



CPAC Newsletter

July 2004

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USAJOBS

A recent news release from the Office of Personnel Management announced latest USAJOBS website improvements. The website has 66 million visitors logged and 600,000 online resumes created. The improvements benefit job seekers who are registered with the USAJOBS job search agent functionality to receive job announcements by e-mail. With the latest

enhancements, job seekers are now receiving expanded information in their job search notices including salary and closing date. This enhanced content gives job seekers more decision making data right in their e-mail. Job seekers who wish to receive e-mail notification of new job openings can sign up on the USAJOBS website, www.usajobs.opm.gov, and create up to five job search agents to receive

a daily, weekly, or monthly notice of matching job opportunities as they are posted to the website. The ability to receive, by e-mail, notices of new job openings is one of the most popular features of the USAJOBS website. One of the major goals of USAJOBS is to provide a helpful, useful resource for those considering careers in the federal government.

National Security Personnel System Website Update

The NSPS Website has undergone a major renovation. The new web address is: <http://www.cpms.osd.mil/nsps/index.html>. Here you will find an overview of what DoD employees can expect from the new personnel system, as well as information regarding issues of labor- management and

employee unions, and links to NSPS-related documents. One of the more powerful features of the NSPS Web site is a mechanism for visitors to submit comments and ideas about NSPS directly to the NSPS Program Executive Office. The website also offers up to date information under its

"What's New" section, where it is mentioned that Mr. Brad Bunn, a member of the Federal Government's Senior Executive Service, was named Deputy Program Executive Officer (D-PEO), National Security Personnel System (NSPS), in June 2004. In that position, Mr. Bunn

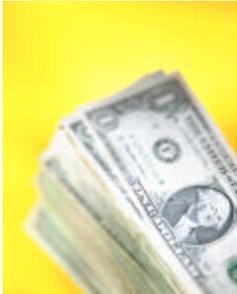
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assists Mrs. Mary Lacey, the Program Executive Officer, in overseeing the comprehensive policy and program management

office that will complete the design, planning, assessment, and implementation of NSPS. Mr. Bunn comes to the PEO-NSPS from the

Office of the Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Civilian Personnel Policy. Take a look at the new website to learn the latest on NSPS.



Thrift Savings Plan—Important Information

The Federal Retirement Thrift Investment Board announced today that it will begin providing toll-free telephone service to Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) participants and beneficiaries beginning July 1, 2004. Those using the toll-free service will be able to obtain TSP account or transaction information via the ThriftLine's automated

telephone service 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. They will also be able to speak to a participant service representative at one of two TSP call centers between the expanded hours of 7:00 am to 9:00 pm Eastern time, Monday through Friday.

Beginning July 1, 2004, for calls from the U.S.,

Canada, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands, the primary toll-free number will be 1-TSP-YOU-FRST (1-877-968-3778) and the TDD number for the hearing impaired will be 1-TSP-THRIFT5 (1-877-847-4385). The current number (1-504-255-8777) should be used for all other international calls.

FEGLI Open Season

To mark the 50th anniversary of the FEGLI program, a rare open season for enrolling in or changing coverage levels in the Federal employees group life insurance program will be held in September.

FEGLI typically holds open seasons only when benefit levels or premium rates change. Neither will

change in the upcoming opportunity, which will be open only to active employees and certain rehired annuitants-and not to retirees otherwise. The elections and resulting premium changes will not be effective until the first pay period of September 2005. FEGLI enrollees can cancel or reduce coverage at any time, but outside an open season

they generally may only increase coverage by proving insurability or after experiencing certain life events, such as marriage or the birth of a child. No proof of insurability will be required for elections made in the upcoming open season. Employees who do not wish to change their coverage will not have to do anything in the open season.



Retirement Processing

If you are now considering retirement, the Army Benefits Center-Civilian (ABC-C) strongly recommends that you submit your retirement application package to the ABC-C within 90-120 days in advance of your intended retirement date. A timely submission will help ensure a timely first annuity payment from the Office of Personnel Management.

Consequently, a delay in submitting your application package will directly impact the processing of your retirement; this often results in a delay in the receipt of your first annuity payment. ABC-C statistics indicate, for example, that about 75% of the

employees who submitted retirement applications within 1-15 days before retirement may encounter a delay in annuity receipt. Provided below are the percentages of those applications that were processed timely based on the amount of advance receipt of the retirement application from the employee:

- Retirement packages received more than 60 days in advance- 98.46%
- Retirement packages received within 31 - 60 days - 96.74%
- Retirement packages received within 16 - 30 days - 92.78%

- Retirement packages received within 1 - 15 days - 24.26%
- Overall timeliness for May, 2004 was 77.22%.

