



# Advocate



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## Rumsfeld Opposes Bill with Concurrent Receipt Legislation


Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld recently sent another emphatic message to Congress that he opposes spending any more money on health care or disabled retirees. His July "heartburn letter" to House and Senate Armed Services Committee leaders said he would "join other senior advisors to the President in recommending that he veto the FY2004 Defense Authorization Bill if it includes Senate-passed provisions authorizing concurrent receipt of military retirement pay and veterans' disability compensation benefits, or expands TRICARE." It said he'd also recommend a veto if the defense bill includes any change that would hamper a new round of base closures in 2005.

The Administration's opposition to concurrent receipt is nothing new. It's what made Congress backpedal last year after both chambers passed substantive concurrent receipt plans. The pressure is on again this year, as the Senate-passed bill would authorize full concurrent receipt, and 202 representatives have signed a discharge petition that would force a vote on the issue in the House. Unfortunately this has become a partisan issue and because of presidential pressure only one Republican has signed the petition.

This year, Secretary Rumsfeld has stooped further to oppose much-needed health coverage continuity for drilling members of the National Guard and Reserve. Tens of thousands of these families have experienced significant

health insurance problems in recent years because of the change in their coverage status when mobilized to and demobilized from active duty. Many had to try to find new doctors who would take TRICARE when they were mobilized and then switch providers again when reverting to their private health plan. Members called to war had to worry whether their families would get information about TRICARE, find a participating doctor, or encounter billing hassles. Too often, their worries proved well founded.

The Senate responded by passing a plan to let drilling Guard and Reserve members enroll in TRICARE coverage year-round (for a fee) or elect to have the government pay part of their civilian insurance premium while mobilized. Virtually all military and veterans' associations, including AMS, think such health coverage continuity is essential to protect Guard and Reserve families hurt by multiple mobilizations to fight our country's battles around the world. If national policy requires frequent mobilizations of the Guard and Reserve, we can't keep disrupting their families' health care. We can either build a retention tool or ignore a problem that causes many servicemembers to think twice about reenlisting.

AMS urges our members to contact their Congressional Representative and ask him or her to support the discharge petition for H.R. 303, the concurrent receipt discharge petition. 

## VA To Fill Prescriptions by Non-VA Physicians

Some veterans waiting to see Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) physicians for the first time may be eligible to receive



medications from VA mail-out pharmacies that were prescribed by private doctors, under a new policy announced recently.

"This policy should ease the minds of veterans with pharmaceutical needs who have been waiting too long for their first appointment," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Anthony J. Principi. "This decision will help these veterans while preserving our ability to serve others."

To be eligible for the new benefit, veterans must meet all of the following conditions:

- Have enrolled in VA health care before July 25, 2003, and
- Requested their first primary care appointment with VA before July 25, 2003, and

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# Commissary Web Site is Customer Link to Savings

**W**hen is the next case lot sale? What time does my commissary open? Where can I get more coupons? The answers to those questions, and more, are at <http://www.commissaries.com>. Commissary customers will find their one-stop cyber information center is open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year and there is always something new.

The Web site is there to help them save money, said Rick Brink, Web content editor for the Defense Commissary Agency. One thing we're often asked is why there aren't Internet coupons on our site. But there are. We may not be able to offer them ourselves, but customers can find links to commercial sites that offer commissary sales information, newsletters and downloadable coupons through the links page at <http://www.commissaries.com>.

The number of coupons redeemed online or downloaded and used at brick and mortar stores has increased dramatically over the last three years, with grocery coupons among the most popular. For example, a link to CoolSavings, one of the largest providers of coupons on the Internet, is brand new on the links page of <http://www.commissaries.com>.

saries.com. If a business sells groceries in commissaries or has coupons of interest to our customers, all they need to do is provide a gateway page for commissary customers and we'll provide a text link to their Web site, says Brink. We


*Customers can find links to commercial sites that offer commissary sales information, newsletters and downloadable coupons.*

want to do anything we can to encourage savings above and beyond the 30 percent savings we typically provide commissary shoppers.

The DeCA Web site attracts heavy traffic and experiences from 2 million to 4 million hits per month, according to Web master Corintha Russell. Average daily visits this year increased more than 20 percent by the end of March, she said. In fact, March 28 was the most visited day ever at the Web site.

Store pages are the most visited areas of our Web site by far, said Brink. Customers can find commissary locations, hours, news about store events and other useful information about their commissary. They can even e-mail the store. It's all right there at their fingertips. All they have to do is click.

