

**JOINT READINESS TRAINING CENTER AND FORT POLK  
CIVILIAN PERSONNEL ADVISORY CENTER  
FORT POLK, LOUISIANA 71459-5341**



*“ARMY CIVILIAN PERSONNEL PROFESSIONALS--  
HELPING LEADERS MEET THE MISSION”*

CPAC INFORMATION BULLETIN  
NUMBER 24

MAY 2000

**ARMY BENEFITS CENTER**

The Department of the Army recently announced the establishment of a centralized, automated benefits center at its Southwest Civilian Personnel Operations Center (SWCPOC), Fort Riley, Kansas. The Army Benefits Center (ABC) uses state-of-the-art technology, similar to the automated systems used by banks, colleges and health insurance carriers. The ABC will eventually provide services to ALL appropriated fund Army civilian employees.

Full services of the ABC opened to Fort Riley employees in late October 1999 and expanded to the rest of the Southwest Region (Colorado, Kansas, Nebraska, Oklahoma and Texas) in January 2000. Full services include access to personal benefit data contained in the official personnel folder, access to general benefits information, and ability to electronically change benefit enrollments using the web or touch-tone phones. Employees serviced by the remaining stateside CPOCs will receive service in scheduled intervals to be announced.

**PROGRAMS**

The ABC will provide services in the following program areas:

- Federal Employees' Health Benefits (FEHB)
- Federal Employees' Group Life Insurance (FEGLI)
- Thrift Savings Plan (TSP)
- Retirement (Civil Service Retirement System and Federal Employees' Retirement System)
- Survivor Benefits (death and dismemberment)

**ADVANTAGES**

The goal is to give Army employees a convenient self-help system that provides quality, timely customer services. The ABC will enable employees to have the necessary tools to make sound decisions and better manage their own benefits portfolio.

Some of the advantages in using the ABC are:

- It is easy. If employees have access to a computer, they have access to ABC! If employees have access to a touch-tone phone, they have access to ABC!
- It is convenient. The system is available from any location day or night, 7 days a

**CONTENTS**

|                                      |        |   |        |
|--------------------------------------|--------|---|--------|
| Army Benefits Center                 | Page 1 | Modern System Update  | Page 5 |
| Advance Leave                        | Page 2 | Social Security Retirement Planner                          | Page 5 |
| Family and Medical Leave             | Page 3 | Expansion of Military Leave for Reserves and National Guard | Page 5 |
| Resume Bloopers                      | Page 4 | Veteran's Preference for Service in Kosovo                  | Page 6 |
| Information Website                  | Page 4 | FEGLI for Part -Time Employees                              | Page 6 |
| Voluntary Separation                 | Page 5 | Thrift Savings Plan Open Season                             | Page 8 |
| Incentive Pay for Garrison Employees |        | TSP Rates of Return   | Page 8 |

- week. Employees with "full-service" can transfer to benefit counselors Monday through Friday from 0600 to 2000 hours, Central Time.
- It is reliable. Electronic transactions reduce the possibility of clerical errors. The system provides the effective date of the change. Employees can access the system 2 days later to verify that an action was processed or, if before the effective date, that an action is in the projected area. Additionally, electronic changes appear on employees' Leave and Earnings Statements (LES).
- It is fast. Employees do not need to obtain and submit most hardcopy forms. This self-help system means freedom from completing cumbersome and confusing forms.
- Help is but a phone call away. Trained counselors will provide complete, current and consistent information.

Current up-to-date information on the Army Benefits Center ABC is available at <http://www.cpol.army.mil> and [www.swcpoc.army.mil](http://www.swcpoc.army.mil).



## **ADVANCE LEAVE**

Commanders or Directors may grant advance annual and/or sick leave to civilian employees consistent with Fort Polk regulations and procedures. The amount of annual leave that may be advanced is limited to the amount of annual leave an employee would accrue in the remainder of the leave year. A maximum of 30 days of sick leave may be advanced to an employee with a medical emergency or for purposes related to the adoption of a child. A maximum of 5

days of sick leave may be advanced for family care or bereavement purposes. Employees do not have an entitlement to advance leave.