The above statistics reveal that it is in your best interest to submit your retirement application to the ABC-C within the recommended timeframe. Although there may be situations that prevent an early submission, ABC-C strives for timely application processing and continues to provide service of the highest quality to Department of the Army employees.

To learn more about the retirement process, visit the ABC-C web site at <https://www.abc.army.mil>.

“The ABC-C strongly recommends that you submit your retirement package within 90-120 days in advance of your intended retirement date.”

Flexible Spending Accounts for Federal Employees (FSAFEDS) - Paperless Reimbursement

FSAFEDS has partnered with a number of FEHB fee-for-service plans to implement Paperless Reimbursement. This new program eliminates the need for you to manually prepare and submit your claims for out-of-pocket costs from your FEHB Plan to FSAFEDS. Instead, once your FEHB plan processes your medical, dental, and/or

prescription claims, they will forward your out-of-pocket expense(s) electronically to FSAFEDS for paperless reimbursement from your Health Care Flexible Spending Account (HCFSA). Now you can not only save money with your HCFSA, you save your valuable time as well!

Current Participating FEHB Fee-For-Service Plans

- BlueCross/BlueShield Service Benefit Plan
- GEHA
- Mail Handlers/First Health
- Association Benefit Plan

Important Information

- In order to participate in Paperless Reimbursement, the

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FEHB contract holder's social security number for your enrollment must be on file with your FEHB plan.

- Paperless Reimbursement does not change in any way your relationship and obligations to your health care providers. You are expected to make payment for your out-of-pocket expenses when requested by your provider. Under Paperless Reimbursement, FSAFEDS will reimburse you – not your provider.
- Paperless Reimbursement works

best with self and family coverage.

- Covered expenses that are filed with your FEHB – for all family members covered under the enrollment – will be forwarded to SHPS for Paperless reimbursement under your FSAFEDS account.
- The timeline for your FEHB plan to process your claim has not changed. Once your claim has been processed it will automatically be submitted to your FSAFEDS account.
- You can sign up for, or cancel your participation in Paperless

Reimbursement at any time by logging onto your account at

www.fsafeds.com.

- To learn more, please check our Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) at <https://www.fsafeds.com/fsafeds/faq.asp> and then click on Paperless Reimbursement. You may also call the FSAFEDS toll free phone line at 1-877-FSAFEDS (372-3337). Benefits counselors are available to assist you from 9:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday.

Long Term Care Premiums

If you pay your Long Term Care premiums via payroll deduction and you transfer to a new agency, your premium deductions do not automatically transfer to the new agency. To continue payroll deductions, you MUST contact LTC Partners as soon as you know where and when you will be transferring. They will work with your new agency location to start payroll deductions there. Depending on when you

contact LTC Partners with information on your transfer, they may not be able to get your payroll deduction changed over in time for your first paycheck from the new location. If that is the case, you will automatically receive a direct bill from LTC Partners for the premiums due that were not collected through payroll deduction. Payroll deductions are not adjusted to “catch up” uncollected premiums, so it is important for you to

pay the direct bill promptly when you receive them, in order to keep your Long Term Care coverage current.

To report your transfer, please call the Customer Service Center at LTC Partners at 1-800-LTC-FEDS (1-800-582-3337, option #3) (TTY 1-800-843-3557). For more information, go to <http://www.opm.gov/insure/ltc/index.asp>.



Defense Travel Systems

It's here, and it's coming your way! The Defense Travel System (DTS), represents a whole new way of doing business for government. It delivers real, measurable results as proven in pilot tests. DTS makes the travel process faster, easier, and better than ever before. DTS seamlessly automates the three DoD travel processes: Authorization, reservation, and voucher filing. Using DTS, travelers are able to generate travel authorizations, make trip reservations, and route travel requests for approval, all from their desktop workstation. The system is paperless and

uses DoD Public Key Infrastructure (PKI) certificates to digitally sign documents all from their desktop workstation. DTS is totally web-based. There is no need to load any software on the workstation other than a web browser plug-in for digital signature authentication and system security. When the trip is complete, the traveler can quickly create a voucher from the data already stored in the DTS system, and then electronically route it for approval and submission to the Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS). An electronic funds transfer from DFAS to the

traveler's bank account completes the process. The Program Management Office – Defense Travel System (PMO-DTS) has developed an interim system to meet your immediate travel process needs while at the same time preparing your organization for the DTS. This bridge system is called DTS-Limited and it's available now. The Defense Travel System will be deployed to DoD through FY 06. For more information, go to <http://www.defensetravel.osd.mil/dts/site>. As of March of this year, Ft. Detrick is on the DTS deployment schedule for FY 05.

