

AFSA

MAGAZINE

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2015

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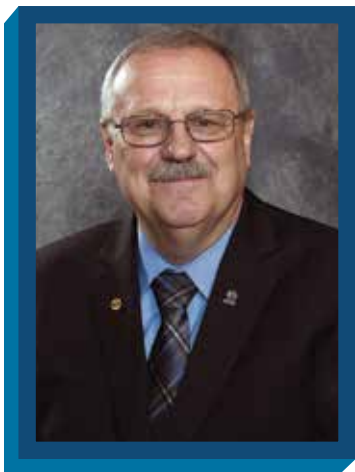
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Daniel Yeomans,
CMSgt., USAF Retired
AFSA International
President

RECOGNIZING DIFFERENCE-MAKERS

As I sit in San Francisco's airport reflecting on my day, I cannot help but think about the many AFSA volunteers who are just like me. Many of you have jobs and families that are counting on you. Many have busy lives with few moments to do the things you want to do. However, we all have a common denominator: We believe in AFSA, believe in our Airmen and are willing to make the time to make a difference. In this commentary, I want to thank some special volunteers who have made and continue to make AFSA the Voice of the Enlisted.

Did you know there are 12 high-level volunteers, myself included, who guide the direction of AFSA? We take the time and energy to ensure AFSA remains focused on its four pillars—legislation, membership, communications and fraternity. For their contributions in this area, I want to thank Division Presidents Frank Bearse, Frank Graziano, Steve Zalesky, Jim Crissinger, Angela Fernandez, Kerry Wright and Matt Console. In addition, thanks are due to Vice President Fred Dembinski, Senior Advisor Jeff Ledoux, and Trustees Dale Lutzen and Mike Warren. Each and every day, you make a difference.

I also want to say thank you to the hundreds of volunteers who give up their time to keep our chapters strong! The AFSA chapter is the foundation of our Association. Without you, AFSA would cease to be.

During this year's Professional Airmen's Conference in San Antonio, we said goodbye to two individuals who served AFSA for many years in many ways. I want to first say thank you to Tim Litherland. Tim served as a Division President and International Vice President for many years. He also served as Chairman of the International Membership Committee, ensuring AFSA's voice

As I enter the fourth and final year of serving as International President, I am continually amazed by the herculean efforts of our volunteer force. All of you, including our recruiters and retainers, are heroes in your own way.

remained strong. Thank you, Tim, for your service; you are an AFSA hero.

Dale Nelson served for many years at the Chapter, Division and International level. He stepped down as Trustee of Retiree and Veterans Affairs, but his legacy will live on for a lifetime. Dale excelled as a Trustee and was instrumental in ensuring AFSA has an awards program that is second to none.

As I enter the fourth and final year of serving as International President, I am continually amazed by the herculean efforts of our volunteer force. All of you, including our recruiters and retainers, are heroes in your own way. Without each of you, AFSA would fail. I am humbled by your tireless commitment and just wanted to take this time to recognize a few who continue to serve.

God bless you all, God bless America, and God bless our Air Force. I remain your humble servant. As always, feel free to contact me at dyeomans@hqafsa.org.

Daniel C. Yeomans

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On the Cover: AFSA member Senior Airman Gregory Orlando holds the flag that was draped over his father's coffin and then presented to his family. His father, U.S. Army Lt. Col. Kim S. Orlando, was killed in action in 2003 during Operation Iraqi Freedom. (Staff Sgt. Victoria Baldwin)

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MEMBERSHIP

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EDITORIAL STATEMENT

AFSA Magazine is the only magazine dedicated solely to serving the Total Air Force enlisted corps and their families. We are obliged to serve the interests and concerns of Air Force enlisted personnel and our members by striving to report timely and accurate information. The editors reserve the right to edit all submissions

but will never materially alter the author's viewpoint. The opinions expressed in this publication are not necessarily those of the Air Force Sergeants Association or its editors.

AFSA does not necessarily endorse products or services advertised in *AFSA Magazine*.

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AFSA

Founded in 1961 by four Air Force enlisted people, AFSA is a non-profit, tax-exempted organization representing the professional and quality-of-life concerns of the Total Air Force (active duty and components) enlisted members in active, retired, and veteran status, and their families, on Capitol Hill and in the Pentagon. Through its many programs and worldwide chapters, AFSA also reaches out to bases and communities to help those in need and to raise awareness of the sacrifices, concerns, and contributions of those who have worn or are wearing enlisted chevrons.

AMF

An AFSA affiliate, the Airmen Memorial Foundation (AMF) provides educational assistance to dependent children of the *Total Air Force* enlisted force. It is also an annual participant in the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC #10517).

AMM

An AFSA affiliate, the Airmen Memorial Museum (AMM), located in AFSA's Airmen Memorial Building, features rotating exhibits and stands as a tribute to those who have served. It is also an annual participant in the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC #10518).

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YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED

HQ AFSA often receives questions from the membership on important policy and advocacy issues. Here are some of your most frequently asked questions of late, along with answers and related background from your Association.

Q: On the one hand, you often mention that military spouses also serve, and yet you advocate repeal of the Former Spouse Protection Act. Can you explain that seeming contradiction?

A: There is no contradiction. While we certainly celebrate and recognize the extraordinary service and sacrifice of military family members, we feel that military members themselves should be treated fairly. During a divorce proceeding, the Uniformed Services Former Spouses Protection Act (USFSPA) allows award of a portion of a service member's current or future military retirement pay to any spouse who was ever married to a military member *for any length of time*. On top of that, the former spouse enjoys that award for life. So while it takes a military member 20 years to earn a retirement check, a former spouse gets part of that check simply for having been married to the military member. Since its inception, the precedential application of the USFSPA law has become an automatic payout to former spouses *regardless of fault*. It is above and beyond child support and alimony, there is no statute of limitations on claims under the act, it does not terminate when a former spouse remarries, and it is based on the member's retirement rank—not a proration back to the grade at time of divorce, often many years before. On top of that, the spouse never loses, is never found at fault and always gains; the military member always is penalized, usually disproportionately.

While we advocate elimination of this inequitable law, at a minimum we call for significant amendments to the law:

- Any award to a former spouse should be based on the grade at the time of divorce.
- A former spouse should collect for a period no longer than the duration of the failed marriage.
- Any award to a former spouse should be terminated upon remarriage.

So, we feel that our position is not contradictory; we are simply advocating for fairness for those who wear

the uniform. Those who might be interested in helping us with modification or repeal of this law will find an action letter they can send to their elected officials at AFSA's Legislative Action Center at www.voterveice.net/AFSA/Campaigns/39651/Respond.

Q: What has AFSA done for members of the Guard and Reserve? What issues are being pursued by AFSA for them?

A: Since its inception in 1961, AFSA has been very involved in supporting the quality of life of members of the Selected Reserve. AFSA has played a major role in securing or maintaining many benefits; just a few of them are:

- Enlisted retirement.
- Increases in IDT points applicable toward retirement.
- Payment of FEHBP fees when activated more than 30 days.
- Year-round exchange and commissary benefits.
- Elimination of contract quarters glitches that disadvantaged Guard and Reserve members when "deployed" within CONUS.
- Protection of enlisted retirement after 18 years of service.
- Mobilization/dental insurance programs.
- Permanent authority for Reserve disability retirement.
- Required automatic immediate Reserve Component Survivor Benefit Plan coverage for Reserves attaining 20 years of service, unless declined by member and spouse.
- Extension of the VA home loan authority for members of the Selected Reserve.
- Expanded protections for National Guard service members activated under state orders in support of a federally declared national emergency.
- Reduction in the number of years of continuous Reserve component service needed immediately before qualifying for Reserve retirement from eight to six years.

Comments appearing in the Airmen's Forum are culled from letters, emails and social media posts sent by our members and supporters to Headquarters AFSA. The Forum serves as a platform for members to voice their opinions on a given subject, which may or may not reflect the views or positions of the Association as a whole. AFSA Magazine reserves the right to select and condense letters for publication. Send your questions and comments to AFSAComm@hqafsa.org.

