



COLUMBIA VOYAGER

<http://www.TriCitiesMOAA.org>

chapter@TriCitiesMOAA.org

February 2018

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GMOs: Frankenfood or the end of famine?



Dr. Nancy Washton

Genetically modified organisms (GMOs) have been in the news for the last few years. What are they? Are they safe to eat? What are the facts and what is hype and scare tactics? Our February speaker will address these questions. Dr. Nancy Washton is a scientist at PNNL working in interfacial sciences and simulation. She has a BS from the University of Nevada and a PhD from Penn State University.

We will return to the Clover Island Inn; as Spring approaches we may get a nice view of the river at the start of the meeting. Email or call your reservation to Bob Allen by Thursday, February 15.

Membership Renewals

Membership renewals were due in January; if you haven't renewed yet please send \$25 to

Paul Seipt
232 Somerset Street
Richland WA 99354

Hq MOAA sends . . .

Vision and Dental Care under TRICARE

Editor's note: This is a new benefit, and the details aren't clear yet. It sounds like retirees are going to be eligible for vision and dental care under TRICARE. From what is out there now, I can't tell what the costs will be. But here's what is out there now:

MOAA had an exclusive preview of TRICARE's widely anticipated new dental and vision plans. This new insurance option for certain beneficiaries is set to be offered starting Jan. 1, 2019. The newly designed option was included in the 2017 National Defense Authorization Act with the legislated start date of 2019. The later starting time is meant to allow for better planning and communication for this new plan, as it will be offered and administered through the Federal Employees Dental and Vision Insurance Program (FEDVIP).

FEDVIP is popular among Federal employees. The more than 3.3 million people already enrolled give the program high marks for quality and value. With 10 dental and four vision carriers to choose from, and both standard and high plan options, we're happy to say that FEDVIP offers many benefit plans and options, which will provide great flexibility.

Here's the rundown on who is eligible for what. All TRICARE retirees and their families are eligible for both the dental insurance and the vision coverage. The retiree dental

plan and the new addition of a vision plan will allow for beneficiaries to make a selection from among several dental and vision carriers with a variety of benefit options. For example, in 2018 the FEDVIP program lists 10 dental carriers and four vision carriers (Delta Dental is included) with comprehensive dental and vision insurance at competitive group rates.

Key facts:

- Eligible beneficiaries must choose their plan during TRICARE's open season, Nov. 12 - Dec. 10, 2018.

- Beneficiaries currently enrolled in the TRICARE Retiree Dental Program will be required to enroll for coverage.

- Enrollment and plan changes can only occur during the open season with the exceptions for those beneficiaries with qualifying life events (usually anything that necessitates a change in the DEERS system).

Here's the kind of coverage TRICARE beneficiaries will get with FEDVIP (besides more choices):

- no wait period for most dental services
- no annual maximum benefit for some dental plans
- regional and national dental networks

- no deductible for some vision plans
- no limit on brands for frames or contacts for some vision plans
- discounts on LASIK offered by some vision plans.

Beneficiaries are encouraged to start getting information and pre-enrollment communications through the website set up just for this program: www.TRICARE.benefeds.com.

Sequestration . . . again

President Donald Trump, in his first State of the Union address, called for the end of sequestration - one of MOAA's top priorities.

"I am asking the Congress to end the dangerous defense sequester and fully fund our great military," Trump continued. The comment drew applause from both parties, a rare sight from a deeply divided Congress.

MOAA included sequestration on our list of five things we wanted the president to address in his speech. But making the request a reality will be difficult, at best.

Sequestration makes across-the-board cuts to programs if spending exceeds predetermined levels. Because they were unable to come to an agreement on a combination of spending reductions and revenue increases,

the prospect of meat-axe cuts to defense and non-defense programs has loomed over every federal budget ever since. With a recently passed tax overhaul scheduled to add \$1.5 trillion to the national debt, lawmakers might have little choice but to continue deficit spending.

Rather than full repeal of sequestration, a more likely scenario would be some sort of two-year agreement to raise defense and non-defense spending levels. When sequestration temporarily went into effect in 2013, Congress quickly cobbled together a two-year deal to raise the budget caps. Congress paid for the increased levels by cutting military retired pay. The move, COLA-minus-1, was panned by military and veterans service organizations. MOAA members flooded lawmakers' phones and inboxes with protests against the move, and Congress quickly repealed the provision.

Secretary of Defense Jim Mattis famously assailed the caps, telling lawmakers, "For all the heartache caused by the loss of our troops during these wars, no enemy in the field has done more to harm the readiness of our military than sequestration." But finding the political will to completely eliminate sequestration in this political environment might be a bridge too far for lawmakers.

February Meeting Tuesday, February 20

Clover Island Inn
Kennewick

Social hour at 6:30
Dinner at 7:00
\$30.00 per person

A reservation made
is a reservation paid.

Reservations by
Thursday, Feb 15 to
Bob Allen
627-6226
moaa.tricities@charter.net

Menu

Chicken Cordon Bleu
Green Salad with
House and Ranch Dressing
Orzo Pasta Salad
Warm Rolls with Butter
Baby Red Potatoes
Steamed Vegetable Medley
Carrot Cake
Coffee, Decaf, Tea or Milk