“The Defense Travel System (DTS) seamlessly automates the three DoD travel processes: Authorization, reservation, and voucher filing.”

Home Leave

Employees recruited for overseas duty from the United States and who may accumulate 45 days of annual leave under section 6404(b) of title 5, United States Code, are entitled to earn, and may be granted home leave. Home leave may be used **only** in the U.S., the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, or the territories and possessions of the U.S. An employee is eligible to

use leave entitlements only when he/she has completed 24 months of **continuous service abroad**. Home leave is earned and credited on a monthly basis. Earning rates range from 5 days per 12 months at posts with Foreign Post Differential rates of less than 10 percent (0-5% FPD); 10 days per 12 months at posts with Foreign Post Differential

rates of 10-15 percent, and 15 days per year at posts with FPD rates of 20 percent and higher. Home leave may be used in combination with other leaves of absence, but cannot be used as terminal leave or as the basis for a lump-sum payment. There is no limit on accumulation of home leave.

Veteran's Preference Explained

What is the difference between vet preference, 5- point vet preference and 10-point vet preference.

Veteran's Preference

Since the time of the Civil War, Veterans of the Armed Forces have been given some degree of preference in appointments to Federal jobs. Recognizing that sacrifices are made by those serving in the Armed Forces, Congress enacted laws to prevent veterans seeking Federal employment from being penalized because of the time spent in military service.

By law, veterans who are disabled or who served on active duty in the Armed Forces during certain specified time periods or in military campaigns are entitled to preference over non-veterans both in hiring from competitive lists of eligibles and in retention during reductions in force.

Preference does not have as its goal the placement of a veteran in every vacant Federal job; this would be incompatible with the merit principle of public employment. Nor does it apply to promotions or other in-service actions. However, preference does provide a uniform method by which

special consideration is given to qualified veterans seeking Federal employment.

Preference applies in hiring from civil service examinations, for most excepted service jobs, and when agencies make temporary appointments or use direct hire and delegated examining authorities from the U. S. Office of Personnel Management.

General Requirements for Preference

To be entitled to preference, a veteran must meet the eligibility requirements in section 2108 of title 5, United States Code. This means that:

- An honorable or general discharge is necessary.
- Military retirees at the rank of major, lieutenant commander, or higher are not eligible for preference unless they are disabled veterans.
- Guard and Reserve active duty for training purposes does not qualify for preference.
- When applying for Federal jobs, eligible veterans should claim preference on their application or resume. Applicants claiming 10-point preference must complete form SF-15, Application for 10-Point

Veteran Preference.

TYPES OF PREFERENCE:

5-Point Preference

Five points are added to the passing examination score of a veteran who served:

- During the period December 7, 1941, to July 1, 1955; or
- For more than 180 consecutive days, any part of which occurred after January 31, 1955, and before October 15, 1976; or
- During the Gulf War from August 2, 1990 through January 2, 1992; or
- In a campaign or expedition for which a campaign medal has been authorized, including El Salvador, Grenada, Haiti, Lebanon, Panama, Somalia, Southwest Asia, Bosnia, and the Global War on Terrorism.

Medal holders and Gulf War veterans who enlisted after September 7, 1980, or entered on active duty on or after October 14, 1982, must have served continuously for 24 months or the full period called or ordered to active duty. The service requirement does not apply to veterans with

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“By law, veterans who served on active duty in the Armed Forces...are entitled to preference over non-veterans both in hiring from competitive lists of eligible and in retention during reductions in force.”

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compensable service-connected disabilities, or to veterans separated for disability in the line of duty, or for hardship.

10-Point Preference

Ten points are added to the passing examination score of:

- A veteran who served any time and who (1) has a present service-connected disability or (2) is receiving compensation, disability retirement benefits, or pension from the military or the Department of Veterans Affairs. Individuals who received a Purple Heart qualify as disabled veterans.
- An unmarried spouse of certain deceased veterans, a spouse of a veteran unable to work because of a service-connected disability, and
- a mother of a veteran who died in service or who is permanently and totally disabled.