- Authorization of TRICARE Prime Remote eligibility for families of Guard/Reserve members activated for more than 30 days, if residing in Prime Remote area.
- Extension of government long-term care coverage to gray area Reserves.
- Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) coverage for members who die during inactive duty training.
- Permanent authorization of pre- and post-call up TRICARE coverage periods.
- And many, many more legislative accomplishments enjoyed by Guardsmen and Reservists today.

In reference to current targets, AFSA members concerned with Selected Reserve benefits have tasked us with several legislative targets. These include efforts to:

- Remove the annual cap of 130 IDT points applicable toward retirement calculations.
- Reduce the earliest retirement age from 60 to 55.
- Credit all post-9/11 active duty service toward early retirement.
- Award Veterans' status to all Guard and Reserve members.
- Enhance tuition assistance and GI Bill benefits for all members of the Guard and Reserve regardless of status—including Dual Status Technicians.
- Support greater transparency in reporting and resolving Uniformed Services Employment and Re-employment Rights Act (USERRA) violations.
- Authorize reimbursement for military duty-related travel of less than 100 miles.
- Extend TRICARE Reserve Select eligibility to Dual Status Technicians.

Of course, depending on status (i.e., traditional, AGR, ART), many other accomplishments apply to all components. These range from compensation, to health care, to education benefits, to tax breaks for combat conditions, to quality-of-life benefit programs, to protection for military families, to protecting and enhancing military retirement, to protection of military survivors. We always solicit the view and desires of our members of all components.

Q: In articles, you often mention “AFSA’s Coalition partners.” Who are they, and what role, if any, do they play in AFSA’s efforts on the Hill?

A: First and foremost, AFSA operates independently, speaking out on behalf of our members’ interests—with a primary focus on Air Force enlisted quality-of-life benefit matters. AFSA is a relatively large, highly respected Association that lobbies congressional offices and testifies before key committees. The size of our Association is important because it opens doors and increases our likelihood of access, influence and success. On the Hill, numbers matter.

“ The size of our Association is important because it opens doors and increases our likelihood of access, influence and success. On the Hill, numbers matter. ”

AFSA also is a key member of “The Military Coalition,” a collective group of 31 member associations, each representing a unique focus. The member associations meet as a whole once a month as well as in committees throughout each month that focus on different benefit areas. While each association has an individual focus, there are many issues that these associations have in common. Many of the member associations are 501c3 educational associations. A few are lobbying, testifying associations, like AFSA (which is a non-profit, 501c19). When, during our monthly meetings, the Coalition members vote to support a particular matter, effort, campaign or piece of legislation, representatives of the associations in the Coalition that lobby can rightfully claim that we are speaking on behalf of 5.5 million members on that issue, thus enhancing our prospects of success. You can get more information on The Military Coalition at www.themilitarycoalition.org.

Q: Why did military leaders recently speak out against the proposal to cut BAH for military couples but remained silent on the third pay-raise cut in a row, the defunding of military commissaries and TRICARE cost increases?

A: The answer to your question lies in the source of the proposals. As part of the Administration, DoD and military leaders had to support the President’s FY 2016 Budget proposals on the pay raise cut, the commissary-funding cut and the TRICARE prescription cost increases. However, the proposal to cut the Basic Allowance for Housing for couples originated in the Senate and was not proposed nor supported by the Administration. Therefore, military leaders were free to complement the White House’s vocal opposition on that particular matter.

Q: Please explain what you mean when you write about “concurrent receipt.”

A: Military retirees who also have service-connected disabilities as adjudged by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) are eligible for two checks each month: a military retirement check and a VA disability check. However, for decades the law allowed DoD to reduce the military retirement check by one dollar for each disability dollar received from the VA. Since our inception, AFSA led

the fight against this reduction, asserting that the two incomes are for very different reasons—namely honorable longevity of military service versus “damage” done to a person through that service.

In recent years, we have successfully convinced Congress to eliminate this reduction, claiming that disabled retirees ought to concurrently receive both checks without any reduction. To date, we have been able to convince Congress to enact full concurrent receipt for those rated with VA disabilities of at least 50 percent. Our mission continues on this matter, as we are now working to establish full concurrent receipt for those rated with 40, 30, 20 and 10 percent service-connected disabilities. Congress has now accepted the “corrective principle,” but completion of this effort is currently being delayed due to budget considerations. In fact, this is another campaign you can assist in by going to the AFSA Legislative Action Center on the AFSA website and looking at S. 271 and H.R. 303, both labeled the “Retired Pay Restoration Act.”

Q: Why is it that military retirees are not going to receive a COLA for 2016, but military members are going to get a 1.3 percent pay raise? We both have to live in this economy.

A: The two are based on different formulas in law. Military retiree cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs) are based on the consumer price index (CPI), a measurement of inflation. Each October, the Bureau of Labor Statistics announces the difference (any growth or not) between overall prices from the third quarter of one year to the next. If there is growth in prices (inflation), military retirees get a COLA. If there is no increase, or a reduction in overall prices, retirees do not receive a COLA.

On the other hand, annual military pay raises are based on the year-to-year change in a different economic measurement: the Employment Cost Index (ECI), which measures private-sector (civilian) wage growth. Interestingly, this measurement is taken 15 months in advance. For example, we knew in October 2014 that the military pay raise for January 2016 should be 2.3 percent, based on the growth of private-sector wages. Unless the Administration, with the approval of Congress, intervenes, the annual pay raise will be based directly on that formula. This year, for the third year in a row, the White House called for a full 1 percent cut in the pay raise. Congress acquiesced—thus, the 1.3 percent military pay raise for 2016 that was included in the congressionally passed Defense Bill.

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AFSA'S LAW A WRAP

A BRIEF SUMMARY OF 10 IMPORTANT POLICY ISSUES

With all the activity on Capitol Hill since our last publication—NDAA passage, resignation of the Speaker of the House, etc.—there is no shortage of issues that tie into the legislative process. The principal focus of our annual Legislative Awareness Week, or LAW, is raising the level of our collective understanding as an Association so as to have a more meaningful dialogue on issues. As such, here's an excerpt of a briefing HQ staff recently gave—10 “elevator speeches” in 10 minutes—where we summarized some overarching principles, some Association history and some terminology explanations, with an added sprinkle of future thinking. Keep in mind that while each topic warrants a full dissection or discussion, what follows is the 50,000-foot view, so these notes are just generalizations for conversations.

1. Appropriations vs. Authorizations. The easiest analogy is groceries: You appropriate (fund) \$200 toward the overall bill; you then authorize (spend) \$20 on milk, \$10 on bread, etc. You can't spend anything at the grocery store unless you fund it first. Likewise, the NDAA tells us what the DoD's shopping list is, but it doesn't matter unless funds have been appropriated.

2. Continuing Resolution (CR). When Appropriations don't get passed, the government shuts down. That doesn't mean we're out of money; we just don't have access. The Band-Aid fix is to pass a CR where previous years' funding levels are extended. CRs are bad because we might be spending at the FY12 rate even though actual dollars may be valued differently in FY16.

3. Sequestration vs. Reconciliation. Although not yet fully enacted, we're relatively familiar with the impacts of a sequester. A reconciliation is another option that might get framed as a “solution” to the sequestration issue. If sequestration is like getting hit by a bus in that it's upfront and instantaneous, then reconciliation is like death by 1,000 paper cuts. In the end the financial result is the same—budget cuts—so don't be fooled by misleading rhetoric.

4. DoD is not QoL. As a political tool, the mission of the Defense Department is to intimidate or obliterate our enemies into diplomatic compliance. Bombs, bullets and Kevlar, please. Congress passes laws with Quality of Life issue focus,

and DoD follows the laws. Most QoL issues start with you and then make it to Congress.

5. You Are the Boss. You have an issue and see that it is a system issue that could impact others. You raise it to your Chapter Legislative Trustee, he or she in turn to the Chapter President, next to Division President, then to AFSA's International Legislative Committee, and then HQ compiles and streamlines. At the annual Convention, the membership (you) votes on approving or amending this list of issues, and AFSA's Legislative Platform is born.

