from the one approved by House lawmakers on a range of issues. On non-healthcare issues, the bill would, among other things, make the Special Survivor Indemnity Allowance permanent at the \$310 monthly rate, provide a 1.6 percent military pay raise (vs. the 2.1 percent House proposal), require a test of privatizing military commissaries at five locations, and require women to register for the draft.

For TRICARE, the Senate bill makes no changes to TRICARE For Life, but it would adopt most of the DoD-proposed fee increases for other beneficiaries, including:

- a new annual enrollment fee for TRICARE Standard that would start at \$150/\$300 (single/family) as of Jan. 1, 2018, and rise to \$450/\$900 over the next five years;
- raising the TRICARE Prime annual enrollment fee 24 percent to \$350/\$700 (single/family);
- raising the annual cap on

out-of-pocket expenses to \$1,500 for currently serving families and \$4,000 for retired families (vs. current \$1,000/\$3,000);

- giving DoD discretion to implement a pilot program authorizing Guard and Reserve members to elect coverage under the auspices of the federal employees health insurance program;

- roughly doubling pharmacy copays over a 9-year period, including raising the mail-order copay for generic drugs from the current zero to \$11, effective in 2020; and

- authorizing DoD to collect a “no-show” fee for missed appointments at military medical facilities.

Like the House-passed bill, the Senate bill would move most responsibilities for military health care programs from the Army, Navy, and Air Force to the Defense Health Agency. This would place military medical facilities, healthcare delivery, and personnel and budget responsibilities directly under DoD for unified planning and execution.

The bill also includes a wide range of provisions aimed at improving access and quality of care.

MOAA appreciates and supports the Senate Armed Services Committee's efforts to directly

address the well-documented access, quality, and efficiency problems of the military health system. But we believe the proposed beneficiary fee increases are significantly too high and fail to adequately consider the very high non-cash premiums career service members and families are required to pay up-front through decades of service and sacrifice.

Senate leaders plan to bring the defense bill up for full Senate consideration as early as next week.

MOAA has been working with several senators to sponsor important amendments to the bill to protect commissaries, help disabled retirees, and increase the military pay raise.

#### **Senate Panel: Curtail Housing Allowances**

Members of the Senate Armed Services Committee proposed a significant allowance overhaul in its version of the FY 2017 Defense Authorization Bill. Under the proposal, members whose housing costs are less than their allowance would have the allowance reduced. The proposal would also reduce the combined value of the housing allowances received by dual military couples and roommates. Each member would receive the applicable housing allowance amount for his or her grade, divided by the number of occupants.

## **June Meeting** **Tuesday, June 21**

Country Gentleman  
9221 W. Clearwater Ave  
Kennewick

Social hour at 6:30  
Dinner at 7:00  
\$27.50 per person

A reservation made  
is a reservation paid.

Reservations by  
**Thursday, June 16 to**  
Bob Allen  
627-6226  
MOAA.TriCities@charter.net

### **Menu**

Tri-Tip w/ Demi Glace  
horseradish sauce  
Scalloped Potatoes  
Fresh Green Beans /w bacon  
and onion  
Caesar Salad, 2 dressings  
Rolls, Cookie  
Coffee