



COLUMBIA VOYAGER

<http://www.TriCitiesMOAA.org>

chapter@TriCitiesMOAA.org

January 2019

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A bit of WW II history

We will kick off the new year with a presentation by chapter member Ron Weed. His presentation, "Why did Hitler Pass Up Switzerland?" is based on an academic paper he wrote a few years ago. Your newsletter editor reviewed it before publication, it's a fascinating story.

We will meet on January 15 at Clover Island Inn. Because of travel this month, reservations should go to Mark Hanneman by Thursday, January 10.

Dues are due

Annual dues of \$25 are in January. Send your dues now to:
Paul Seipt

232 Somerset Street
Richland WA 99354

Make your check out to "L&C Chapter." Better yet, bring your dues to the January meeting.

2019 COLA

From the Olympic Peninsula chapter's newsletter:

It's official: The 2019 COLA for military retired pay, Survivor Benefit Plan annuities, Social Security checks, and VA disability and survivor benefits will be 2.8 percent. [Most military members will see a 2.6 percent increase in their base pay.] This was effective in the January 2019 checks. The 2.8 per-cent 2018 COLA will be the second-largest COLA of the past decade, trailing only the 3.6-percent COLA year of 2011. The

calculation is made by comparing the average Consumer Price Index from July through September of the current year to the average for the same months of the year prior. It is important to keep in mind the CPI might not reflect your personal experience with price changes, but is rather a measure representing the experience of the average household, a working family, not retirees.

HQ MOAA sends . . .

FEDVIP enrollment officially extended for three months

Sign-ups for the Federal Employees Dental and Vision Insurance Program (FEDVIP) have officially extended for three months, officials at the Office of Personnel Management have informed MOAA.

Open Season ended Dec. 10, however OPM has granted a "belated enrollment phase" for potential beneficiaries who missed the first deadline. Sign-ups should be granted until about mid-March.

As of early Dec. 13, about 639,000 beneficiaries had signed up for dental coverage. The target goal is at least 800,000 signups. Vision coverage is also offered, through four carriers. FEDVIP vision plans help pay for routine vision appointments and frames, lens and contacts. As of Dec. 13, about 300,000 people had signed up for vision.

To enroll online visit BENEFEDS.com or call, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. Eastern, at 1-877-888-3337.

For those who have signed up: You will not see premiums taken out of your account until February. FEDVIP bills beneficiaries after each month of coverage.

Congress Looking at Shrinking the Deficit by Shorting Troops and Veterans

A new report outlines 121 options to reduce our nation's deficit - could you be affected?

Most likely you would be, if Congress implemented any variation of the options provided by the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) in a December report. There are many suggestions on the list that would affect service members, military retirees and their families. Among the options are the introduction of TRICARE for Life fees and reductions in basic allowance for housing.

The national debt is reaching critical mass and climbing, fueled by continued deficit spending. The FY 2018 federal budget deficit totaled \$779 billion, raising our nation's debt to 78 percent of our Gross Domestic Product.

Nearly every legislative engagement on Capitol Hill now prompts, "How do you propose to pay for this new spending required in the bill?" The inherent expectation is for the funding to come from the same department or program the bill supports.

This is why the bill to support Blue Water Navy veterans includes proposed increases to VA Home Loan fees to pay for it.

MOAA has not supported funding strategies that pit one group of military and veterans against another as a means to pay for service earned benefits - rather we support funding from the treasury so costs could be shared by all.

This leads to three focus points:

- CBO options to reduce the deficit may gain traction as the administration and Congress wrestle with a pay-for mandate.

- Military pay, benefits, and healthcare are often seen as funding sources for other programs.

- MOAA will continue to oppose putting the pay-for burden on the backs of beneficiaries.

With these points in mind, we draw your attention to seven of the 121 options. These are areas previously eyed for funding, and they are in the CBO report. The seven options if implemented would:

- Cap increases in basic military pay for military service members

- Reduce the Basic Allowance for Housing to 80 percent of average housing costs

- Introduce enrollment fees under TRICARE For Life
- Introduce minimum out-of-pocket requirement under TRICARE For Life

- Increase premiums for Medicare Part B

- Modify TRICARE enrollment fees and cost sharing for working-age military retirees

- End VA's Individual Unemployability payments to disabled veterans at the full retirement age for Social Security

Blue Water Navy Bill

Hours into the new legislative session, a House Republican introduced the Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act of 2019, which would expand presumptive exposure to Agent Orange to tens of thousands of veterans who served on ships off Vietnam's coast. The move comes after the previous Congress failed to pass identical legislation when the Senate declined to vote on the measure in the closing days of its session.

The bill would allow these veterans to receive benefits for Agent Orange exposure, which is connected to a variety of cancers and other long-term illnesses. An estimated 900,000 veterans have been exposed to Agent Orange; this bill would extend disability benefits to about 90,000 veterans.

January Meeting

Tuesday, January 15

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, Jan 10 to
Mark Hanneman
539-6911
olddrummer55@gmail.com

Menu

Chicken Cordon Bleu
with Mornay sauce
Crisp garden salad
with raspberry vinaigrette
Warm rolls with butter
Vegetables
Freshly brewed coffee, decaf,
hot tea or milk