



AIR FORCE SERGEANTS ASSOCIATION

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AFSA CEO: NDAA Actions Re-open Pay Gap

SUITLAND, Maryland, Dec. 2, 2014 – Reports on the Fiscal Year '15 National Defense Authorization Act Conference are beginning to emerge, and it appears that military members will see a 1 percent pay raise, a 1 percent decrease in future housing allowance, and no immediate changes to the Commissaries.

With just 10 days remaining before planned adjournment, NDAA conferees came to consensus on the Department of Defense spending plan, 60 days after the start of the fiscal year it governs.

According to Morgan Brown, AFSA Director of Military and Government Affairs, the end product of merging H.R. 4435 and S. 2410 failed to specify the 1.8 percent Employment Cost Index-based pay raise mandated by law, thereby allowing the President and the Department of Defense's proposal of 1 percent to carry.

AFSA CEO Rob Frank sees this as three steps back in regard to equitable pay for those who wear the uniform of the nation's military. "In very short order, the administration has re-opened the wound of a pay gap," said Frank. He pointed to last year's pay raise, which was .7 percent less than ECI, coupled with .8 percent less this year as evidence of a reverse in past efforts to allow military pay to keep pace with the ECI.

"It took over a decade to suture the 13.5 percent pay differential and now we have a de facto 1.5 percent reduction in pay in just two years, he added. "Couple that with reductions in housing and the cumulative impact becomes immediately negative for those serving on the heels of extended combat. We are 'nickel and dining' the troops, and treating them like an expense ripe for the trimming. Our military members are not an expense, rather an investment that we need to properly cultivate," he said.

Other key provisions of the report include:

- Extension of certain special pay and bonuses for active-duty and reserve personnel.
- Rejection of DoD's requested budget cut to the Commissary Program, with direction to the Secretary of Defense to conduct a review, using the services of an independent organization experienced in retail grocery analysis to determine the best way forward.
- Requirement for enhanced information regarding the use of the Post 9/11 GI Bill and federal financial aid through the Transition Assistance Program.

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- A one-time increase of \$3 for pharmacy co-pays for retail prescriptions and mail-order non-generic prescriptions. The bill also requires that, beginning Oct. 1, 2015, all non-generic prescription maintenance medications be filled through military treatment facility pharmacies or the national mail-order pharmacy program.
- Requirement for the Secretary of Defense to provide a person-to-person mental health assessment for active duty and selected reserve members each year and, through 2018, a person-to-person mental health screening once during each 180-day period in which a member is deployed.

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The Air Force Sergeants Association (www.hqafsa.org) is a non-profit, federally chartered, military and veterans association of 110,000 dues-paying members which specifically focuses on the quality-of-life benefits of enlisted military members and their families, while supporting all military members and a strong national defense. Enlisted members currently comprise about 83 percent of those in uniform.