The DeCA Web site also has the latest news releases about what's happening at commissaries and customers can contact the agency directly to ask questions, offer suggestions, send compliments and resolve issues through the Web site's comment feature. Customers can also access the shopping pages before they plan their commissary trips to find out what's on sale.

Another recent addition is a link to the Commissary Gift Certificates page, which allows anyone to purchase the certificates as a gift of groceries for military families and friends or to donate to charities that support the military. The gift certificates page has become the top-ranked specialty page with over \$1 million commissary gift certificates purchased or donated since October 2002. 

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*By Bonnie Powell*

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## VA to Fill Prescriptions

*continued from page 1*

- Must be waiting more than 30 days for their first appointment with a primary care physician on Sept. 22, 2003.

The first prescriptions will be filled under the new program on September 22. Eligible veterans will be unable to get prescriptions filled before that date. The period between announcement of the program (July 25) and filling the first prescriptions (Sept. 22) is necessary to allow VA to identify and contact eligible veterans and to put new systems and procedures in place to deliver this benefit.


Principi stressed the policy is a

short-term measure to assist veterans who were enrolled and waiting for the appointment before July 25, when details about the new benefit were published in the Federal Register. It will not apply to veterans who are put on the waiting list after July 24. VA estimates that 200,000 veterans will be eligible for the benefit.

"Traditionally, an examination and a prescription – both by a VA physician – have been required before VA would provide pharmacy benefits to veterans," Principi said. "By improving the process of giving veterans the medication they're

seeking, we can enhance their health care treatment and reduce the waiting lists for everyone."

Veterans covered by the new rule will receive information by mail from their nearest VA medical facility about filling prescriptions by mail from non-VA doctors, including information for the doctors themselves.

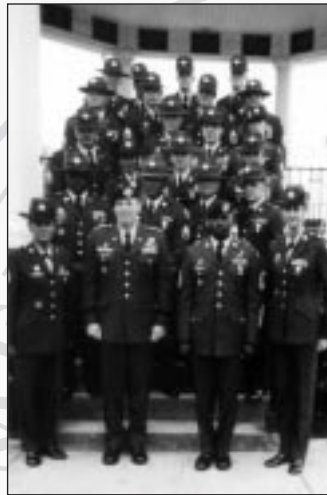
Principi credited Reps. John Mica (R-Fla.) and Rob Simmons (R-Conn.) with "playing an important role in launching this new benefit due to their keen interest in improving prescription coverage for veterans." 



# PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

## DOUG RUSSELL

Drill sergeant, drill instructor, military training instructor, recruit division commander, company commander – whatever you call them, there's no doubt that they are some of the most memorable people anyone will ever meet in the military. They are among the very best noncommissioned officers in our Armed Forces and the success of our military depends on them. That's why I was so pleased to be invited recently to attend the ceremony when the Army named its Drill Sergeants of the Year for 2003.



*Doug Russell  
congratulates top  
Army Drill Sergeants.*

Little did I know that I would see history in the making, because for the first time ever, two women were named as U.S. Army Drill Sergeants of the Year. On the active duty side, we congratulate SFC Billie Jo Miranda of Fort Jackson, S.C., and on the reserve side, congratulations go to SFC Corenna L. Rouse of the 100th Division, Louisville, Ky.

...



It is simply not possible to let the passing of Bob Hope go without some thoughts. He has been eulogized by those who are far more eloquent than I, but there will never be another like him. He did what he did because he cared about GIs. As I'm sure everyone knows, he often risked his life to bring a little bit of home to those who were so far away from home. It is impossible to replace him, but it's very sad that there is no one of his stature in the entertainment industry who is willing to step forward in the same way

that Bob Hope always did. Yes, I know that there are some celebrities who've traveled in recent years to visit our troops, but those who might be in the same league as Bob Hope simply have not done it regularly, and any who have done it regularly are not as universally popular as he was. We will all miss him, and we are truly thankful for the memories.

...

The June 30 issues of the Army, Navy and Air Force Times contained very disturbing editorials about the way military personnel are being treated by our political leadership in Washington. To quote the Air Force Times, "In recent months, President Bush and the Republican-controlled Congress have missed no opportunity to heap richly deserved praise on the military. But talk is cheap – and getting cheaper by the day, judging from the nickel-and-dime treatment the troops are getting lately."

