

Sent: Monday, December 14, 2009 2:31 AM
To: COA@LIST.NIH.GOV
Subject: [COA-DC-BRANCH] Smart Brief - Benefits Available to PHS Officers

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA METROPOLITAN AREA BR



To members of the D.C. Metropolitan Area Branch,

This Smart Brief is a journal style email message intended to help keep you informed about various uniformed service benefits available to PHS officers. Please note that some offers may only apply to Armed Forces members; however, these Smart Briefs will help promote awareness and push toward including the common language of "Uniformed Services" in more legislation and benefits packages.

For the current posting, please forward any questions or comments to LCDR Robert Windom at robert.windom@foh.hhs.gov. We also welcome any hot topics or special discounts that you wish to share with your fellow officers. Thank you.

.....

Current Posting

1. GI Bill Transferability H.R. 3657*
2. Space Available Flight Travel Information
3. Commissary Connection Highlights
4. White House Launches Veterans Employment Initiative
5. PHS Health Reform Bill

Previously Posted

1. **Veterans Day in the Nation's Capitol**
2. **President Obama Signs National Defense Authorization Act**
3. **Department of Defense Military Health System Conference Jan 25-28**
4. **Veterans Day Offers for Uniformed Service Members**

.....

Current Posting

1. **GI Bill Transferability H.R. 3657**

Dear Officers;

There is a bill in the U.S. House of Representatives to extend GI Bill transferability to PHS and NOAA officers. The bill is H.R. 3657, introduced by Rep. Ciro Rodriguez. At this time, there is no companion bill in the Senate. You can help in the following ways:

- **Write to your Representative in the House and ask him or her to co-sponsor H.R. 3657 to extend transferability of GI Bill benefits to PHS officers.**
- **Write to both of your Senators and ask them to support the creation of a companion bill to H.R. 3657 to extend transferability of GI Bill benefits to PHS officers.**

Please click on the COA website: [GI Bill Transferability - COA Call to Action](#) for information. COA created a document that contains rules to follow and helpful tips for writing your elected representatives. *Please read it before writing your representatives.* The website also contains sample letters you may use as a guide for writing your own letters.

After you write your elected representatives, please send copies of all your letters to COA Government Relations Director Judith Rensberger (jrensberger@coausphs.org). COA will send follow-up letters to your Representative and Senator, thus doubling the impact of your own efforts! You have a lot to gain (college education for a child or spouse) and little to lose (a half an hour to write the letters, and the cost of a few stamps). Let your representatives in Congress know how you feel, then spread the word to your friends and colleagues. The more PHS officers who participate in this call to action, the better our chances at success. This effort will also serve to realign our benefits with other sister services and maintain parity with them, which is vital to our future. If you believe we

deserve this benefit, then please help us secure transferability for current and future officers and their families!

2. Space Available Flight Travel information

Please see attached for additional information and ways to optimize your Space-A flight travel experience (*Contributed by LCDR D. Lau*).

3. Commissary Connection Highlights

Frito-Lay is giving away bicycles for the holidays

During December, Frito-Lay will send Huffy bicycles to all commissaries in the continental U.S. to serve as centerpieces for its holiday season displays and to promote health and physical fitness. Look for local Frito-Lay representatives at participating stores to give the bicycles to winning customers or to donate them to activities such as the Chaplain's Fund or Morale, Welfare and Recreation - where appropriate. Look for information about the drawings and dates at Frito-Lay holiday displays.

It's time for C. Lloyd Johnson's 16th annual holiday sale!

From Nov. 5 through Jan. 6, 2010, C. Lloyd Johnson and its manufacturers are sponsoring their 16th Annual "Holiday Sale" to support "Toys for Tots" and the "Wounded Warrior Project." Look for drastic discounts on brands such as Campbells, Minute Maid, Vlasic, Curel, Ban, Birds Eye and many other brand-named items throughout participating commissaries. In-store coupons will offer savings and recipes for holiday foods for entertaining, and you can look for information about how you can support these worthwhile programs as well. For every case sold, a donation of 25 cents will go to support these programs.