6. Concurrent Receipt. Let's say you earn a DoD retirement of \$1,500 for your 20 years of service. And you earn a VA disability of \$500 for sacrifice (injury, etc.). But you only get the full \$2,000 each month due to your service and sacrifice as long as your sacrifice is rated 50 percent. If your VA rating is below 50 percent, you'll get \$1,000 from DoD and \$500 tax-free from VA, equaling a full retirement of \$1,500. This is what it means to have your disability “offset” from your pay, and it impacts all retirees, current and future.

7. SBP-DIC Offset. Aside from those who lost a spouse on active duty, the Survivor Benefit Plan is an election that all married members make at the time of their retirement. Similar to insurance, you pay for SBP out of your own pocket and it ensures a percentage of your DoD retirement continues for your widow. Dependency and Indemnity Compensation from the VA is paid when the member's death can be service-connected—for example, exposure to Agent Orange or Burn Pits, contracting cancer from the exposure, and death from the cancer. Parallel to concurrent receipt, there are cases when the DIC is “offset” from the SBP that was purchased.

8. USAF = “Us” Air Force. There is a tendency to either take pride in the whole USAF or only worry about your component and ignore the others, but the reality is all components need to be good wingmen for each other, legislatively speaking. Often a law or provision impacts only one component directly, so other members tend to ignore it, thinking it doesn't apply to them. The tactics of legislation, however, are to get the proverbial foot in the door. So ignore the “Guard issue” because you're Active Duty if you want to, but it often is the precedent for future actions that could affect *your* component, sometime years later. One team, one fight.

Eye on Washington reports on all of the legislative activity that AFSA is either involved with or tracking on behalf of our members. The Military & Government Relations Team of Morgan Brown, Paul Grugin, Jennifer Davis and Jim Lokovic write each issue's compilation.

9. Compensation Package vs. Basic Pay. Something HQ picked up on with the recent Dual BAH cuts that were proposed (but not enacted) is that semantics matter. Each year, DFAS provides a document that lists your compensation package, including Basic Pay, BAH, BAS, CLA, HDP, FSA and even shopping advantages at the BX and tax breaks. Congress and corporate America refer to compensation packages, but when asked what they “make,” many Airmen refer only to their Basic Pay, not thinking about these other types of payment. AFSA fights to “protect your pay,” but we collectively need to keep in mind who we’re talking to and what we mean when we say those words. Cutting someone’s BAH is cutting into their compensation package, which means their pay.

10. Changes and the Future. AFSA has long been a supporter of repealing or reforming the Uniformed Services Former Spouse Protection Act (USFSPA) since it clearly discriminates against the military and no other federal agency. Since the Supreme Court repealed the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), same-sex marriages are legal in many states. Anything involving spousal consideration or language might need to be reviewed for applicability. Have divorce laws caught up from state to state? What happens to the military couple that gets married in a state recognizing same-sex marriages and then they PCS to a state that doesn’t? This is obviously still a sensitive issue for many, but it warrants mention, as the future always brings change and we need to be ready, or at least ready to talk about it.



VETERANS ISSUES ROUNDTABLE

AFSA CEO Rob Frank discusses Veteran issues at a Democratic Roundtable hosted by Minority Leader of the House Nancy Pelosi Oct. 27. Veteran Service Organizations were invited to discuss the future of Veteran health care with congressional members. Topics included the VA Choice Card Program, issues specific to female Veterans, access to health care and excessive wait times.

NO 2016 COLA CPI DID NOT MEASURE ANY RELATIVE YEAR-OVER-YEAR INFLATION

Because there has been no relative inflation since a year ago, there will be no 2016 Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA) increase for Social Security recipients, military and federal civilian retirees, and those receiving VA disability-related payments. Each year, these annuitants normally get a COLA based on inflation, as measured by the Consumer Price Index for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers (CPI-W). The determinant is the difference between the third quarter costs of one year as compared to the costs the following year.

The measurement is based on a market basket survey of designated goods and services. The CPI-W market basket survey includes all goods and services purchased for consumption by the group involved (in this case, urban wage earners and clerical workers) in eight major groups. These include food and beverages, housing, apparel, transportation, medical care, recreation, education and communication, as well as other goods and services.

If there is inflation of costs from one year to the next, a COLA increase is awarded. If there is no cost increase or a decrease in relative costs, there is no COLA. When there is a negative measurement from one year to the next, there is no reduction in pay due to protective language in the law.

On Thursday, Oct. 15, 2015, the Bureau of Labor Statistics formally announced its third quarter economic measurements, which showed the September CPI-W dropped 0.7 percent below the FY 2014 baseline. Because there was no positive growth in the CPI from the final quarter of 2014 compared to the same period for 2015, there will be no 2016 COLA for affected annuitants. So the military and federal retirement pay levels and those for Social Security and Veteran annuitants will remain at the same levels for next year as they were for 2015.

For more details on the Consumer Price Index, consult the Bureau of Labor Statistics's Frequently Asked Question page at www.bls.gov/cpi/cpifaq.htm.

NDAА MOVING ON, FINALLY A LIST OF POSITIVES AND CONCERNS

The Fiscal Year 2016 National Defense Authorization Act passed both Chambers in early October, but the bill was subsequently vetoed by the President over a disagreement with the way the DoD's programs were being funded. The funding dispute was eventually resolved, and just before press time, House

lawmakers approved an amended version of the bill; similar action by the Senate was expected prior to the Thanksgiving Day Recess. Only time will tell if the amended version meets the Oval Office's approval. However, as written, here are a few NDAA highlights:

AFSA appreciates the following provisions:

- Grandfathering currently serving military members on the current retirement system.
- Extending government Thrift Savings Plan matching past 20 years of service.
- Keeping dual BAH for military couples (and single roommates).
- Repealing of COLA-minus-1-percent penalty for military retirees.
- Supporting for commissary funding.
- Including no-fee prescriptions at military treatment facilities.

AFSA questions the following provisions:

- A 1.3 percent pay raise instead of the 2.3 percent indicated by the ECI.
- Lump-sum payment option at retirement; concerns parallel old REDUX.
- Progressive BAH cuts; 1 percent in FY16, totaling 5 percent by FY19.
- Certain Reserve Component members denied the recognition as "Veterans."
- Increased TRICARE prescription fees; 30-day generics up \$2, formularies up \$4.

Considering what was at stake when we began the year, the outcome was overall a favorable result. We will report on some of these changes in greater detail once the bill is signed and officially becomes law.

FILLING VA CAREGIVER GAP ADDING MORE MEDICS AND HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS

For well over 50 years, AFSA has been instrumental in achieving changes in the law to support the transition from service member to military Veteran status. We have also been in the thick of efforts to reform a broken Department of Veterans Affairs health care system. These efforts have ranged from expanded VA health care coverage to the quality of care, to the reduction of patient wait times, to the creation of the Veterans' Choice Program. In recent times, Congress has appropriated a great deal of money to hire thousands of new doctors to provide VA health care. However, to date, the VA has filled only 163 of the 1,500 authorized residency positions.

HAPPY HOLIDAYS from the HQ STAFF!



At this annual time of recollection and celebration, the AFSA HQ staff wishes each of our members a wonder-filled holiday season. As you gather with friends and families, please remember those who are deployed and unable to be home with their loved ones.

Thank you to all our members and their spouses, children and families for their patience and support throughout the year.

Leading our Association is an extraordinary opportunity, but it can also be a challenge. AFSA leaders, and those who support them, are great people, passionate and selfless, and among the

finest of our country's citizens. They do great things for their chapters, units, our Air Force, and this wonderful nation we are so privileged to serve.

On behalf of the AFSA Staff here in the Washington, D.C., area, we thank you for allowing us to be part of the extraordinary AFSA family and to participate in our collective efforts and achievements.

We sincerely wish you wonderful days ahead, and we look forward to the many accomplishments we'll achieve together in 2016.



On Oct. 5, Sen. Jon Tester (D-MT) introduced S. 2134, the “Grow Our Own Directive: Physician Assistant Employment and Education Act of 2015,” more commonly referred to as the DOCs for Veterans Act. This bill is designed to create a consistent pipeline of VA medical professionals, from physician assistants to medical administrators, by increasing the number of funded residencies. The bill would provide scholarships toward certain master’s degrees and capitalize on military certifications and experience.