The editorial then goes on to point out these specific items: 1) the White House complained about incentives that were added to the Defense budget by the House of Representatives, including doubling the \$6,000 gratuity paid to families of troops who die on active duty; 2) the Administration announced that on Oct.1 it wants to roll back recent increases in monthly imminent-danger pay for troops in combat zones (decreasing it from \$225 to \$150); 3) the inability of the White House and Congress to find time to pass minor tax provisions that would be a boon to military homeowners, parents deployed to combat zones, and reservists who travel long distances for training; 4) the President's 2004 Defense budget proposed capping raises for E-1s, E-2s and O-1s at 2 percent, compared to the average raise of 4.1 percent; 5) the Administration's proposed 2004 military construction budget is \$1.5 billion less than the 2003 budget.

To be fair, a tax bill passed by the House after the publication of the editorials did contain some of the military tax reduction provisions. But the point was well made. It is foolish to trust politicians to take care of you. That's why you need to belong to a military association. And that's why AMS is on duty for you.

*Doug Russell*

## Little Known Draft Plan In Standby Mode

Doctors, nurses, and other health care personnel could be in for a rude shock if there is a national emergency or if a major war should break out. That's because the Health Care Personnel Delivery System (HCPDS) has developed a standby plan for the Selective Service System at the request of Congress. If needed, this system would be used to draft health care personnel into the military. According to the Selective Service System website, the plan would be implemented only in time of national emergency, and "only if Congress and the President approve the plan and pass and sign legislation to enact it. No portion of the plan is designed for implementation in peacetime."

As outlined by the Selective Service, the plan would include women, unless otherwise directed by Congress and the President; would "provide a fair and equitable draft of doctors, nurses, medical technicians," among other health care personnel; and would begin a mass registration of male and female health care workers between the ages of 20 and 45. Although the plan calls for a pool of 3.4 million health care workers, it claims the impact on civilian health care would be minimal.

*If needed, this system would be used to draft health care personnel into the military.*

It is hard not to wonder if our political leaders aren't continuing to hide their heads in the sand. If they continue to send U.S. troops all over the world to fight wars and build nations, they are simply going to have to increase the size of our Armed Forces, including medical personnel. The mechanics of registering and then inducting millions of medical personnel who have no idea they are subject to a draft seems almost ludicrous. And it's very difficult to believe that pulling that many people out of the civilian health care system is not going to have a significant impact.

At his recent confirmation hearing before the Senate, newly named Army Chief of Staff General Peter Schoomaker made it known that he thinks the U.S. probably needs a larger military than we now have. This flies in the face of constant pronouncements by Defense Secretary Rumsfeld over the past months denying the need for a larger force.

Without even addressing the subject of whether women should be drafted, we can only hope the civilian leadership at the Pentagon will start listening to General Schoomaker and the other military leaders who know the force is too small. ♡

## Group Provides Clothing, Other Items for Returning Wounded Troops

Susan Brewer made a startling discovery during a "Support Our Troops" rally on the National Mall in April. She found out that wounded service members returning from Iraq only have the clothes on their backs – and that's if their garments haven't been cut off for medical procedures.

Lisa Lourake, an Air Force spouse, approached and asked Brewer if her organization, America's Heroes of Freedom, could help get a bunch of things for troops returning from the desert for medical treatment. Lourake told her that wounded servicemen and women arriving at Andrews Air Force Base, Md., needed shirts, pants, jackets,

underwear, socks, shoes, pants, toiletries and other items.

"I decided to find somebody to help the injured soldiers who come to Andrews from Iraq," Lourake said. "Ever since I told Susan, she has been delivering boxes and helping troops with various items they need."

She said Brewer delivered items the day after her first request. "That's pretty awesome!" Lourake said.

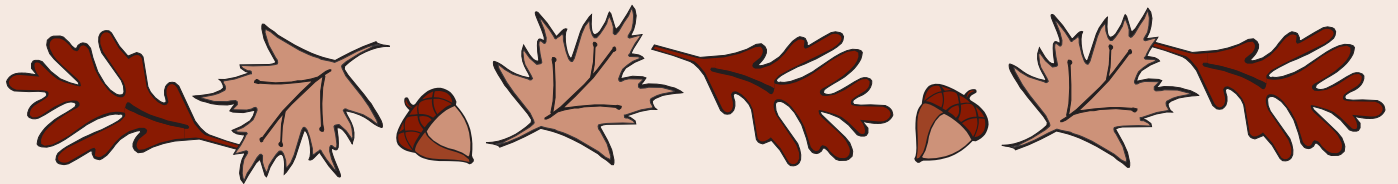
Brig. Gen. Glenn F. Spears, commander of the 89th Airlift Wing at Andrews, and his wife, Kim, met the group when they arrived to deliver the items to the troops. "He thanked us and gave us hugs," Brewer noted.