PREFERENCE IN EXAMINATION

Veterans meeting the criteria for preference and who are found eligible (achieve a score of 70 or higher either by a written examination or an evaluation of their experience and education) have 5 or 10 points added to their numerical ratings

depending on the nature of their preference. For scientific and professional positions in grade GS-9 or higher, names of all eligibles are listed in order of ratings, augmented by veteran preference, if any. For all other positions, the names of 10-point preference eligibles who have a compensable, service-connected disability of 10 percent or more are placed ahead of the names of all other eligibles on a given register. The names of other 10-point preference eligibles, 5-point preference eligibles, and non-veterans are listed in order of their numerical ratings.

Entitlement to veterans' preference does not guarantee a job. There are many ways an agency can fill a vacancy other than by appointment from a list of eligibles.

FILING APPLICATIONS AFTER EXAMINATIONS HAVE CLOSED

A 10-point preference eligible may file an application at any time for any positions for which a non-temporary appointment has been made from a competitive list of eligibles within the past 3 years.

In addition, a person who is unable to file for an open competitive examination because of

military service may file after the closing date. In either of the above situations, the veteran should contact the agency that announced the position for further information.

POSITIONS FOR PREFERENCE ELIGIBLES ONLY

Certain examinations are open only to preference eligibles as long as such applicants are available. These are custodian, guard, elevator operator and messenger.

SPECIAL COMPLAINT PROCEDURES FOR VETERANS

Veterans who believe that they have not been accorded the preference to which they are entitled may file a complaint with the U. S. Department of Labor's Veterans Employment and Training Service (VETS).

The Department of Labor's Office of the Assistant Secretary for Policy and Veterans' Employment and Training Service developed an "expert system" to help veterans receive the preferences to which they are entitled. Two versions of this system are currently available, both of which, help the veterans determine the type of preference to which they are entitled, the benefits associated with the



preference and the steps necessary to file a complaint due to the failure of a Federal Agency to provide those benefits. The Internet address for the veterans' preference program is <http://www.dol.gov/elaws/vetspref.htm>. (State Employment Service Offices have veteran representatives available to assist veterans in gaining access to this

information.)

AS OF: 5-24-04

VETERANS' PREFERENCE can be printed as it appears on your browser. It also can be printed as an exact replica of the official publication. Download the file by clicking on the .pdf file name and follow the print help instructions.

SF-15, APPLICATION FOR 10-POINT VETERAN PREFERENCE

An exact replica of the SF-15, Application for 10-Point Veteran Preference can be printed. Download the file by clicking on the .pdf file name and follow the print help instructions.

Scheduling "Use or Lose Leave"

"For most employees the maximum amount of annual leave that can be carried forward into a new year is 240 hours."

This is a reminder that "use or lose" annual leave must be scheduled on or before 27 November 2004 in order to avoid forfeiture.

For most employees, the maximum amount of annual leave that can be carried forward into a new year is 240 hours. With very few exceptions, federal regulations require forfeiture of annual leave in excess of 240 hours after the last day of the current leave year, which is 08 January 2005.

You should check the "use or lose" block on your current Leave and Earnings Statement. If the block shows any amount of leave, you should submit a SF-71, Request for Leave or Approved Absence, for the amount shown as soon as

possible, **but no later than 27 November 2004.**

If you fail to request leave by 27 November 2004 and fail to use your annual leave prior to 08 January 2005, you will not be entitled to have any lost leave restored.

Employees are encouraged to submit their leave request(s) as soon as leave plans are known, but no later than 27 November. Protect your annual leave. Submit your leave request(s) to your supervisor.

Depending on workload requirements, your supervisor will determine whether your leave request can be approved for the time requested, or you may be offered an alternative time when you can take your leave.

Agencies may restore annual leave that was forfeited because it was in excess of the maximum leave ceilings (i.e., 30, 45, or 90 days) if the leave was forfeited because of an administrative error, exigency of the public business, or sickness of the employee. An agency must restore the annual leave in a separate leave account.

Administrative Error

The employing agency determines what constitutes an administrative error.

Exigency of the Public Business

The employing agency determines that an exigency is of major importance and that excess annual leave cannot be used.

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Sickness

The employing agency determines that the annual leave was forfeited because of a period of absence due to an employee's sickness or injury that occurred late in the leave year or was of such duration that the

excess annual leave could not be rescheduled for use before the end of the leave year.

An agency may consider for restoration annual leave that was forfeited due to an exigency of the public business or sickness of the employee **only** if the

annual leave was scheduled in writing before the start of the **third biweekly pay period prior to the end of the leave year**.

If you have any questions, please contact the Fort Detrick CPAC at (301) 619-2247.

Civilian Personnel Advisory Center

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