



# COLUMBIA VOYAGER

<http://www.TriCitiesMOAA.org>

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## September 2018

### Local Wildfires, NASA Space Programs



Norb Kuhman

We kick off our meetings after the summer break with guest speaker Fire Chief Norb Kuhman with MSA/Hanford Fire Dept. His primary topic will be the wildfires we have been experiencing out here in the NW: causes, how to battle, fire behavior, along with interesting war stories, from his past positions:

Norb Kuhman has spent 42 years serving the public in a variety of fire departments and positions on large federal installations with unique, diverse mission profiles. Norb began his career on the west side of Washington State at Naval Subbase Bangor where he served for ten years. For the next 27 years Norb served as either the Deputy Fire Chief or Fire Chief at Kennedy Space Center and Cape Canaveral AFS in Florida, providing fire protection services to both the manned and unmanned space

programs. For seven years Norb ran the Kennedy Space Center's Astronaut Rescue Program and was airborne in a NASA command and control helicopter for all Space Shuttle launches and landings. Norb worked with specially trained fire rescue and Air Force HH60 crews to provide astronaut rescue services either on the launch pad or during an ascent or landing mishap. In 2014 Norb was asked to bring his talents to Hanford to work with the DOE and the Hanford fire community to improve fire safety and emergency response.

We will meet at the Clover Island Inn on September 18. The Asian menu looks interesting, make a reservation for some good food and a fascinating speaker.

### TRICARE Dental and Vision coverage

Starting in 2019, TRICARE for Life participants will be eligible for the Federal Employees Dental and Vision Insurance Program (FEDVIP). You can preview the available plans at <http://tricare.benefeds.com>. The rates for 2019 won't be released until October, I'll try for an update if the new rates are out by the time I write the next newsletter. I did compare the 2018 rates to what I'm paying for Battelle's retired dental plan – with Delta Dental, which will be one of the plans under FEDVIP. It looks like the federal program will save me about \$35 per month. It might be wise to contact your dentist and

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vision provider to see what you typically spend in a year and compare that to the annual premium for insurance. Keep in mind, the insurance plans pay a discounted rate; without insurance you can expect to pay full price.

### Hq MOAA sends . . .

#### New Veterans Administration Would Mean Another VA Home Loan Fee

The creation of a fourth veterans administration - this one aimed at employment programs, education and military transition - advanced in the House in late July, according to a Military Times report.

Groups such as the Student Veterans of America and the American Enterprise Institute have supported the plan to create the Veterans Economic Opportunity Administration.

You're probably asking why, considering Veterans Affairs already operates the Veterans Benefits Administration, Veterans Health Administration and the National Cemetery Administration. Military Times' Leo Shane III cited concerns the VBA in particular "is too overwhelmed with disability compensation and pension claims to focus on education programs, post-military jobs efforts and a host of other resources."

The Veterans Economic Opportunity Administration is expected to include in its mission: housing loans, education assistance and employment programs.

A potential sticking point for many service members and veterans alike is that, in order to fund the creation of the new administration, the House legislation calls for a "temporary" fee on refinancing VA home loans.

While MOAA supports the new administration's core mission, adding another home loan fee is not the right way to fund it, said Col. Dan Merry, USAF (Ret.), MOAA's Vice President of Government Relations.

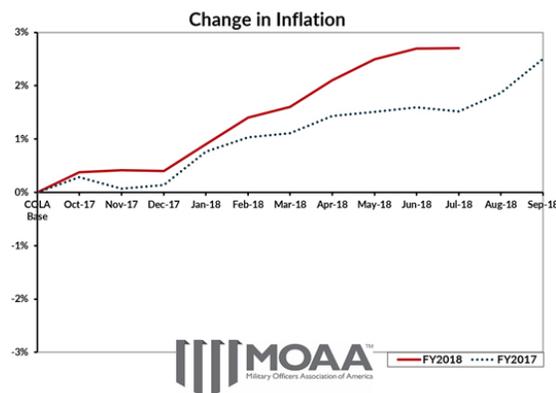
"We understand the need to create a focused level of effort to assist veterans through transition and into viable education programs that result in tangible employment opportunities," Merry said. "Once again, and disappointingly, the

costs associated with such stand-up efforts are directly imposed on the beneficiaries themselves - other veterans who are trying to refinance their homes. While we support causes such as this, we are not supportive of the method."

#### COLA, Active Duty Pay Raise

The July 2018 CPI is 246.155, 2.7 percent above the FY 2018 COLA baseline. This is the index used to calculate the COLA for military and Social Security retirees.

President Donald Trump approved H.R. 515, the John S. McCain National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2019. The President signed the legislation in front of huge crowd at Fort Drum, N.Y. The legislation includes a 2.6 percent increase in basic pay for troops, which President Trump described as "the biggest increase in a decade."



## September Meeting Tuesday, September 18

Clover Island Inn  
Clover Island  
Kennewick

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

A reservation made  
is a reservation paid.

Reservations by  
Noon Friday, Sept 14 to  
Paul Seipt  
375-5112  
pama227@charter.net

### Menu

Sweet and Sour Chicken  
Beef and Broccoli Stir Fry  
Oriental Vegetables  
Fried Rice  
Pork Egg Rolls  
Pot Stickers  
Oriental Sesame Salad  
Asian Slaw  
Fortune Cookies  
Coffee, tea, milk