"Fox & Friends" morning show "announced the project on national TV telling people we needed new items – no used items," Brewer noted. "Within about three days, more than 160 boxes arrived packed with different items from all over the country."

The group has also taken about 600 boxes of items for the wounded patients to Washington's Walter Reed Army Medical Center. "And we're getting calls from other bases around the country," Brewer noted.

Cpl. David Calhoun, 37, of Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 3rd Battalion, 7th Infantry, 1st

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## RESOLUTION TO DESIGNATE NOVEMBER 9-15 AS *“National Veterans Awareness Week”*

### INTRODUCED IN SENATE

**F**or the fourth year in a row, Senator Joseph Biden of Delaware has introduced a resolution expressing the sense of the Senate that the week that includes Veterans' Day this year be designated as “National Veterans Awareness Week.” His resolution is cosponsored by 54 other Senators from both political parties.

According to Senator Biden, “the purpose of National Veterans Awareness Week is to serve as a focus for educational programs designed to make students in elementary and secondary schools aware of the contributions of veterans and their importance in preserving American peace and prosperity. This goal takes on particular importance and immediacy this year as we find ourselves again with uniformed men and women in harm's way in foreign lands.”


“This action has become necessary because we are victims of our own success with regard to the superior performance of our Armed Forces. The plain fact is that there are just fewer people around now who have had any connection with military service. For example, as a result of tremendous advances in military technology and the resultant productivity increases, our current Armed Forces now operate effectively with a personnel roster that is one-third less in size than just 15 years ago. In addition, the success of the all-volunteer career-oriented force has led to much lower turnover of personnel in today's military than in previous eras when conscription was in place. Finally, the number of veterans who served during previous conflicts, such as World War II, when our military was many times larger than today, is inevitably declining.”

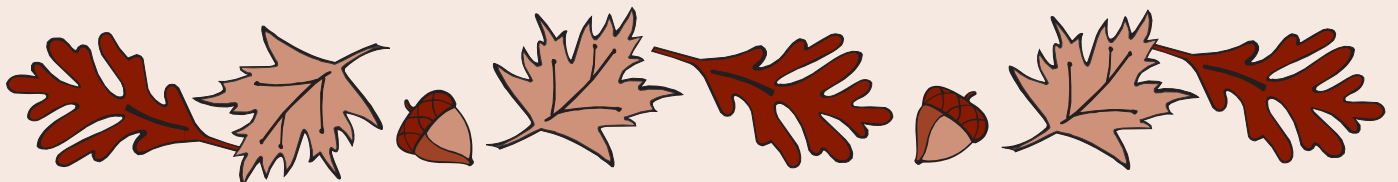
Senator Biden believes this lack of understanding about military veterans' important role in our society can have potentially serious repercussions. In our country, civilian control of the Armed Forces is the key tenet of

military governance. A citizenry that is oblivious to the capabilities and limitations of the armed forces, and to its critical role throughout our history, can make decisions that have unexpected and unwanted consequences. Even more important, general recognition of the importance of those individual character traits that are essential for military success, such as patriotism, selflessness, sacrifice, and heroism, is vital to maintaining these key aspects of citizenship in the armed forces and even throughout the population at large.

“We don't want our children growing up to think that Veterans Day has simply become a synonym for department store sale, and we don't want to become a nation where more high school seniors recognize the name Britney Spears than the name Dwight Eisenhower,” the Senator stated.

National Veterans Awareness Week complements Veterans Day by focusing on education as well as commemoration, on the contributions of the many in addition to the heroism and service of the individual. National Veterans Awareness Week also presents an opportunity to remind ourselves of the contributions and sacrifices of those who have served in peacetime as well as in conflict; both groups work unending hours and spend long periods away from their families under conditions of great discomfort so that we all can live in a land of freedom and plenty.

Last year, the Resolution designating National Veterans Awareness Week had 55 cosponsors and was approved in the Senate by unanimous consent. Responding to that resolution, President Bush issued a proclamation urging our citizenry to observe National Veterans Awareness Week. 



