

OPEN LETTER - TIME TO STOP TRICARE FEE INCREASES

Service members, past and present, and their families have undoubtedly given more in service to our country than most. These Americans have devoted a great deal to our nation's security and sustainment of freedom. All the while being paid below civilian equivalents and benefits such as health care are near constantly under attack.

In recent years, TRICARE has been reformed- bringing a mixed bag of results. On one hand plans have been streamlined and modernized. We've seen this in the combination of TRICARE Standard and Extra into TRICARE Select. In the near future the TRICARE Retiree Dental Program (TRDP) will sunset and beneficiaries will rollover into the Federal Employee Dental and Vision Insurance Program (FEDVIP) administered by Office of Personnel Management (OPM). Additionally, active duty families will be eligible to participate in the vision plan. Furthering this course of action, the FY2019 NDAA includes a provision to make currently serving beneficiaries of the TRICARE Dental Plan (TDP) eligible to enroll in FEDVIP for dental needs as well.

On the other hand, drastic increases in pharmacy co-pays and increased fees for certain plan enrollments and point of service have been added. This takes money directly out of the pockets of service members, veterans and their families. Compounding the issue is the concern that, with such drastic increases in fees, beneficiaries may choose to forgo care to cut down on out-of-pocket costs. Doing this could backfire resulting in long-term illness or injury which would end up costing the individual and Departments of Defense (DoD) or Veterans Affairs (VA) down the road.

On behalf of the nearly 100,000 members of the Air Force Sergeants Association, the largest of the enlisted advocacy associations in this nation, we urge all leaders of the Executive and Legislative branches to stop raising fees on military health care. This is the least we can do for those who have devoted their lives to the service of this nation, to honor their commitment and sacrifice, and to fulfill the reciprocal promise of support made by our government to those who serve. Accordingly, we urge our national leaders to step up as advocates and champions for the members of the Armed Forces and the family members who support them.

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