AFSA has endorsed this legislation, and during a recent Senate Veterans Affairs Committee hearing, VA Assistant Deputy Under Secretary for Health Clinical Operations Dr. Thomas Lynch endorsed the residency provision in Tester’s bill as an effective way to fill the 1,500 residency positions that were authorized by the Choice Act but remain largely unfilled. We will keep our members informed as this legislation moves through Congress.

AN UNCERTAIN STATUS VA CLAIMS IT HAS MADE PROGRESS, BUT CONGRESS AND AFSA NOT CONVINCED

Following a few years of one scandal after another, Congress has signaled it is fed up with the Department of Veterans Affairs. That these outrages have occurred in several areas of the VA indicates there exists a pervasive culture of dysfunction. About a year ago, the performance by this agency led to the firing of one Secretary and the hiring of another. One issue that led to that change was inordinately long health care service wait times—some delays actually led to the deaths of Veterans—and falsified records by VA managers to hide the delays. Another major issue is that despite Congress throwing more and more money at the problem, little progress has been made.

Another area of concern has been the times for service-connected disability claims. Despite the millions of dollars provided to hire more staff across the board, little overall progress has been apparent. It was hoped that an electronic health care record to cover Veterans from the day they enter service through the rest of their lives might make this process clearer and more efficient. After Congress provided millions upon millions of dollars for DoD and the VA to get this record going, and DoD and the VA spent it, both agencies of the Administration announced they were abandoning the effort.

Yet another concern of this Association and Congress is that many of those who are and have been committing fraud and not servicing Veterans as they should—even those who have falsified records—have not been disciplined and/or have been allowed to retire with full benefits. The Administration has resisted all efforts toward accountability, claiming it will make it difficult to recruit future, high-quality employees.

Congress claims that less than a handful of employees have actually been fired, while the VA maintains that thousands have. It is difficult to grasp where the truth lies.

While Congress has proposed numerous pieces of legislation to correct these problems, the difficulties persist. The VA Choice Program, VA accountability efforts and other measures have been passed, yet Congress continues to focus on this agency that is just not getting the job done. VA Secretary Robert McDonald, who took over in 2014, has acknowledged the problems and contends his agency is committed to correcting them. In fact, in contrast to congressional leaders, Secretary McDonald maintains that great progress has been made.

The VA website contends it has made significant progress in 21 areas: 97 percent of appointments occurring within 30 days of a Veteran’s preferred date; increased transparency and accountability; improved customer service; training up to 70 percent of all of this nation’s health care providers; reducing the VA claims backlog by 82 percent in the last 28 months; working with state and local partners to end homelessness among Veterans; shifting part of the VA focus to the fastest growing group among Veterans, women; increasing the number of VA employees by 41,000 in recent months to better serve Veterans; funding \$1.8 billion on promising research to serve our nation’s warriors; affording numerous cost-saving volunteer opportunities; significantly reducing health care-related infections in VA facilities; funding \$8 million for adaptive sports for disabled Veterans and service members; leading the way in mobile and telehealth medicine; using cutting-edge technology; changing lives through the GI Bill; making great efforts to promote innovation; making a concerted effort to provide Vet Centers and mobile van Vet Centers for local communities; capitalizing on innovative, personalized technologies; sponsoring a creative arts competition for Veterans; and continuing to change the lives of Veterans through research.

Frankly, in light of diametrically opposing claims, we can only judge progress by the feedback we get from our members. Members of Congress with whom we associate have essentially stated the same and are looking to their constituents to determine the truth. Despite VA claims of success, corrective legislation continues to be introduced—one recent bill even calls for permanently allowing Veterans to seek care in non-VA facilities with the VA footing the bill.

We urge our members to share their experiences as they maneuver their way through the VA system. Let us know about the timeliness and quality of your VA health care. Tell us about the process, duration and fairness of the VA disability claims process as you experienced it. Tell us about the level of care and customer service you are experiencing at VA facilities. In the meantime, we will, of course, work hard to ensure that those who put their lives on the line for this nation are treated with the respect and the level of care they deserve. Please help us do that.

LEGISLATIVE CHAMPIONS MILITARY COALITION HONORS TWO U.S. POLICYMAKERS

The Military Coalition (TMC), an influential consortium of 31 military, uniformed service and Veteran's groups that represents approximately 5.5 million individuals who serve or have served in our country's military and uniformed services, presented its highest leadership awards to two U.S. Senators, one member of the U.S. House of Representatives and one Congressional staffer on Sept. 10, 2015, at a ceremony at the Veterans of Foreign Wars building on Capitol Hill.

The senators recognized at the event were James Inhofe (R-OK) and Barbara Mikulski (D-MD), who were lauded for leading the fight against privatization of the military commissary system. The pair introduced a bipartisan amendment into the FY16 National Defense Authorization Act that prevented the Pentagon from privatizing five commissaries at major installations during next year and instead requires the Defense Department to first conduct an assessment of the privatization effort and report to the Congress the potential

costs and benefits of commissary privatization. In addition, Sen. Mikulski used her clout as Ranking Member on the Senate Appropriations Committee to reject a proposed commissary-funding cut of \$322 million.

Rep. Joe Heck (R-NV) was honored for his work in fending off Pentagon cost-cutting proposals that would have eroded the pay and benefits of those in uniform. Specifically, Rep. Heck led the fight to prevent a reduction in the commissary benefit and an increase in health care fees. Rep. Heck, a physician and brigadier general in the Army Reserve, served in Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

The Coalition also honored the work of Anthony J. "Lazer" Lazarski, a retired Air Force colonel and senior military and Veterans affairs advisor to Sen. Inhofe. Lazarski worked with TMC members to gather support for the Inhofe-Mikulski amendment stopping commissary privatization. He was given the 2015 Freedom Award by TMC.



Chairman of the House Armed Services, Personnel Subcommittee Representative Joe Heck (R-NV; second from right) was one of this year's recipients of The Military Coalition's (TMC) Award of Merit. Presenting this year's awards were (from left) Col. (Ret.) Mike Hayden from the Military Officers Association of America; Jewish War Veterans Executive Director Herb Rosenbleeth; and AFSA's Morgan Brown, director of Military and Government Affairs. Incidentally, December marks the 30th anniversary of TMC, a group of 31 military, Veterans and uniformed services organizations in joint pursuit of issues affecting service members, Veterans and their families and survivors.

THE



PERCENTERS

**A STAFF SERGEANT USES HER PASSION
FOR PHOTOGRAPHY TO HONOR FELLOW VETERANS**

**By Darla J. Torres
Editor-in-Chief
Images by Victoria Baldwin**



AFSA Member Tech. Sgt. Douglas Suazo and his father, retired Lt. Col. Sostenes Suazo, were photographed by Victoria Baldwin as part of “The Seven Percenters” project. The photo was taken outside of the Wright-Patterson AFB Club, where the younger Suazo remembers his father taking him as a young child.

“When my father paid the ultimate sacrifice during Operation Iraqi Freedom, I swore off ever joining the military. I selfishly hated that war had taken him and couldn’t fathom ever following in his footsteps that led to dire tragedy.”

Those are the words written by Senior Airman Gregory Orlando as part of a photo and essay project aimed

at honoring the service of military men and women from around the country.

In 2014, the Department of Defense estimated that 7 percent of the current U.S. population are Veterans—including those currently serving and those who have served in the Armed Forces. AFSA member Victoria Baldwin is

using her camera and her passion to honor those people who make up that 7 percent.

An active-duty Airman herself, the staff sergeant is photographing Airmen, Soldiers, Sailors, Marines, Veterans, Wounded Warriors and Retirees in her off-duty time as a part of a photography project titled, “The Seven Percenters: Stories of Service.” Along with the photos, each person shares their personal experience and why they chose to serve their country.