An employee submits a request for advance leave on FP Form 197-E, to his or her first line supervisor, with supporting justification and medical documentation, as appropriate. After considering the request, the supervisor will forward the request with his/her recommendation through channels to the Commander/Director of the employee's activity for approval/disapproval.

**Advance Annual Leave** In recommending to grant or deny a request for advance annual leave, the first line supervisor will consider: (1) The employee's current leave balance, the number of hours requested, and the amount of leave the employee will earn by the end of the leave year. (2) History of the employee's leave usage. (3) The reason for the requested leave. (4) The impact of the absence on the mission. (5) The employee's status (temporary limited, term, probationer, retiring, etc.). All accrued annual leave must be exhausted before annual leave is advanced.

**Advance Sick Leave** In recommending to grant or deny the request for advance sick leave, the first line supervisor will consider: (1) The adequacy of the medical documentation; (2) The sick leave balance; (3) The employee's past work history and attendance record; and (4) The employee's status (temporary limited, term, probationary, retiring, etc.)

Before a request for advance sick leave may be granted: (1) All available accumulated sick leave must be exhausted, (2) The request must be supported by medical certification signed by a medical doctor, which clearly states the period of time the employee is expected to be incapacitated from duty and

the nature of the illness or injury, (3) There must be a reasonable assurance that the employee will return to duty.

The request will then be forwarded through channels to the Director/Commander of the employee's activity. Such advance leave will be granted with care and discretion, and will be dependent upon circumstances surrounding the request as well as the recommendations of the employee's supervisor, the employee's past work history, and his attendance record.

Specific procedures are outlined in JRTC & FP Reg 690-20.

For further information, contact your Personnel Advisor at 531-4020.



## **FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE**

1. The Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 (FMLA) (Public Law 103-3, 5 February 1993) provides an eligible Federal employee with a total of 12 administrative workweeks of unpaid leave (although the employee may choose to substitute paid leave) during any 12-month period for: (a) the birth of a son or daughter and care of the newborn; (b) the placement of a child with the employee for adoption or foster care; (c) the care of the employee's spouse, son or daughter, or parent with a serious health condition; or (d) a serious health condition of the employee that makes the employee unable to perform the essential functions of his or her position. The initial final regulations for FMLA were effective on 6 January 1997.

2. Because of many questions and concerns regarding FMLA, OPM published proposed regulatory changes on 13 August 1998. After

receiving comments, the latest changes were finalized and published on 8 May 2000. A summary of the changes/clarifications made are presented below:

a. An employee must invoke his or her entitlement to family and medical leave. An employee may not retroactively invoke the entitlement. However, if an employee and his or her personal representative are physically or mentally incapable of invoking the employee's entitlement during the entire period the employee is absent from work for an FMLA-qualifying purpose, the employee may retroactively invoke his or her entitlement within 2 workdays after returning to work. In such cases, the incapacity of the employee must be documented by written medical certification from a health care provider. The employee must also provide documentation acceptable to the agency of why the representative was unable to contact the agency on behalf of the employee.

b. Holidays that occur during the period in which the employee is on family and medical leave may not be counted toward the 12-week entitlement.

c. An agency may not put an employee on family and medical leave and may not subtract leave from an employee's family and medical leave entitlement unless the agency has obtained confirmation from the employee that it his or her intent to invoke entitlement to leave.

d. Employees must provide required written medical certification, signed by a healthcare provider, no later than 15 calendar days after the date the agency requests such medical certification. If it is not practicable under particular circumstances to provide the requested documentation, and the employee has made diligent, good faith efforts to comply, the employee must provide the information within a reasonable period

of time under the circumstances involved, but no later than 30 calendar days after the date the agency requested the information.

e. At its own expense, an agency may require subsequent medical recertification on a periodic basis, but no more than once every 30 calendar days, for leave taken for purposes relating to pregnancy, chronic conditions, or long-term conditions.

f. Employees who do not comply with notification requirements or provide medical certification signed by the health care provider are not entitled to medical and family leave.

