

## **Soldiers, Families, and Army Civilians**

### 10-03 Military Compensation, Benefits, Special Allowances, and Recognition

Sustaining an All-Volunteer Force that is fully engaged in persistent conflict yet remains dedicated to the defense and security of our nation is a national imperative. Current demands exceed Army readiness and force strength; therefore, balance must be restored in the near future. Restoring balance requires recruitment and retention of high quality Soldiers and the support of their Families. Sustaining and growing an All-Volunteer Force demands military compensation and benefits that are commensurate with their contributions to national defense. We appreciate the continued support of Congress and the Administration; however, much work remains to improve military compensation. Therefore, Congress must support Soldier pay raises that continue to close the gap with the private sector and benefits improvements that enhance quality of life.

The Army's continued and persistent effort to attract and retain a dedicated force must be supported by a legislative commitment to improve compensation and benefits for our Soldiers. Changing demographics and a decreasing propensity to serve requires a unified effort by Congress, the Administration, and the Army to develop innovative approaches to fill and maintain the ranks and care for Families.

The Army relies on the total force to protect and defend our nation from enemies, at home and abroad. Because of continued dependence on the Reserve Component (RC), it is essential that its compensation and benefits be equitable to those of the Active Component (AC). Our RC Soldiers and their Families deserve nothing less.

In this era of persistent conflict, we can expect continuing deployments which place extraordinary demands on our human resources, necessitating that Congress address the long-term consequences for the All-Volunteer Force. This strategic environment requires a dedicated and long-term commitment by Soldiers and their Families. Military service should not be the primary cause of Soldier and Family financial hardship or degradation of quality of life. Our Soldiers' compensation and retirement benefits should reflect their service and sacrifice.

#### **WE THEREFORE RESOLVE to urge the Administration and Congress to:**

- Eliminate the pay gap by 2011, maintain comparability in the out years, and make pay commensurate with level of responsibility
- Fund unlimited transferability to Family members of the Montgomery GI Bill (MGIB) benefits earned by Servicemembers
- Reduce the cost of permanent change of station moves by increasing per diem and Temporary Lodging Expense rates, increasing weight allowances, and streamlining the moving process
- Enact legislation that authorizes and funds additional pilot programs to evaluate innovative approaches for meeting future challenges facing recruiting and retention requirements
- Enact legislation that authorizes the inclusion of Health Professional Incentive Special Pay and Board Certification Pay as part of Basic Pay for calculating retirement for AMEDD officers over 26 years of service
- Expand concurrent receipt entitlement legislation to include all veterans who are medically retired

- Increase special pay and bonus programs to recruit and retain RC Soldiers with critical skills, such as health care professionals, commensurate with their AC counterparts
- Enact legislation to give RC Soldiers and their Families compensation and benefits, while on active duty status, equal to AC Soldiers
- Enact legislation to fund RC Soldier travel expenses to and from their unit of duty assignment for inactive duty training (IDT)
- Establish full parity in retirement and VA benefits between duty performed under Title 10 and Title 32, by allowing military service under Title 32 to be creditable for the same purposes as military service under Title 10
- Enact legislation to fund the development and implementation of a single pay system for AC and RC Soldiers
- Authorize tax credits for employers of mobilized RC Soldiers
- Continue to update the current RC compensation system to include educational benefits for retired RC members who have served at least 20 years
- Fund the congressionally approved Welcome Home Warrior Citizen Award Program and Freedom Salute Award Program for RC Soldiers
- Strengthen financial protection provisions under the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act
- Enact legislation to create parity between federal Title 10 and state-funded Title 32 Montgomery GI Bill education benefits for Active Guard Reserve (AGR) Soldiers
- Enact legislation to provide Veterans status for RC Soldiers after equivalency of six years of continuous service
- Amend legislation to provide hiring preference in the Federal Service to all RC Soldiers who complete 20 or more years of service
- Change VA regulations to allow Servicemembers who are stationed overseas to use their VA entitlements for home purchase, regardless of its immediate occupancy
- Amend legislation to prevent receipt of SGLI proceeds by relatives of those convicted of wrongdoing in the death of their spouse, and potentially the wrongdoers themselves
- Support initiatives to protect and enhance the exchange benefit, including military exchange shared-services initiatives that will result in benefit enhancements and cost savings for beneficiaries while ensuring that there is no reduction in Morale Welfare and Recreation (MWR) funds provided to services and that any changes are transparent to the customer
- Amend the Internal Revenue Service code to provide Alternative Minimum Tax relief to child annuitants of the Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP)

- Encourage states, when RC Soldiers are mobilized, to waive or reimburse tuitions and fees for undergraduate studies at community colleges and state universities; to provide academic leave for Soldiers who depart during an academic term and to refund dormitory and certain other fees; and upon return, to provide priority placement for class enrollment