

April 2019

## Retired Military Newsletter

**COLA.** The February 2019 CPI is 246.218, **0.1 percent below** the FY 2019 COLA baseline. The Consumer Price Index for March is scheduled to be released April 10.



**AAFES Restaurants.** Panda Express and Muscle Maker Grill are among the new restaurants coming to Air Force and Army bases this year, officials with the Army and Air Force Exchange (AAFES) told Military.com. Chinese fast-food restaurant Panda Express will open this year at Fort Meade, Maryland; Fort Benning and Fort Stewart, Georgia; and Travis Air Force Base, California, AAFES officials said. Healthy menu-focused Muscle Maker Grill will open additional locations at Benning; Joint Base Andrews, Maryland; and, according to the company's website, Fort Bragg, North Carolina. Qdoba, which opened on several bases last year, including Fort Knox, Kentucky; Fort Lee, Virginia; and Fort Stewart, Georgia, will add more military locations. (Source: Week of February 25, 2019 Military.com)

**Emergency prescription refill program.** Tricare's emergency prescription refill program is in place for Lee County, Alabama, and 21 counties in California, including Los Angeles, Marin, San Diego and Monterey. In Alabama, the emergency procedures were prompted by a recent tornado. In California, the procedures were prompted by flooding. When that system is in place, Tricare users who fill their prescriptions at retail chains can fill it at another store in that chain or get emergency refills at any retail network pharmacy. For a full list of impacted California counties, [see this Tricare notice](#). (Source: Week of March 11, 2019 Military.com).

**VA Claims and Appeals.** A new Department of Veterans Affairs claims, and appeals process took effect Feb. 19. Veterans who appeal VA claims have three decision review options: a high-level review, a supplemental claim or an appeal to the board of Veterans' Appeals. VA officials aim to complete supplemental claims and higher-level reviews in an average of 125 days, and decisions appealed to the Board in an average of 365 days, they said in a release. Under the previous process, decisions typically took three to seven years. (Source: Week of February 25, 2019 Military.com)

**DFAS.** DFAS is asking us to keep our information current so they can get in touch with us if there is a problem, change, or update with your account. Here's a list of things to check at least once a year.

1. Update your address

If you've moved and haven't told DFAS, they won't know how to reach you. From an audit of your account to a returned payment, lots of things come up that they need to contact members about. Make sure DFAS has a way of reaching you that is current and correct! Log in to your

myPay account and view your correspondence address as part of your annual account check-up. The same goes for your email address.

For more ways to update your contact information, consult the DFAS website at <http://www.dfas.mil/retiredmilitary/manage/changeofaddress.html>

## 2. Check your state and federal income tax withholding

Don't wait until April 15th to discover we've been deducting taxes for a state you no longer have to file in!

You can verify and update your tax withholding information yourself in myPay. Click on your Federal Withholding to see if your marital status and number of exemptions are correct. Then click on your State Withholding to make sure both the state and the amount are what you want.

3. Review your allotments. Check each allotment and your allotment amounts. Make sure each allotment is current and the amount is correct. If you need to stop, start, or change an allotment, see our instructions in this issue on how to update allotments using myPay. <http://www.dfas.mil/retiredmilitary/manage/allotments.html>

A video tutorial on how to start an allotment in myPay is available online at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XWHz9XSzy8&list=PLhx\\_8nsfXqVh2y-LOFIVcvcPQuztOXjYy&index=6](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XWHz9XSzy8&list=PLhx_8nsfXqVh2y-LOFIVcvcPQuztOXjYy&index=6)

Finally, please keep in mind that not all allotments can be changed using myPay. Some common allotments that cannot be changed using myPay include Delta Dental, Tricare and NSGLI, all of which are listed in your latest eRAS.

## 4. Have there been changes in your family?

When you get married, lose a spouse or have children, the change can affect your account. From federal income tax withholding to Survivor Benefit Plan costs, the amount of retired pay you receive each month can change.

If there have been any changes in your family, send us a copy of the official documentation (marriage license, divorce decree, death certificate or birth certificate), as well as a request for how you want us to update your account.

Always notify DFAS as soon as possible about a major life change. You can fax your documents to 1-800-469-6559 or mail them to DFAS, PO Box 7130, London, KY 40742-7130. Always make sure your Social Security Number is clearly visible on each document so we will know whose account to update.

## 5. Check your beneficiary designations

Lastly, who have you chosen as a beneficiary for any arrears of retired pay when you die? Make sure you're still satisfied with your designation and check your address book to confirm that their addresses are up to date. If you have any questions about what this benefit may be, please see the "Educate Your Beneficiaries" article in this newsletter.

You can check this information by clicking on the Beneficiary for Arrears link in myPay. Now you can even make changes to your designations and update their address information through myPay.

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**Privatized military housing.** You can live in "privatized military housing." As part of the base housing privatization process legislated by [Public Law 104-106](#), the DOD says, when the number of vacant homes on any base rises above a certain level, the contractor can rent them to anyone it likes. The program is available on only some bases. [Check with your local housing office for details.](#)



While all of the housing areas are different -- some have yard maintenance and utilities included, while some don't; **some will rent only to** DoD civilians and **military retirees**, while others may rent to anyone; each housing company has its own set of rules, but they generally follow the federal guidelines.

If you're interested in living in a place where you may not have to worry about home or yard maintenance, paying utility bills or homeowners association fees, base housing may be for you.

In fact, some of the companies that run the privatized housing call living on base "the ultimate gated community."

You normally lease a house for one year at a time. Military families get first dibs on any available housing, so if you are living there and your lease comes up for renewal, you may have to move to make room for an active-duty family.

The rent is usually based on the local [Basic Allowance for Housing](#), but can be much less than comparable homes in the area. And the fact that utilities may be paid, maintenance is included, the housing is pet-friendly, and much of it is pretty new makes living on base a good option for some people.

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**Commissary pickup program.** The [commissary](#)'s curbside grocery pickup program started its expansion to new locations Friday, while also announcing the closure of the three current locations -- and adding a service fee.

The program, known as Click2Go, has been available for free through a pilot program at three commissaries -- [at Fort Lee](#), Virginia; [Offutt Air Force Base](#), Nebraska; and [Travis Air Force Base](#), California -- since 2013. In July 2017, Defense Commissary Agency officials announced plans for expansion, but gave no details on when or where.

Now, 20 months later, the system has added its first new location: [Fort Eustis](#), Virginia. But at the same time, officials announced that the Fort Lee, Offutt and Travis locations, which are operated under a different contract, will be shuttering when that contract ends June 1.

Although the service at Eustis will be free for a promotional period through the end of March, shoppers there will pay a \$4.95 service fee per order starting April 1, officials said in a release. That is similar to the fee paid for curbside delivery at some off-base grocery stores.

Next to receive the new program "at a time to be determined" will be the commissary at [Naval Air Station Oceana](#), Virginia, officials said in a release. After that, customers can expect a rollout to locations worldwide over the next four years, with plans to eventually reopen the service at the original three locations.

But don't get too excited. Not all commissary locations will offer the service, officials cautioned. (Source: 1 Mar 2019 Military.com | By [Amy Bushatz](#)).

**MWR.** Don't forget that the MWR provides a variety of leisure programs designed to support military personnel and their families. Service members probably already know about most of the services offered by MWR at their local military installations, such as bowling alleys, libraries, fitness centers, golf courses and much more. But what many military families may not know is that MWR also offers a variety of practical and recreational items for rent.



When everything is coming your way, you're in the wrong lane.



We serve all the men and women of the  
Armed Forces of the United States of America

### How to contact us

The Retired Activities Office, Naval Weapons Station, Seal Beach, California is located at 800 Seal Beach Blvd in Bldg. 22, Rm 2, Seal Beach, CA 90740-5000. We are here to serve all Armed Forces retirees and are open M-Th 0900 to 1500; Fri 0900 to 1200. You may contact us at (562)-626-7152 or by emailing us at [rao-nwssb@navy.mil](mailto:rao-nwssb@navy.mil)

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[Retired Activities Website](#)