For further information, contact your Personnel Advisor at 531-4020



## RESUME BLOOPERS

Personnel expert and author, Robert Half, advises job seekers to carefully proofread resumes before sending them to prospective employers-making sure they don't give too much information.

Here are some examples he has collected over the past 40 years:

"I am loyal to my employer at all costs... Please feel free to respond to my resume on my office voice mail."

"Finished eighth in my high school graduating class of ten."

"Suspected to graduate early next year."

"Accomplishments: Oversight of entire department."

"Proven ability to track down and correct errors."

"Have had littel luck in finding a new and challenging position."

"Qualifications: No education or experience."

SOURCE: Accountemps, February 8, 1995 press release.



## INFORMATION WEBSITE

1. There is a website that provides FREE Federal handbooks, tons of other FREE information, and newsletters. The address is [www.fedamerica.com](http://www.fedamerica.com).

It allows federal employees to find all of their pay and benefits information in one place. In addition to everything you will need to know about such areas as pay, retirement, leave, health and life insurance, travel and employment. It currently has 12 FREE handbooks available for downloading, printing and/or online viewing. These books include:

- CSRS and FERS Retirement Guide
- 2000 Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB)
- Federal Employees Group Life Insurance (FEGLI)
- Tax Retirement Planning Guide
- Pay Manual
- People with Disabilities in the Federal Government
- Competing for Federal Jobs
- FEHB and Medicare Handbook
- TRICARE Handbook
- Veteran's Guide to Employment in the Federal Government
- Guide to Dealing with Workplace Violence

2. Like FEDWeek, employees can also sign up for two free email newsletters.

## **VOLUNTARY SEPARATION INCENTIVE PAY FOR GARRISON EMPLOYEES**

Civilian Personnel Bulletin 12-00, dated 15 May 00 announced an opportunity for Garrison Employees to apply for Voluntary Separation Incentive Pay (VSIP) during the period 15 May 00 through 15 Jun 00. The Bulletin details the reason, eligibility criteria, amount of payment, application window, approval process, separation agreements, restrictions on reemployment, and application procedures. It is important to note that the payments will be authorized subject to the availability of funding. A copy of the Bulletin will be distributed to each employee and will be available on the CPAC Web Page. The administration of this round of VSIPS will be a particular challenge for the CPAC and CPOC as we also assist you with development of MEO's and deploy a new automated system during the same period, with limited resources. We encourage all eligible employees who are interested, to apply and we also solicit their cooperation and patience as we strive to get everything accomplished. We are committed to providing employees as much information as soon as we can so that they can make informed decisions.



## **MODERN SYSTEM UPDATE**

We have been advised that our Modern System Training has been put on hold pending receipt of training materials for the preplanned data systems upgrades. The delay is expected to last approximately two weeks. Regrettably, we will be impacted by the delay. It will mean that we will have to revise our training schedule. As of now, we

have not been advised of the revised training date. Until we are advised differently, other than the training schedule, the milestones we set forth are still good. We will advise as developments occur.



## **SOCIAL SECURITY RETIREMENT PLANNER**

The Social Security Administration has recently added a link to their homepage that provides an on-line retirement planning site. The Retirement Planner page allows individuals to compute estimates of their future Social Security retirement by using two on-line calculators. Individuals can also download a calculator for use on their own personal computer. The page provides useful information on factors affecting Social Security retirement benefits such as military service and Federal employment. The site is easy to use and provides a wealth of information on Social Security benefits. You can access the Retirement Planner at <http://www.ssa.gov/retire>. Soon there will be a link from the CPAC web site.



## **EXPANSION OF MILITARY LEAVE FOR RESERVES AND NATIONAL GUARD**

Public Law (PL) 106-65, National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2000 was signed October 5, 1999. Section 1106 expands the use of military leave for inactive duty training to federal civilian employees serving in the Reserves or National Guard. