

May Retired Military Newsletter 2017

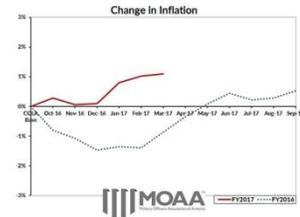


We serve all the men and women of the Armed Forces of the United States of America

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COLA. The March CPI is 1.1 percent above the FY 2016 COLA baseline.



COMMISSARY SAVINGS. The Defense Commissary Agency (DeCA) recently announced, "Savings for Commissary shoppers will be reported more often and better reflect the cost of living where patrons shop." Historically, DeCA measured savings globally by comparing national prices at commissaries against average market prices for the entire country.



The military commissary at the **Los Angeles Air Force Base** serves about 750 shoppers and sells \$60,000 of merchandise a day, according to store data.

Shoppers save 23.7 percent by using commissaries instead of civilian grocery stores, lower than the 30 percent savings claimed for years. The drop isn't a result of price increases, at least not directly. It's a change in how DeCA tracks the savings, moving from a solely national model to one that includes a regional comparison of commissary prices with those at nearby stores.

However, the cost of living varies by region. To account for these geographic differences, Congress now requires DeCA

to report on savings regionally, comparing prices with two or three commercial grocers, including super centers, in the local area of each commissary in the United States.

Since the savings rate is calculated from local price comparisons, it will vary by region due to differences in the cost of living, even when commissary prices remain uniform and constant. For example, if the price of macaroni is \$1.25 at all commissaries, but the comparison price at local commercial retailers varies by region. In Hawaii, where the cost of living is higher, the

price of macaroni in commercial retailers is \$2.00, but in Georgia, where the cost of living is lower, the price outside the gate is \$1.50. This would mean even though customers pay \$1.25 for macaroni at commissaries worldwide, customers in Hawaii save 37.5 percent by using their commissary benefit, whereas customers in Georgia save 16.7 percent.

Congress requires DeCA maintain savings at current levels, even as the commissary system transforms its business operations and improves the shopping experience. The new savings rate provides an accurate baseline that will allow DeCA and Congress to monitor and protect patron savings. For more details on the commissary's new business model, visit the transformation page on DeCA's FAQ website: www.commissaries.com.

TRICARE CONTRACTORS. TRICARE will have two new managed care contractors starting October 1: Humana Military in the East Region and Health Net Federal Services in the West Region. To make sure the move to the new managed care support contracts is smooth, the Department of Defense is guiding the process with greater visibility of the new contractors' transition schedule.

The DoD will continuously monitor seven critical performance areas: provider networks, enrollment, customer service, management, referral management, claims processing, and medical management. Through these quality assurance measures, the DoD will know that the managed care support contractors are performing to desired standards. We retirees need to ensure our information in DEERS is current.

VA CEMETERIES. VA national cemeteries now will allow families, friends and community members to find time and location information for those being interred. The VA wants manageable information for anyone wishing to pay their respects. The new **online** feature is available to anyone with a smartphone, tablet or computer. Schedules of interments are updated hourly at www.cem.va.gov/dailyburialschedule, though some scheduled services may not be included as families may opt out of posting the information publicly.

Searches can be conducted by location or last name. The daily burial schedule provides date and time of the committal service, the location of the cemetery, as well as the funeral home providing services. The schedule also provides a direct link to the national cemetery's web page, directions, location of committal shelters and additional information. VA operates 135

national cemeteries and 33 soldiers' lots and monument sites in 40 states and Puerto Rico. More than 4 million Americans, including Veterans of every war and conflict, are buried in VA's national cemeteries. VA also provides funding to establish, expand, improve and maintain 105 Veterans cemeteries in 47 states and territories including tribal trust lands, Guam, and Saipan. For Veterans not buried in a VA national cemetery, the VA provides headstones, markers or medallions to commemorate their service. In 2016, VA honored more than 345,000 Veterans and their loved ones with memorial benefits in national, state, tribal and private cemeteries. [Source: Vantage Point | Megan Moloney | March 24, 2017]

LAPEL PIN . The Veterans Administration has a Vietnam Veterans' lapel pin available to veterans who served during the period November 1, 1955 to May 15, 1975. The pin commemorates the 50th anniversary of the war and is available at most VA facilities. Contact your local VA office or go to: <http://www.vietnamwar50th.com/> (source: VA web page).

TFL. Occasionally the question comes up "what do I have to do to get TRICARE-for-Life (TFL)." TFL is **wraparound** coverage for TRICARE-Eligible beneficiaries who have Medicare Part A and B. No enrollment is required. Coverage is automatic for Tricare-eligible beneficiaries who have both Medicare Part A and B. Your retired military ID card or Dependent ID card serves as your TRICARE for Life identification.

Using TRICARE for Life Overseas- Medicare provides coverage in the U.S. and U.S. Territories. Medicare does not provide coverage in any other overseas locations. When using TRICARE for Life in all other overseas locations, whether living overseas or traveling overseas, TRICARE is the primary payer and you are responsible for paying TRICARE's annual deductible and cost shares (same costs as TRICARE Standard Overseas).

Register online for access to secure functions on the TRICARE Overseas Program website for more information, or call TRICARE (1-866 773-0404).

DENTAL. The Western region TRICARE dental program (TRDP) representative advises that she still meets many retirees who have never heard of the plan's benefits, so she wants to make sure that everything is being done to get the word out. This article is intended to help ensure that you are not one of those retirees who haven't heard of the program. If you are not familiar with it, check it out. You and your families may benefit from getting this information.

RAD. There will be a Retired Appreciation Day at Los Angeles Air Force Base on Saturday, June 3, 2017, 0800-1200 hrs. at the Gordon Conference Center (Bldg. 270, Corner of Douglas Blvd and El Segundo Blvd on Base.) There will be Guest speakers on TRICARE, Casualty Assistance, on-base medical services and more. The ID Card Office (Bldg. 272) will be open

1000-1200 hrs. (first come, first served until 1200). For more information, contact the LAAFB Retiree Activities Office (310) 653-5144.

VA. According to the Mobile Vet Centers (MVCs) of the Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA), the MVCs provide readjustment counseling and information resources to Veterans across the country. Like community-based Vet Centers, MVCs focus on services that help Veterans make the difficult transition between military and civilian life. As of 2016, 50 MVC units travel across the country, reaching Veterans in every county of the lower 48 states. The following link provides the location of MVCs : <http://www.va.gov/directory/guide/facility.asp?id=5455> For additional information, see: <http://www.va.gov/health/NewsFeatures/20091116a.asp>

DENTAL AND VISION. Military families will be eligible by 2018 to buy vision coverage through federal employee health programs, according to Karen Ruedisueli, government relations deputy director for National Military Family Association. **Retirees and dependents will be eligible for both dental and vision programs.**

VA LOANS. The Department of Veterans Affairs has announced new loan. The maximum amount for the VA Home Loan Guaranty Program for 2017 is \$424,100 in most counties. In higher-cost counties, the loan limit will range from \$425,500 to \$721,050, according to the Military Times. Veterans eligible for VA home loans can borrow amounts higher than the loan limits, but lenders might require them to make a down payment for the excess borrowed. The VA calculates loan limits using counties' median home values as reported by the Federal Housing Administration. Some counties' limits will increase, while others will remain the same. A few counties will see decreased. [Source: Mortgage Professional America | Ryan Smith | 19 December 2016)

THUNDERBIRDS schedule:

- June 3-4: Open Date
- June 10-11: Scott AFB, Illinois ----- “Scott AFB Air Show & Open House”
- June 17-18: Youngstown ANG, Ohio – “Thunder Over the Valley Air Show”
- June 24-25: Dayton, Ohio ----- “Vectren Dayton Air Show”

How to contact us

The Retired Activities Office, Naval Weapons Station, Seal Beach, California is located at 800 Seal Beach Blvd in Bldg. 22, Rm 2, Seal Beach, CA 90740-5000. We are here to serve all Armed Forces retirees and are open M-Th0900 to 1500; Fri 0900 to 1200. You may contact us at (562)-626-7152 or by emailing us at rao-nwssb@navy.mil

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[Retired Activities Website](#)