DOCUMENTING SERVICE

Orlando was one of the subjects Baldwin profiled. In his photograph, Orlando is holding the flag that had been draped over his father’s coffin after he was killed in Iraq in 2003. It was the first time it had ever been uncased. “It just seemed appropriate,” says Orlando. Ten years after the death of his father, U.S. Army Lt. Col. Kim S. Orlando, the younger Orlando’s once negative view of serving had changed, and he joined the Air Force. “A huge part of why I decided to serve is centered around my father,” he says. “His death wasn’t a mere accident or tragic misfortune, but instead a pathway and route into sharing the honor that he died with. I bear his flag and this uniform with great pride, and am grateful that he awarded me with a sense of excellence.”

Stories like Orlando’s provide Baldwin with a satisfaction that she is honoring others with her project. She enjoys the excitement she sees in the volunteers she photographs when they begin to share personal stories of why they serve.

“We all serve for a common purpose,” Baldwin notes, “ultimately to protect and defend our nation. But the path that each of us has traveled to end up serving our country varies so much.”

Accordingly, she has become “fascinated” with meeting new Veterans or current service members, finding out more about them and their experiences, and developing unique ways to photograph them to capture some part of their story.

Baldwin’s current photography project is her third. The first, “Portraits in Bravery,” focused on Airmen who were



Staff Sgt. Britaney Wubbena left active duty after six years so she could better support her daughter, Hadley. She is now a member of the Tennessee Air National Guard, an avid runner and active in Team Red, White and Blue.

deployed with her in Kuwait in 2014. After sharing the photos and stories, she began receiving emails, Facebook messages and “thank you” care packages from family members of those she had photographed. “I never expected my photo project to make the impact that it did,” she says. “I cried when I saw the support the photo project was generating.”

Her second project focused on military and civilian women participating in jobs, hobbies or sports traditionally dominated by men. “I got to hear wonderful and inspiring stories of overcoming challenges, setbacks and stumbles that only allowed the person to come out better and brighter on the other side,” she recalls fondly.

AN EYE FOR A STORY

Originally from Pullman, Wash., Baldwin’s Air Force journey began in 2007, and her photography journey began in 2010, when she borrowed her first DSLR camera. She quickly became hooked and started her own photography business in 2013, while continuing to serve in the Air Force.

Baldwin says she feels fortunate to be able to combine two of her passions—photography and serving her

country—in her latest project. The Seven Percenters project began with photos of several military members at her current duty station, Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio. In November, she traveled to Minneapolis to document more stories of the men and women who serve. She plans to continue her quest

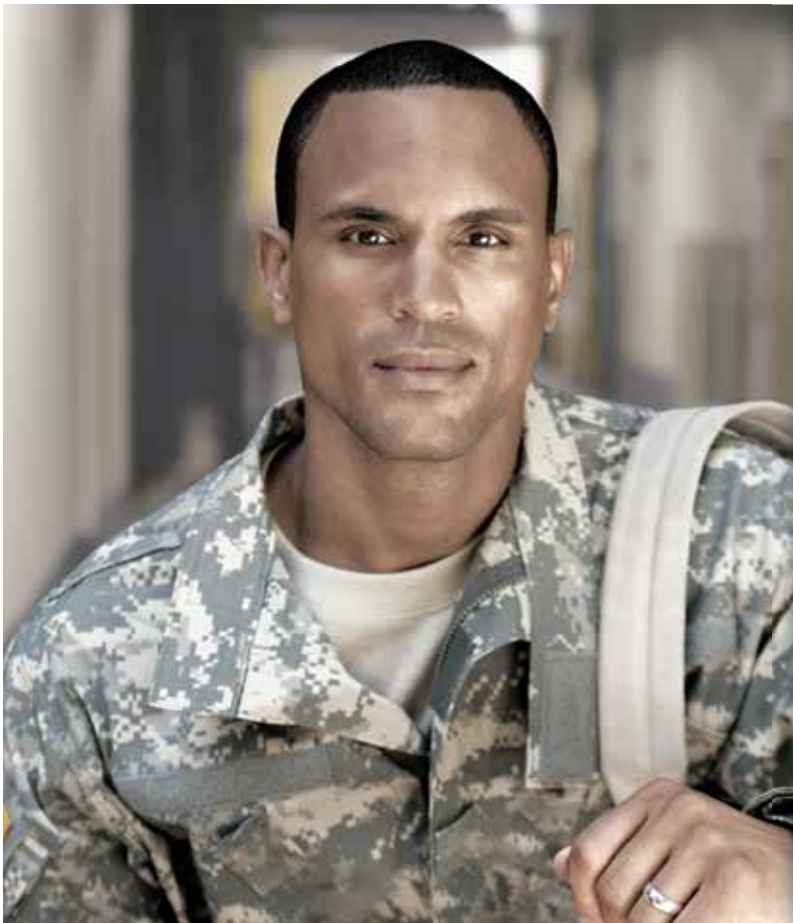


Staff Sgt. Victoria Baldwin, who is currently stationed at Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio, combines her passion for photography with her passion for serving her country through her photography projects, including her most recent, “The Seven Percenters: Stories of Service.”

with a visit to San Antonio, Texas, in January. From there, she hopes to hit an East Coast location in the Spring, and depending on mission requirements, leave ability and funding, she will continue to document “heroes and their stories” around the country. Thus far, supporters have pitched in via a “GoFundMe” site to help with travel costs.

“Being able to share such beautiful stories and moments with the friends and families of these heroes is such a humbling experience,” she says. “I am constantly amazed at the people whom I get to meet and photograph.”

In honor of Veterans Day, Victoria Baldwin displayed some of the photos from her current project, “The Seven Percenters: Stories of Service,” each day in November on Facebook at www.facebook.com/becauseofthebrave. To learn more about or to help support her project, contact her at becauseofthebrave.info@gmail.com.



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ON THE HILL

AN ENLISTED AIR FORCE PERSPECTIVE
FROM THE HALLS OF CONGRESS

By Michelle Gray
PR Specialist



The Legislative Fellows Program now includes enlisted members, including Senior Master Sgt. Tom Temple (left) and Chief Master Sgt. Lavor Kirkpatrick, pictured here outside Capitol Hill.



Congresswoman Niki Tsongas (D-MA), congratulates Enlisted Fellow Senior Master Sgt. Melanie Noel on her selection for promotion to chief master sergeant.

Not many enlisted members get to walk the halls of Congress as a daily part of their job, but for Airmen selected as Enlisted Legislative Fellows, the U.S. Capitol is their place of work.

The Airmen are part of the Air Force Legislative Fellows (AFLF) Program, which began in 1995 as a Professional Military Education program for Air Force officers and civilians. In 2011, the Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force requested the program be expanded to include Senior NCOs, a move that was enacted in 2013. Since then, four Senior NCOs have been selected to participate.

The goal of the SNCO Legislative Fellow Program is to develop innovative, strategic-minded Airmen through hands-on experience on Capitol Hill and education/development activities, followed by an assignment to a legislative-related position.

According to Maj. Gen. Thomas W. Bergeson, the Director, Legislative Liaison, Office of the Secretary of the Air Force, the Pentagon, Washington, D.C., “These enlisted leaders will be better positioned to advise senior leaders at every level of command.” Bergeson adds that the enlisted force makes up over three-fourths of the Air Force. “Our enlisted fellows provide a voice for those Airmen every single day,” he says.

THE SELECTION PROCESS

Before being selected for Capitol Hill, each enlisted Airman must be recommended by his or her leadership. “All

fellows, enlisted, officer and civilian, represent the best in their respective fields,” says Bergeson. There is an arduous selection process for each Enlisted Legislative Fellow. The Legislative Liaison director sits with a panel that consists of members from the Office of the Secretary of the Air Force and the Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force to select the most qualified Airmen for the assignment.

Bergeson stresses that the panel looks for professionals who are leaders. “They must embody the Air Force Core Values, be experts in their AFSCs, and have exhibited exceptional communication skills, written and verbal, throughout their careers,” he says.