# DoD, Postal Service Honor Korean War Armistice, Veterans

“The Korean War will not really end until every American is brought home or accounted for.” So stated Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz to several thousand veterans and family members about the “forgotten war” during the Defense Department’s recognition of the 50th anniversary of armistice that brought about a cease-fire to the Korean War.

“We owe them that; we owe it to their families, and we’ll keep our promise,”

Wolfowitz said. “Until things change in Pyongyang (the North Korean capital), we’ll have to guard against renewed aggression. Meanwhile, we’ll work with the North Koreans to bring home our missing.”

The deputy defense secretary was speaking to thousands of people gathered on the National Mall for the DoD commemoration and the U.S. Postal Service’s dedication and unveiling of a special stamp honoring the memorial. Robert F. Rider, a member of the postal service’s board of governors, unveiled the stamp.

Rider said some Korean War veter-



Korean War veteran. The picture shows the sculptures at the Korean War Memorial shrouded in heavy snow.


“As a Korean War veteran myself, I can tell you that it perfectly captures those bleak and frigid battlefields we so often endured,” Rider said. He said as far as the postal service is concerned, the Korean War has never been forgotten. “We have issued several stamps over the

ans felt forgotten, adding that, “To the men and women who served, the Korean War could never be a forgotten war. And with this new stamp, we’ll help ensure that their efforts on behalf of freedom are remembered for generations to come.”

“This stamp will serve as a special reminder that we must not forget the brave men and women who made the ultimate sacrifice,” Rider continued. “Nor should we forget those who returned home without fanfare.”

A photograph taken by Marine Corps Reserve Lt. Col. John W. Alli graces the stamp. Alli took the photo as a retirement gift to his father, Bill Alli, a

years to recognize the bravery of Korean War veterans and the significance of the Korean War in U.S. and world history,” Rider noted. “In 1985, we issued the 22-cent Veterans of Korea stamp. And in 1999, we issued a Korean War stamp as part of the ‘Celebrate the Century’ series.”

The commemoration period commenced June 25, 2000, marking the 50th anniversary of the invasion of South Korea, and will continue until this year’s Veterans Day on Nov. 11. 

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*By Rudi Williams  
American Forces Press Service*

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## Group Provides Clothing

*continued from page 4*


Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division, is a wheelchair patient who received a gift box. He said after getting treatment for wounds suffered in Iraq July 1, he was flown to the Landstuhl Regional Medical Center in Germany. From there, he arrived at Andrews July 9 and was flown to Winn Army Hospital at Fort Stewart, Ga., July 11.

Calhoun said when he arrived at Andrews, he needed clothes. “At the time, I only had my uniform and they had cut it off of me,” he noted. “So the only thing I was wearing were the clothes they give you at the hospital. When I got here and saw all this stuff, it was amazing. I needed everything because all my gear is back in Iraq. Some of my stuff is at Fort Stewart, but it’s packed away.”

The first thing he asked for was “personal hygiene items, some clothes to get out of the hospital in. They gave me shirts, socks, T-shirts – everything I could possibly need to

maintain myself.”

Another wheelchair patient was Army transportation specialist Pfc. Mary Lamkin, 27, who had injured her leg June 27. She was taken to the hospital in Kuwait at Camp Wolf, and then to Landstuhl. She was also flown to Fort Stewart, where she is attached to Company B, 703rd Main Support Battalion.

Asked what items she needed upon arrival at Andrews, Lamkin said, “I needed underwear, shampoo and, like all women, combs and brushes for my hair.” Looking at all the items laid out by members of America’s Heroes of Freedom, she said, “So this is really great, because my bags are in a shipping container. It’s so full I don’t want to dig anything out.” 

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*By Rudi Williams  
American Forces Press Service*

# American Military Society Membership Application Form

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- Yes**, I want to join in support of a strong national defense and take advantage of the great benefits AMS offers. I also understand that I am joining an organization that fights for the compensation, benefits, and entitlements of all military personnel of the uniformed services.

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\* Lifetime Membership may be paid in 10 quarterly payments – 1st payment of \$25 is enclosed.

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## AMS Benefits and Services

**Special Notice to AMS Members:** Due to recently revised postal standards, we can no longer list specific AMS Member Benefits without losing our ability to mail the Advocate at the nonprofit postage rate. Therefore, we are listing the generic AMS Member Benefits and a general toll-free number you can call to get more specific information about the benefits.

For information about any of these programs, call our Customer Service Representatives,  
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