



COLUMBIA VOYAGER

<http://www.TriCitiesMOAA.org>

chapter@TriCitiesMOAA.org

January 2017

Chapter Officers

President
Chris Buroker
LTC, ArmyNatGuard

1st Vice President
Ron Weed
LtCol, USAF, Ret

2nd Vice President
Mark Hanneman
Capt, USAF, Ret

Secretary
Bob Allen
Maj, USAF, Ret

Treasurer
Paul Seipt
LTCOL, USMC, Ret

Directors

Richard Ciccone
LTC, USA, Ret

Richard Evanoff
LtCDR, USN, Ret

Matt Boehnke
LTC, USA, Ret

Past President
George Stotz
Capt, USA, Ret

Extra Duties
High School ROTC
Ron Weed

Legislative Liaison
Matt Boehnke

Recruiting
Pat Kenny

Auxiliary Liaison
Richard Misener

Spies, Terrorism, and Computers

Mark Hanneman will give a Counterintelligence presentation: Espionage, Terrorism and a touch of cyber at the January meeting. Mark served as a counterintelligence agent during his time in the Air Force Office of Special Investigations and ran the counterintelligence program at the Richland DOE office. His topic is timely, as indicated by current stories in the press.

The meeting will be at the Clover Island Inn on Tuesday, January 17th. Reservations to Paul Seipt by Thursday, January 12.

Dues reminder

Annual dues of \$25 are due in January. Send your dues to:

Paul Seipt
232 Somerset Street
Richland WA 99354

Or better yet, bring it to the meeting

Fairchild Retired Affairs

Office advises:

TRICARE Changes

The 2017 National Defense Authorization Bill passed by both chambers of Congress includes the following changes to TRICARE for active duty and retirees:

- TRICARE enrollment costs and use fees for currently serving troops and existing retirees escaped congressional reform efforts unchanged, according to the final draft of the NDAA. But future

retirees who join the military in 2018 or thereafter will pay higher fees for all TRICARE plans.

- TRICARE reforms proposed over the last year had included a parade of fee increases, many of which put the greatest burden on military retirees. But after months of negotiations, lawmakers produced a toned-down set of reforms that focuses change on the incoming military force instead of those who entered service under current health care plans.

- For those currently in the TRICARE system, including TRICARE Reserve Select and TRICARE for Life users, reform focuses primarily on program title change, back end management and limited expansions. For example, the law eliminates the "TRICARE Standard" and "TRICARE Extra" options, swapping them out with the newly minted "TRICARE Select." But for those who serve before 2018, nothing about the cost structure under the new plan differs from what users pay today under Standard or Extra.

- Under expansions in the legislation, TRICARE Prime users will be able to access civilian-based urgent care without prior authorization, a program that is currently capped at two visits per year. Military treatment facilities also will expand their primary care business hours and implement a standard appointment scheduling system across all services and

facilities nationwide while increasing the number of available appointments.

- The legislation allows the Defense Department to sell durable medical equipment, such as hearing aids, to beneficiaries at cost. Currently, TRICARE does not cover hearing aids for retirees.

Private Label Brands Coming to Commissaries

Commissary customers worldwide will start seeing private label products on their stores' shelves in May 2017, with an initial assortment of about 400 items. Private label products are sometimes referred to as "generic" products, usually costing less than national name brands.

Over the next few months the commissary agency will work with SpartanNash to decide on an initial assortment of about 400 items that will be available to commissaries worldwide in May 2017 and will continue to grow to about 1,000 items by the end of 2017. Over the next two years, they'll add more products.

Veterans Bills

Congress sent a package of important veterans bills to the president. Although Congress failed to act on major VA reform bills introduced earlier in the year, it did manage to pass a bill with a variety of other needed measures. For one

thing the bill established veteran status for all retired Guard and Reserve members, including those not called to federal service during their careers. Current law limits the "veteran" designation to those who have performed federal active duty. The change, which doesn't authorize any additional pay or benefits for the group, simply acknowledges the contributions of the Guard and Reserve retirees to our country. Selected other provisions of the bill include

- **Survivor Benefits** - Streamlines the delivery of survivor benefits from the VA, making it unnecessary for a survivor to apply separately to DoD and the VA.

- **Veterans Court Judges** - Extends the temporary increase in the number of judges on the United States Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims. The extension adds two more judges for another four years to handle the appeal workload, which already has an extreme backlog.

- **Immunizations**-Aligns the VA's definition of preventive health services with the current adult immunization schedule used by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

- **Mental Health Counselors**- Expands the qualification requirements for individuals the VA hires as licensed professional mental

health counselors to include providers with doctoral degrees in mental health counseling.

- **Physician Work Hours**-Allows greater work hour flexibility by allowing physicians to work more or less than 80 hours in a biweekly period as is currently done in the private sector. VA leaders say this is essential to attract new hires.

- **Toxic Exposure Research**- Requires the VA to conduct an assessment on scientific research related to descendants of veterans with toxic exposure and recommend to Congress the feasibility of conducting further research regarding health conditions of descendants of exposed veterans. If further research is deemed feasible, the VA would establish an advisory board to help the Secretary of VA in carrying out further research going forward

Editor's note:

You're getting this early because I'm going out of town. Please keep track of the date of the meeting.

January Meeting Tuesday, January 17

Clover Island Inn
Clover Island
Kennewick

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

*A reservation made
is a reservation paid.*

Reservations by
Thursday, Jan 12 to
Paul Seipt
375-5221
pama227@charter.net

Menu

Caesar Salad
Orzo Pasta Salad
Bread Sticks
Pasta Alfredo
Steamed Vegetable Medley
Stuffed Manicotti Smothered
in Sausage Marinara
Chicken Marsala
Tiramisu
Coffee, Decaf, Tea, Milk