



ECHOES

A Message from the Chief, Army Retirement Services

As you may have noted, we slipped our fall edition of *Army Echoes* from September to October. We will also push the January 2014 edition to February 2014; and the May 2014 edition to June 2014. The slight change better fits our ability to manage several major events with our smaller staff and still continue our communications with you. I appreciate your patience and understanding.

Let me highlight some key areas important to us and to you – our very important retirees, spouses, and surviving spouses. The DOD-imposed furlough of civilian employees thankfully lasted only six weeks (vice eleven in the final plan). Without question, our output slowed down as did that in the local retirement services office nearest your location. Our staff here, and the installation, USAR, or ARNG locations that support you appreciate your forbearance in the delays of service that occurred. We hope the civilian furlough is not repeated in Fiscal Year 2014. Furloughs hurt our Army at every level!

In our last edition of *Echoes*, we announced that the Secretary of the Army directed a significant change to Army Knowledge Online (AKO), as HQDA moves toward “the information foundation of Army 2020.” We explained that among the key components of this transformation will be that military retirees, family members and Army civilian retirees will lose their personal AKO accounts. During the initial staffing of the Army G-6 plan, we recommended that if the implementation date could not be delayed, the Army should grant an exception to policy to automatically forward e-mails to civilian accounts until Dec. 31, 2014. That recommendation was approved. Please read Mark Overberg’s article “Army plans to close retiree AKO accounts by Mar. 31, 2014” on page 6.

Army RSO is committed to expanding electronic communications to you. This HQDA trend is absolutely irreversible – we all must change and move to new ways of communicating information from the Department of the Army to you and your family members. We will continue the collective HQDA communications program to help make this transformation easier for you and your family members. The Army will push information to retirees via news releases on the Army homepage (www.army.mil) and Army Social Media (Army Facebook, Army Twitter, Army YouTube, etc.); and through a variety of installation publications, as well as links to Army programs such as “Ready and Resilient.” I also ask you to carefully read “DS Logon now a must for most retirees” on page 7 which is the way to view your personal records on DOD/VA websites.

Lastly, we have worked very hard for the past three years to urge retirees to move from “hard copy” *Echoes* to electronic *Echoes* available in a variety of formats. Please read our “Army modifies *Echoes* distribution policy” article on page 16.

I am pleased to note that, finally, after a long campaign by this office, Army Regulation 25-50, *Preparing and Managing Correspondence*, has been changed to direct that all retired Soldiers are officially recognized by the same title – U.S. Army Retired – regardless if their service was active duty, reserve duty (USAR or ARNG), or a combination of both. ONE Team - ONE Army - ONE Nation! (See our “Did You Know?” article on page 10).

Our CSA, General Odierno, continues to recognize your selfless service in his lead article. Despite fiscal challenges at every level, and the complexities of very dynamic global uncertainties, the Army remains a “people-centered force.” He calls us to action and asks that you stay in touch; tell the Army story; and support our volunteer force wherever and whenever you can.

These are tough times. Keep our troops and families in your thoughts and prayers. Remember our leaders at all levels – may they be blessed with wisdom that leads to decisive positive action.

John W. Radke
Chief, Army Retirement Services

Echoes is the U. S. Army’s official newsletter for retired Soldiers, surviving spouses and their families. Published three times each year in accordance with Army Regulation 600-8-7, *Echoes*’ mission is to inform retirees about their benefits, to update them about the Army, and to encourage them to support the Army in their civilian communities. Inquiries/comments about *Echoes* should be sent to Army Retirement Services, Attention: *Echoes* Editor (Room 6048), 2530 Crystal Drive, Arlington, VA 22202-3941 or to ArmyEchoes@mail.mil. Direct all other questions to the Retirement Services Officers listed on pgs. 14-15.

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U.S. Family Health Plan might be an option for you

By Von Ahouse, U.S. Family Health Plan Benefits Specialist

You may not be familiar with an important TRICARE Prime option available to Department of Defense (DOD) beneficiaries in certain areas of the country. If you are a TRICARE-eligible beneficiary, you owe it to yourself to investigate the U.S. Family Health Plan (USFHP) program. The USFHP is a TRICARE Prime option offering comprehensive health care coverage built on a sound mission and unsurpassed commitment to plan members. The USFHP program includes six regionally based health care systems in different parts of the country — Maine and other parts of New England; New York and New Jersey; the Middle Atlantic states; parts of Texas and Louisiana; and the Pacific Northwest. If you live in a select zip code surrounding one of the six designated provider health systems, you are likely eligible for care in the USFHP.

The U.S. Family Health Plan health care systems all began as Public Health Service hospitals. In the early 1980s, they became part of the Defense Health System. They each offer all of the TRICARE Prime health care benefits, but they do so in a more personalized and committed way than many DOD beneficiaries may be used to. The USFHP provides very high-quality health care service and strong physician-patient relationships. The designated providers have long been at the forefront of leading edge health care delivery, employing novel techniques like the patient-centered medical home, telemedicine, and 24-hour nurse telephone lines well before these practices were common in other parts of the defense and federal health care system. The result is exceptional member satisfaction. For the last 15 years, USFHP beneficiaries have reported health care satisfaction rates that routinely run over 90 percent and are significantly higher than the rates reported by other federal health care beneficiaries.

Enrollment is available to active duty family members and to retirees and eligible family members up to age 65. The high beneficiary satisfaction reflects the high priority placed on personalized care by the USFHP providers. All the designated provider health care systems are non-profit organizations, so you know their focus is on providing the best possible patient care. Whatever you are currently using for your health care coverage, you owe it to yourself to check out the USFHP web site, www.usfhp.com, or call (800) 748-7347 for more information.



Did You Know? Army announces major change to retired military customs and courtesies

WASHINGTON — Some customs and courtesies will never change, such as showing respect for the U. S. flag. However, the Army recently modified how retirees list their retired status. The Army published the new policy on May 17 in Army Regulation 25-50, *Preparing and Managing Correspondence*. The policy puts retired Reservists on equal footing with Soldiers who retired from active duty.

AR 25-50 says, "Retired military should follow the same rules as active personnel, except that no organization or branch of the Army will be shown. Show retired status after the grade as follows:

- All Army personnel, active or reserve component, retired for service, age or physical disability and all personnel on the Army of the United States Retired List, including regular Army personnel and nonregular Army personnel on the Temporary Disability Retired List will use 'USA Retired' (for example, A.B. Smith, COL (USA Retired)).
- All personnel on the Officers Honorary Retired List will use 'U.S. Army Retired (Hon).'
- All Reservists assigned to the U. S. Army Reserve (USAR) Control Group (Retired) will use 'USA Retired.'
- Army retirees serving as DA civilians will not use or refer to their military grade or rank except when referring to their personal retirement actions."