4. White House Launches Veterans Employment Initiative

Veterans should find it easier to get jobs with the federal government, thanks to a policy change announced by President Obama on Nov. 9. Under the new Veterans Employment Initiative, most federal agencies will open Veterans Employment Program offices, responsible for helping veterans find and apply for jobs, and keep track of their job-application status. The Office of Personnel Management will also issue a strategic plan, providing agencies with guidance for seeking out, employing, and developing skills for veterans. As of Sept. 30, 2008, roughly 480,000 veterans worked for the federal government. More information is available on the Web at <http://www.fedshirevets.gov/>

5. PHS Health Reform Bill

PHS in health reform. Senator Reid's (D-NV) version of a health reform bill preserves language from the Senate HELP Committee bill which speaks to certain provisions targeting the PHS Commissioned Corps. These include elimination of any numerical cap on the Regular Corps; creation of a Commissioned Corps Ready Reserve; and scholarship and loan repayment programs focused on Corps officers and funded and administered through the Office of the Surgeon General. At this point, Senator Reid's bill has the best chance to succeed and if the language concerning the Corps survives and passes into law, it will mark a significant step forward for the Corps. The next step will be to ensure funding authorized in this bill is in fact appropriated. For more information, go to:

[http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/F?c111:2:./temp/~c111ZlvITe:e769240:](http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/F?c111:2:./temp/~c111ZlvITe:e769240)

(Affordable Health Choices Act (Sec. 429))

Benefits Committee Note

The Benefits Committee is dedicated to researching offers, incentives, and legislative topics with the purpose of increasing awareness of benefits and services available to USPHS Commissioned Corps Officers, retirees, and family members. We strongly feel that sharing this valuable information will lead to increased morale and improved quality of life for our PHS community. We hope that you have enjoyed these Smart Brief publications and we want to continue sharing topics of interest and opening dialogue with you. Please note that Smart Briefs are sent out once a month; look for future editions around the 2nd Monday of each month. For your convenience, a link has been created on the DC COA website that will allow you to access past Smart Brief editions. DC COA Smart Briefs

Thank you for your support,
LCDR Julian Canizares, Chair, DC COA Benefits Committee
CDR Lou Ann Rector
CDR Melissa Meredith
LCDR Robert Windom
LCDR Eduardo Lim
LT Kimberly Love
LTJG Tracy Tilghman

For Military Space A Flight:

<http://www.spacea.net/>

I always call the airports which I will/may take off from to check their schedules:

[http://spacea.net/mediawiki/index.php?title=OCONUS Pacific Space-A Locations](http://spacea.net/mediawiki/index.php?title=OCONUS_Pacific_Space-A_Locations)

[http://spacea.net/mediawiki/index.php?title=CONUS Space-A Locations](http://spacea.net/mediawiki/index.php?title=CONUS_Space-A_Locations)

Those who plan to go to Hawaii coming from the East Coast.

From DC area, I would recommend going from Andrews to Travis to Hickham. This is the easiest route with the most flights. Same route back also but being flexible is good.

This website is great for info and what recommendations other space A travelers have posted. Also really handy in checking for flight patterns and schedule of flights. Will need to create account. Free.

<http://www.pepperd.com/cgi-bin/spacea/discus.cgi>

The key is to sign up early enough so that when you show up for roll call two hours before the flight, you are on top of the list. They go by earliest sign up date. I try to e-mail my sign up about 30 days or more in advance at least. Has always worked. Of course, you need to be on "leave status" when you sign up. And they sometimes ask for proof of your leave at rollcall. So you just need a signed leave slip specifically for this purpose..covering the entire time from when you first sign up to the end of your trip. I usually have one for 45 or more days to ensure my entire vacation and any additional time needed for space A is covered. Of course, this leave slip will be different than the actual days you will take after completion of your vacation.

This website can be used for signing up at the different airports you may possible fly out of. I usually sign up at all airports I may have the possibility of flying out of.

<http://www.takeahop.com/signup/form.htm>

I also send sign-ups directly to the respective airports.

Next in our Space A Flight desk: Going Space A to Hawaii!!!!