



AFSA International Legislative Committee Bulletin 2014-118
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1. 2016 Military Pay Raise. The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) has released the 2014 third-quarter measurement of the Employment Cost Index (ECI) which will determine the 2016 military pay raise. *According to this figure, if current law is followed (Title 37 USC 1009), the January 2016 military pay raise should be 2.3 percent.*

Current law compares the ECI (which measures private sector wage growth) from the third quarter of one year to the third quarter of the following year—in this case 2014 as compared to 2013. That projects the military pay raise 15 months in advance. For example, the ECI measurement released in October 2013 determined the January 2015 military pay raise (unless Congress and the White House agree to change it).

As he did for the 2014 military pay raise, President Obama is once again asking that Congress reduce the 2015 military pay raise by 45 percent (from 1.8 to 1.0 percent). So, it is reasonable to assume he may do the same for the 2016 raise (when he releases his FY 2016 Budget Proposal next February).

Those who want to assist AFSA Headquarters in urging Congress to overrule the President's military pay raise reduction plan can do so by sending a letter to your elected officials now. You have every right to do so. It is time to act now. You may do so by going to: <http://www.capwiz.com/hqafsa/home/>

2. Vote 2014. AFSA Headquarters' 10-day "Reasons to Vote" countdown to the midterm elections (4 November) continues. You can track all of the reasons on Twitter--Tweet to @AFSAHQ. Here is the sixth reason:

Reason to Vote #6: Issues affecting service members, families, and Veterans abound: Take a stand and vote!

3. Expect the Administration to Go After Commissary Funding Again Next Year. An article in the *Shreveport Times* and various other outlets by journalist *Tom Philpott* reports that, "The Defense Commissary Agency (DeCA) faced a tough operating environment in the fiscal year that ended Sept. 30 as sales fell by 4.3 percent.

"The drop was due in part to commissaries closing for six days during a government shutdown last fall. But patrons also saw the worth of their benefit debated for months after the Obama administration proposed cutting DeCA's annual appropriation of \$1.4

billion to \$400 million by 2017, with the idea that average shopper savings of 31 percent could be pared by one third.

“Congress rejected the plan this year, but commissaries are expected to be targeted again in the 2016 defense budget to be unveiled next February.”

As we reported several times, if the Administration plan had been adopted it would, no doubt, have soon led to the closure of the majority of stateside commissaries.

To read the entire *Philpott* column, go to:

<http://www.shreveporttimes.com/story/opinion/columnists/2014/10/30/deca-answers-sales-drop-value-brand/18190133/>

4. Internal Administration Conflict Leads to Inaction on VA Scandals. Severely criticized for not firing inept and corrupt Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) officials as he promised he would during his confirmation hearings, VA Secretary Robert McDonald has indicated he cannot do so until the Department of Justice (DOJ) acts on criminal referrals sent to DOJ by the VA Inspector General. However, DOJ has indicated it will not prosecute these criminal referrals. Remember, the DOJ and the VA carry out these programs at the direction of the Administration.

An article in the *Washington Free Beacon* tells us, “The Veterans Affairs Inspector General referred at least 17 cases tied to allegations of wait-time manipulation to the Department of Justice for prosecution, and the agency [DOJ] has declined to prosecute all of them. Both agencies have refused to comment on the reasons behind the lack of prosecutions.

“But according to a list obtained by the *Washington Free Beacon* from a source close to the House committee investigating the VA’s conduct, the most common reason given for the Department of Justice’s (DOJ) denial was that the referred cases involved lacked evidence of criminal intent.”

Those interested can read more at: <http://freebeacon.com/issues/doj-wont-prosecute-vet-affairs-criminal-referrals/>

5. For Military Retirees: 1099Rs to be Available Online in Mid-December. The Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS) tells us, “The IRS Forms 1099R for the 2014 tax year will become available online in mid-December 2014. You will be able to access yours on *myPay*. If you have not yet created a *myPay* account, or if you have forgotten your password, please take a look at:

<http://www.dfas.mil/retiredmilitary/newsevents/newsletter/needhelpcreatingmypayaccount.html>

“We will also mail hard copy versions of the 1099R to those of you who have chosen that option. Please keep in mind that hard copy versions of the 1099R are issued later and

will take a while to reach you. If you have elected hard copy, you may not receive it until mid-January 2015.

“Please note that 1099R’s are not automatically issued for deceased members. If you want to receive a 1099R on the behalf of a member who passed away, a certificate of death must be on file, and you must request that a 1099R be issued. If you would like to make this request, or have questions regarding a 1099R for a deceased member, please contact us using one of the methods described in this link:

<http://www.dfas.mil/dfas/retiredmilitary/about/aboutus/customer-service.html>

6. Senate Majority Leader Now Says He will Support VA Funding Continuity Bill.

An article in *Stars and Stripes* reports, “A bill to secure the funding of veterans’ services in a time of uncertain federal budgets won an initial ‘legislative victory’ on Capitol Hill this week. Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, D-Nev., [who is currently in Nevada] said he will call a vote before the end of the year on the Putting Veterans Funding First Act. Reid announced this in a letter sent Tuesday to the bill’s sponsor, Sen. Mark Begich, D-Alaska, who is in the midst of a tough re-election battle. Reid’s green-light on the vote was no doubt a midterm run-up gift to Begich . . .”

Note: This bill was introduced in May 2013 and reported out by the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee in November 2013. However, Sen. Reid has not allowed a vote by the full Senate on this legislation for nearly a year. So, while the reason for the timing of this announcement is obvious, the legislation would, nevertheless, be welcome.

To read the full *Stars and Stripes* article, go to: <http://www.stripes.com/news/bill-to-shield-veterans-services-from-government-shutdown-advances-1.311230>

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