Once selected, Airmen must complete a six-month developmental rotational tour as well as attend Georgetown University classes to prepare for the one-year assignment on Capitol Hill. The one-year assignment includes an intensive orientation of Congress; a full-time assignment to the staff of a member, committee or support agency; and periodic seminars throughout the fellowship year. Following the 18-month Legislative Fellowship, Airmen are then given an assignment from the Office of the Secretary of Defense to begin their “payback tour” as a Legislative Liaison.

Airmen and the Air Force aren’t the only beneficiaries of the program. While participants develop an enhanced perspective of the legislative process on a wide range of issues, they also provide Congress with Air Force and defense expertise at the staff level. This is especially helpful since military experience in today’s Congress is limited; less than 19 percent of current congressional members have served in uniform. The fellows are able to provide first-hand perspective to congressional staffers and committees about how decisions or legislation may impact military members and their families.

BENEFITING AIRMEN AND CONGRESS

Chief Master Sgt. Labor Kirkpatrick was the second enlisted Airman selected for the program. He completed an 18-month fellowship and was then selected for a follow-on assignment as an Air Force Legislative Liaison. According to Kirkpatrick, the entire experience gave him a new perspective on national security.

“The Fellowship and follow-on assignment offered me an opportunity to learn about strategic-level issues beyond my Air Force Specialty or even the Air Force,” he says. According to Kirkpatrick, he has had the opportunity to write and develop research for potential legislative issues



Enlisted Fellows Senior Master Sgt. Tom Temple (left) and Chief Master Sgt. Lavor Kirkpatrick discuss the program.

of immediate or ongoing concern of the Air Force and the nation, as well as provide legislative support to the Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force.

“We work the major Air Force priorities like Nuclear Enterprise, Fighter Force Structure and Space Launch, just to name a few,” Kirkpatrick continues. “As a Defense Fellow on the Hill, I also worked mental health concerns for service members and Veterans in rural areas for [now former] Sen. Mark Begich of Alaska.” In his current fellowship as a Legislative Liaison, Kirkpatrick has addressed issues such as dual-military Basic Allowance for Housing, the C-130 Avionic Modernization Program and other basing actions.

Senior Master Sgt. Tom Temple has been a Legislative Fellow for 15 months. “Too often as military members we seem to believe it’s us against Congress, but it truly is a symbiotic relationship,” he notes. “We need to have strong relationships to better the defense of our nation with our ever-declining budgets.”

Temple works directly with Rep. Niki Tsongas of Massachusetts. “I was immediately impressed that Congresswoman Tsongas’ office was so concerned with the health and welfare of military servicemen and service-women,” he says. “Also, the devoted work ethic and vast knowledge of members of Congress and their staff was immediately apparent.” Temple takes great pride in being

an enlisted fellow for the Air Force. “I want to do everything I possibly can to allow Congress to understand the enlisted force and our specific issues.”

Temple also was pleasantly surprised with the open interaction he was afforded with Rep. Tsongas. “She made sure I felt like a valuable member of the team,” he says, “and my unique skill set as the enlisted fellow were incorporated immediately into the team.”

Once the Liaisons’ time on the Hill is over, they return to their Air Force functional community able to share the wealth of knowledge they have learned about the legislative process with fellow Airmen.

“Their performance has been superb,” Bergeson says of the Senior NCOs serving as Legislative Fellows. He attributes the level of professionalism of the fellows to the rigorous hiring process between the Legislative Liaison office and the Office of the CMSAF. “We get the best of the best,” he says.

And he’s not the only fan. The congressional offices where enlisted fellows serve consistently praise the professionalism and skill these Airmen bring to the Hill. “In fact, one such office has made it a point to request an Air Force enlisted fellow as its No. 1 choice for a future defense fellow,” Bergeson says. That, he adds, is a great indicator of the success of the overall program.





MAKING DOLLARS AND SENSE



JUST IN TIME FOR THE HOLIDAYS, AFSA
PARTNERS WITH FELA TO OFFER MEMBERS FREE
FINANCIAL PLANNING RESOURCES

Interview by Megan Kramer





As the holidays approach, you might be giving more thought than usual to your financial well-being. While the holidays are cloaked in fun and good spirits, there is a hidden danger wrapped up in this merriment: overspending. Whether you're buying gifts, plane tickets or supplies for the upcoming festivities, money can seem extra thin this time of year. And this problem can be especially daunting if you don't feel like you have a strong grasp of your finances to begin with.

So to support its members when it comes to better understanding personal finance, AFSA is partnering with Financial Education & Literacy Advisers (FELA), which offers a free online financial education program for Veterans, service members and their families. Here, Blake Allison, President and CEO of FELA, gives more insight into this program, known as LifeCents for VALOR.

Why was there a need for LifeCents?

Allison: One thing that can never be forgotten is that Veterans are consumers like the rest of us. Any challenges that most people face—debt management, saving, retirement planning—Veterans face those challenges as well. At the same time, they have more complex financial lives. We wanted to get them the education they need to help them understand and address the entire spectrum.

There are many resources out there designed to help, but Veterans can't always access them. Or they are what we call "splinter resources," because people have to go to many different organizations and resources to get what they need. With LifeCents people can better understand what their needs are, and we can better connect them to resources that suit their needs.

How does LifeCents work?

Allison: Through an initial online assessment, we are evaluating three dimensions: financial IQ—what you know and don't know; financial wellness—what you are doing or not doing; and financial outlook—how confident or optimistic you are about certain areas of your personal finance and the future. Within each of these are financial-health risk factors, which are different for everyone, because they are based on how you answer the questions.

There are also various prompts to action, such as visiting a partner or resource site, that pop up as you answer questions. It's a very personalized approach to personal finance. We can't help if we don't know what someone's challenges

GETTING STARTED

Through Financial Education & Literacy Advisers (FELA), AFSA members and their families can now participate in a complimentary online financial education program known as LifeCents for VALOR. After an initial 10-minute assessment, participants can start taking more in-depth steps toward learning about the aspects of financial health that matter to them most. By completing goals, participants can unlock rewards and earn LifeCents badges. They also can access additional boot camp modules on various topics, including budgeting, saving, credit scores, planning, retirement and more (see related sidebar on page 24).

➔ To register and take the assessment, visit afsa.mylifecents.com/register.





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- Banking—tips for understanding how banks work, the differences between checking and savings accounts, interest and other benefits of bank accounts, and banking alternatives.
- ID Theft Prevention—information about how to prevent identity theft, how to spot the signs that your identity has been stolen and how to repair the damage done by identity thieves.
- Financial Planning—help for creating a financial plan, information about retirement and information about why financial plans and goals are important.
- Saving—tips and tools to help you save money each month and boost your emergency funds.

are. The one-size-fits-all model just does not work. We want to show the ripple effect: how one answer impacts the rest of your finances.

What type of information does LifeCents ask for?

Allison: We want to look at behaviors and habits. We don't ask for personally identifying information, so it's nonintrusive and, dare I say, approachable. People are more reluctant to provide numeric information, which can be hard to obtain and overwhelming. We can see improvements in financial health just by understanding their habits.

What are the benefits of LifeCents?

Allison: Of course, we would love for everyone to achieve financial security—saving more and spending less, managing debt and credit well. But we know there is no silver bullet to achieving this, so we want LifeCents to be a starting point that engages people and helps them understand their own personal financial situation. We provide meaningful and useful tools that can make an impact.

People can also reach personalized goals to earn badges and unlock rewards within the program. We want to encourage people, so we offer rewards such as drawings and sweepstakes they can enter. We know the benefits of providing motivation, whether it is intrinsic or extrinsic.

Why is LifeCents successful?

Allison: This is a very personal learning environment, and we meet people where they are. We asked ourselves, "How can we provide a touch point that is available to anyone, anywhere, at any time?" That is the real key to LifeCents: It's an opportunity for people to access a resource that allows them to have a personalized plan that connects them to other resources and partners. The resources that Veterans and service members need are going to be at a local level, and based on someone's holistic profile, we create pathways to connect them with partners that are relevant. We are now getting support from partners in the private sector, so participants never have to pay.

We also collect the data from questions participants answer to get a better sense of where the community stands as a whole. There is an absence of data on the financial health of Veterans, which is one of the reasons why this program has taken off and gotten support. Other programs don't have these insights, so it's hard for them to help solve the problems.





Celebrating Our 55th Anniversary Through the Years

AFSA 2016 MEMBERSHIP DIRECTORY

AFSA has a long and solid history of advocating for Airmen, Veterans and their Families. You, the members of AFSA, are our history...men and women who have stepped up through the years to help your fellow Airmen and to be part of one powerful voice on Capitol Hill.

That's why we are proud to partner with Publishing Concepts Incorporated (PCI) to produce a 55th Anniversary Membership Directory titled *Through the Years* filled with your information and stories. This hard-cover book will contain basic directory information for all members who choose to participate, but you will also have the opportunity to archive your own personal history of service and successes, or that of a loved one.

Here's how it works:

- PCI is contacting members on behalf of AFSA via postcard and emails, then through follow-up phone calls, if needed.
- The PCI representative will verify the member information we have on file, to see if it's correct or needs to be updated.
- A PCI representative will also give you an opportunity to submit information and photos for a vignette about your service, or that of a loved one you may wish to honor.

Here's the kinds of things they may ask:

- When and where did you begin your military service or support if a family member?
- In which military campaigns did you participate?
- What was your most recent or final assignment?
- What is your fondest memory, or the greatest lesson learned through the years of your service?
- Please submit two photos – “then and now”
- Would you like to pre-order a directory?

Is there a cost to participate?

There is no cost to be included in the AFSA Directory, though members will be offered a special opportunity to pre-order this special 55th Anniversary edition.

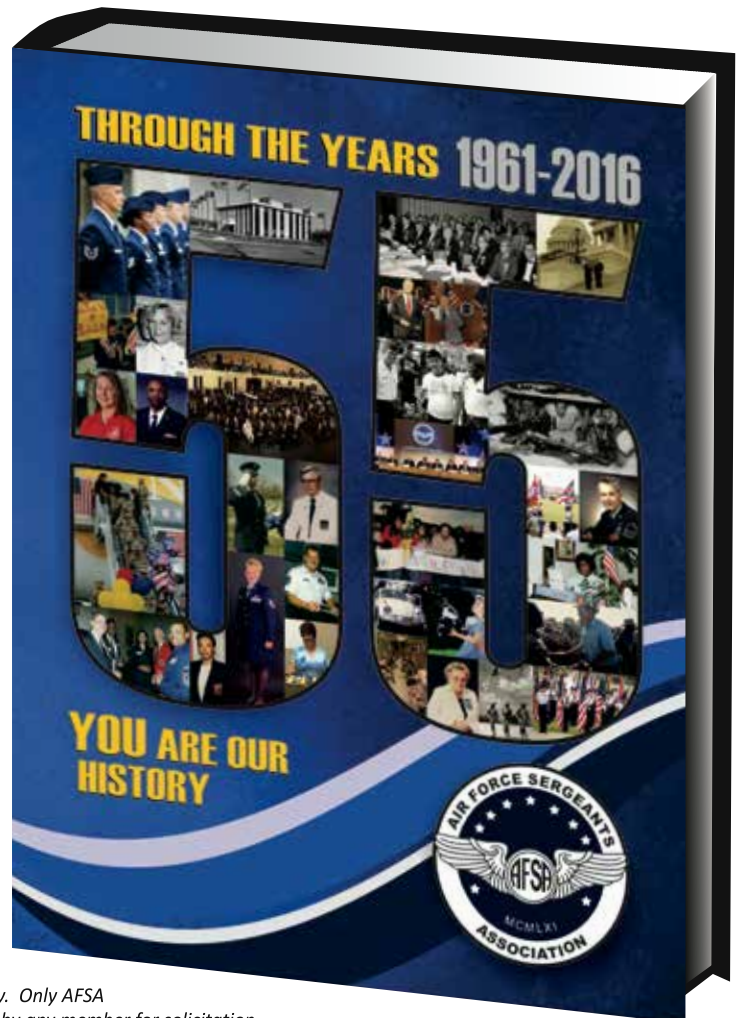
This is a great way for AFSA to gather updated information for our members, and it will result in headquarters having better contact information to share news, information and benefits of membership.

AFSA receives a small royalty on the sale of each directory, so your participation helps your association financially. We thank you in advance for your support.

Please take a moment to call and verify your information to ensure its accuracy for publication.

Call PCI now... 1-866-589-5453

The publisher (PCI) works under a very strict confidentiality agreement with AFSA and will only use the information provided for the purpose of contacting members to gather data and to offer the sale of the directory. Only AFSA members can purchase the directory. It is copyrighted and cannot be used by any member for solicitation purposes. No directory purchase necessary to be included. If you choose not to participate, simply inform the PCI representative.





Aircrew members wearily depart a 93rd Bombardment Group B-24 in England after a WWII mission. Bomber crews had less than a one-third chance of completing their specified mark of 25 missions during the war. *(USAF photo)*

THE NUMBERS OF WAR

THE MEDICAL SUPPORT STUDY OF THE AAF IN WWII

By Sean M. Miskimins
Airmen Memorial Museum Curator

I am sure I am not the only one with this phobia or problem. It commonly occurs when you have a task to accomplish in a library. Maybe you, like me, tend to select sources or books based on their size, avoiding larger, heavier volumes when possible. My rule of thumb was that if a book looked like it would break a toe if I dropped it on my foot, then I would leave it sitting right there on the shelf. This approach worked for a long time and allowed me to walk right past a particularly large black volume sitting on a shelf in the Airmen Memorial Museum library. Its title, though, continued to pique my interest, and I eventually gave in and examined it. The book is *Medical Support of the Army Air Forces in World War II* by Mae M. Link and Hubert A. Coleman.

To say that it is an extensive study is an understatement. The volume is 1,027 pages long and was published in 1955, 10 years after that most horrific war in history ended. I couldn't help but think they probably started working on it as the ink on the surrender documents signed in Tokyo Bay was still drying, yet they didn't finish it until Eisenhower's first term was nearly over. Yes, there is that much data!

Many adults confess to having "hated" or even "feared" math when they were in school. But there is no escaping math, or more specifically, numbers. They are everywhere in our world—from advertisements for lower interest rates to the latest Fantasy Football league. Heck, even books, movies and sports have them. Ever heard of *Moneyball*? Thus, as I opened Link and Coleman's huge volume on medical support of the AAF, I at least did not noticeably shudder at the sight of all the tables, graphs and percentage breakdowns packed into its pages.

It would be unrealistic for a single volume, even a 1,000-page one, to cover all the data out there on the AAF men of WWII. But the topics this book does cover are thorough and illuminating. They are broken down by Theaters of operations and sometimes even sub-categories, such as the 8th, 9th, 15th or 20th Air Forces.

One of the topics covered early in the book is statistics on evacuees. Some immediate trends pop up.

In the Mediterranean Theater of Operations (MTO), 1944 data showed only 90 casualties were flown out during January. This number rose steadily throughout the year, eventually reaching

873 by December. By war's end, 24,000 casualties (evacuees) were flown out of the MTO; of those, the number of non-combat evacuees was higher than I expected: 11,000. Army evacuees out-distanced AAF evacuees in the MTO by a 4-1 ratio during the war, which is an indication of the focus on ground combat for troops in North Africa.

The book includes data on evacuees from other theaters, as well. One fact quickly caught my eye: Only roughly four evacuees per 100,000 died while in flight from the MTO, PTO (Pacific Theater) or ETO (Europe). When looking at the CBI Theater (China-Burma-India), however, the figure quadrupled to 15 per 100,000. I suspect that the longer flight for medical care probably contributed to this difference.

The ETO also had some interesting data from 1944 concerning "off continent" or "off England" evacuees—basically those patients headed back to the U.S. The data for June, July and August 1944 showed zero off-continent or off-England evacuees. However, once the U.S. advanced beyond "hedgerow country" following the D-Day invasion (about seven weeks after June 6) and really starting sweeping east quickly, the numbers



Getting planes back to base with injured crewmen aboard hardly meant they would survive. The time elapsed between the injuries occurring and treatment being provided was a big factor. Here, future Chief Master Sgt. of the Air Force Tom Barnes, left, takes a peek inside the hood of a damaged C-54 during the Korean War while an enlisted buddy, right, looks at the camera. (Barnes collection, AMM)

jumped way up. By November 1944, greater than 8,000 evacuees were shipped off-continent/off-England. In March of 1945, the numbers climbed to more than 11,000, and then to 28,000 by May. The data here is clear: Once we had the Nazis on the run, we had more time, fuel and planes to use for transporting the injured back to waiting doctors and hospitals at home.

