
Defense Report

AUSA



A Very Real Inequity—Forcing Service Members to Underwrite the Cost of Official Moves

When a civilian corporation requires one of its valued employees to move to a new location it goes out of its way to make sure the move is as pleasant as possible by paying for every aspect of it, even helping to sell a vacated house and to underwrite the purchase of a new one. The wisdom of this sort of treatment seems obvious. Having made an investment in recruiting and training the employee, the corporation protects that investment by eliminating most of the irritants associated with a job-related transfer.

The military services have been trying to impress the budgeteers in the White House and Congress with this wisdom for many years, but have been only partially successful. The Army estimates that in the course of a 20-year career the average service member will move nine times and will pay \$13,500 out of his or her pocket to make up for uncompensated expenses related to those moves. This does not include the costs of disposing of an old residence or finding a new one if quarters are not provided.

In its press to save money from the fiscal year 1983 defense budget, Congress has deleted \$119 million that had been planned for improvements to the reimbursement for travel expenses. It would have been used to increase the mileage allowance from 13 cents per mile to 16 cents—still far below the mileage rates paid by private industry—to provide reimbursement for temporary lodging while making moves in the continental United States, and to make other sensible adjustments.

Civilian employers look upon their support of employee moves as a simple “cost of doing business,” an approach long recognized by the services themselves but for which they have not been able to drum up much support. Every day the services lose good people who have “had it” with out-of-pocket moving costs.

We are hearing more pronouncements about the need to do those things which will support the continued vitality of the all-volunteer concept of filling our military ranks. Full reimbursement for the cost of official moves is one of the significant needs.