



AFSA Chapter 567 Legislative Bulletin 2011-001  
The Chindit Chapter  
TSgt William Ross  
Legislative Trustee  
william.ross@hurlburt.af.mil



April 21, 2011

**1. House Budget Committee May Stop VA Care for Priority 7 and 8 Veterans.** An article from journalist Tom Philpott as reported in the *Beaufort Gazette*, says that the House Budget Committee is looking at eliminated VA care for category 7 and 8 veterans. Priority 8 veterans do not have a service-connected disability, and their income exceeds a VA means-test threshold. Priority 7 veterans have no service-connected disabilities, but their income does not exceed the VA geographic income index. House Budget Committee chairman Rep. Paul Ryan, R-Wisc., has said the federal government could save \$6 billion a year by making this change. To read more, go to: <http://www.islandpacket.com/2011/04/14/1619430/budget-committee-eyes-end-to-va.html>

**2. Bill Would Restore Full Post-9/11 GI Bill Coverage.** As reported earlier, on April 6, House Veterans Affairs Committee Chairman Rep. Jeff Miller, R-Fla., introduced H.R. 1383, the "Restoring GI Bill Fairness Act of 2011. This bill would ensure that students attending college under the new Post-9/11 GI Bill would have their full tuition covered, even if the cost exceeds the \$17,500 cap put in place under recent changes to the program. In a statement, Miller said he hopes to act on the legislation before the new changes go into effect, potentially costing some student veterans thousands of dollars. H.R.1383 would provide temporary relief for those veteran-students who were already enrolled in a private institution of higher learning before the "Post-9/11 GI Bill Veterans Educational Assistance Act" was signed into law on 4 January 2011 and created the new nationwide tuition limit. In December, Congress passed changes to the new GI Bill rules, including a flat rate of \$17,500 per year for tuition and fees for private and out-of-state public universities. That move will give many students thousands more in tuition funding. However, for students whose current tuition costs exceed \$17,500, the move could leave them deep in debt.

**3. SASC Personnel Subcommittee Chairman Still against TRICARE Fee Increases.** Sen. Jim Webb, D-Va., the chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee Subcommittee on Personnel said, in a recent *Army Times* article that while he is "looking for personnel-related savings for the FY 2012 defense budget, he is not ready to raise TRICARE health care fees for retirees . . . he continues to believe that higher health care fees are a mistake because medical benefits are a part of a 'moral contract' with service members." To read more, go to: <http://www.armytimes.com/news/2011/04/military-tricare-fees-retirees-jim-webb-041311w/>

**4. President Generally Outlines his Budget Deficit Reduction Approach.** Although he released his FY 2012 Budget Plan two months ago, in a speech delivered today at George Washington University President Obama generally outlined a further approach to budget deficit reduction. He does this greatly in response to a deficit reduction plan blueprint already offered by House Republicans which you can read about at: <http://www.npr.org/2011/04/10/135275350/paul-ryans-2012-budget-good-bad-and-ugly>

The President's plan, any further details of which are expected to be released after Congress leaves Washington for its Spring Recess, is expected to draw greatly from the "findings" of the Presidentially established "National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform" (also known as the "debt reduction commission") which reported its recommendations in December 2010. You can read about this plan at: <http://www.npr.org/2010/12/03/131784919/deficit-plan-vote-falls-short-of-desired-support>

In his speech, the President called for cutting \$4 trillion over the next 12 years by cutting spending and raising taxes, primarily on the "wealthy." However, he avoided mention of any fundamental changes to Medicare, Medicaid, or Social Security. He also asked congressional leaders to appoint a panel of 16 lawmakers to develop a spending plan under the leadership of Vice President Joe Biden with the goal to reach agreement by the end of June—just before a decision must be reached on extending the limit on how much this nation can borrow. Republicans have said they will only support the President's call to raise the debt ceiling if the President enacts a concrete and substantial spending reduction plan.

I must emphasize that no specific details of the Administration plan have been released, any proposal is not binding, and each proposal would require changes in the law which would have to make it through a divided Congress. We will report further details as they become available. In the meantime, to read the text of the President's speech at George Washington University, go to:

<http://blogs.wsj.com/washwire/2011/04/13/text-of-obama-speech-on-the-deficit/>

#### **5. Bill of Interest Introduced April 12<sup>th</sup>.**

**H.R. 1484**, by Rep. Bob Filner, D-Calif., would improve the appeals process of the Department of Veterans Affairs and to establish a commission to study judicial review of the determination of veterans' benefits.

**6. PCSing Active Duty Families May Transfer TRICARE Prime by Phone.** According to the TRICARE Management Authority, "Active duty service members (ADSMs) and active duty family members (ADFMs) who are moving to a new location can now transfer their TRICARE Prime enrollment with a simple phone call. In most transfers, this means no more filling out enrollment forms. This new telephone option adds convenience for ADSMs and their families. Moving ADSMs simply call their current regional health care contractor to transfer their family's enrollment, and include a cell number and email address. The new regional contractor will contact them within five business days after the relocation date to finalize their TRICARE transfer." To read more, go to:

[www.tricare.mil/mediacenter/news.aspx?fid=702](http://www.tricare.mil/mediacenter/news.aspx?fid=702)

For more information on transferring TRICARE Prime enrollment, go to: [www.tricare.mil/moving](http://www.tricare.mil/moving)