The story is similar for dental care. Referring to dentists, the motto of the dental practice where my aunt works as a dental assistant back home in Oregon holds that “you never care where one is until you need one.” That seemed even truer for servicemen in WWII. I chuckled as I saw the data on the number of dentists in the 8th Air Force: As of January 1944, there was one dentist for every 1,657 men in the 8th Air Force. By September, that number improved to one dentist for every 930 men.

While there were no casualties reported from toothache, there were some atypical casualties in the data. Deaths of Airmen in the ETO from 1942–1945 showed a variety of causes, among them suicide (24 men), drowning (34), heart attack (34), accidental

gunshot (113) and car crash (341).

Venereal Disease (VD) was also mentioned in the volume, though there were no deaths attributed to it. Data from July 1, 1942 through the end of June 1945 showed that 4 percent of the Army Air Forces Airmen stationed in Europe had contracted some form of VD. The first year the number was 3.8 percent. The second year, July 1943 through June 1944, saw a dip down to 2.7 percent, but the last year, July 1944 to June 1945, spiked back up to 5.7 percent. These numbers were probably affected by the fact that during the second period aircrews were heavily engaged in the war and had less time for “leisure” activities in places like Paris, Rome and London. The last year, as victory appeared imminent, corresponded with a more relaxed time with more weekend passes. Because the men in the Pacific Theater were often on small

islands without a population of women, VD wasn’t a problem. However, the European Theater wasn’t the only spot where the VD problem sprang up. The 15th Air Force men stationed in the Mediterranean Theater saw peaks and valleys in VD cases during 1944, as well. Some months the number of men with some form of sexually transmitted disease there was as low as 384, while other months the numbers rose to nearly 700.

Medical Support of the Army Air Forces in World War II contains few pictures, though the ones it does have grabbed my attention. For instance, some depict severe cases of frostbite

Speed of evacuating injured personnel away from the front lines to hospitals increased survival rates tremendously. Many credit the advent of helicopters for the rise in survival rates. Here, an HH-19 rescue PJ, uses a hoist to rescue an injured comrade. (USAF photo)



contracted by bomber crews at high altitudes. The data showed that even a change in temperature of just a few degrees could make quite a difference. For the 8th Air Force, February and November of 1943 were the coldest months on average at “bombing altitude,” with the temperatures reaching 43 degrees below zero. Slightly over 2 percent of the 8th Air Force bomber crews got frostbite those months. When the temperature was only slightly different, as in March 1943, when it was *only* 37 degrees below zero, the number of frostbitten fingers and toes was only half of 1 percent of the aircrews.

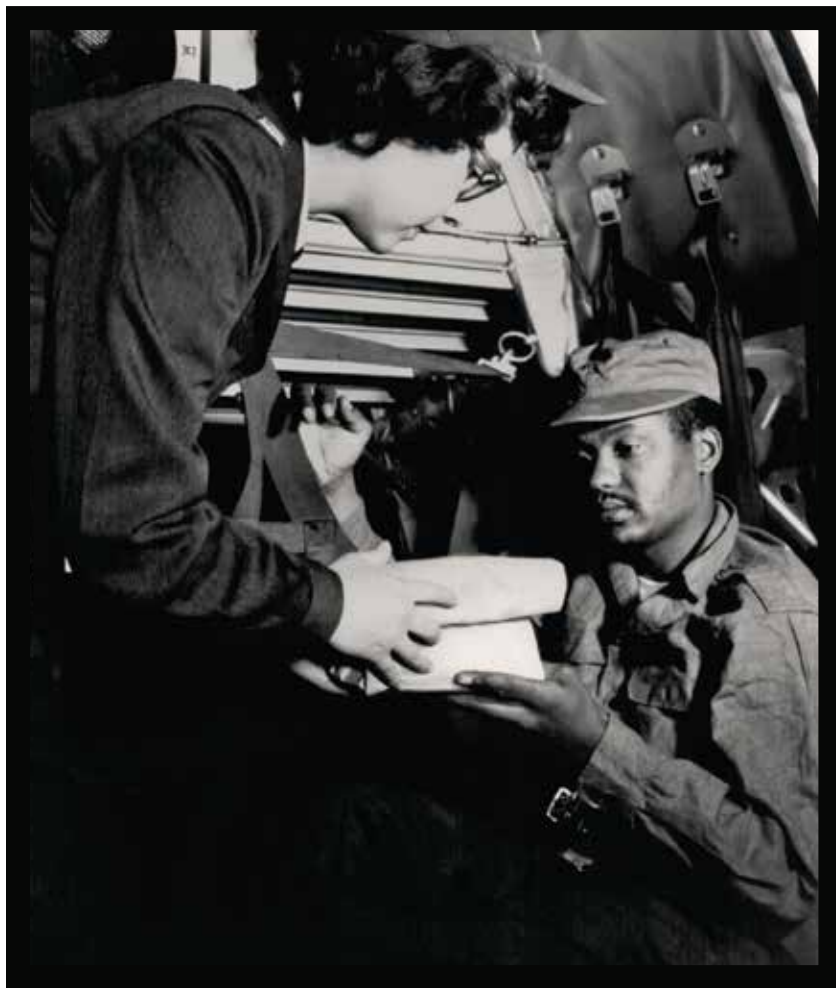
One type of casualty sent me sprinting for the dictionary. “Anoxic fatality” was listed 33 times as the cause of death for bomber crewmen flying missions out of North Africa in 1944. Anoxia means a complete lack of oxygen, so in this case these men’s oxygen masks must have fallen off after they somehow became unconscious during high-altitude flights. (Remember, these bomber cabins were not pressurized.) It appeared mostly in “isolated” positions on B-24s and B-17s where the situation could be deadly when oxygen mask failures occurred. Eleven of the 33 casualties were top-turret gunners while six were ball-turret gunners.

“In-flight casualties” made up another interesting portion of the book. The data here comes from the 15th Air Force from November 1943 to May 1945. Of the 1,157 casualties of the 15th Air Force in that time, 212 died due to “bullet or flak wound,” while 52 succumbed to “parachute accident.” Another 59 died in “ditching problems,” and the largest number, 801 men, died via their aircraft “crashing or getting shot down.”

The final total of AAF casualties in WWII breaks down as follows:

- Pacific Theater: 24,000 casualties
- Mediterranean: 31,000 casualties
- European Theater: 63,000 casualties

While the Pacific Theater had the fewest casualties in number, they had the highest percent die: 40 percent



While flight nurses on evacuation flights were hardly the norm in WWII (except the European Theater in 1944-45), by the Korean War, they were more common. Here, Private Charles Smith, right, of Charlottesville, Va., receives a lunch from a flight nurse after being held as a POW for two and half years. (2nd Photo Sqdn. USAF)

of 24,000 casualties. In the Mediterranean, 30 percent of casualties died, while 28 percent of the European Theater casualties ended up as fatalities.

Those in the Pacific who did survive participated in a “food survey” near the end of the war. It dealt with “most” versus “least” acceptable foods they were given. Vienna Sausages was listed as one of the “most acceptable,” while Spam—another canned meat that one old history teacher once told me “won World War II for us”—was high on the “least acceptable” list. Salmon, a fish largely native to Pacific waters—thus, it should have been fresh fish, right?—was actually listed

on the least acceptable list for the AAF boys in the Pacific.

There was a plethora of information to sift through after the ashes of WWII finally settled. I can see why it took authors Link and Coleman a decade to sort and analyze all the data of the war and produce it in an organized and coherent manner. This historian certainly doesn’t envy their task. I would simply tell them kudos on a tough task and a job well done.

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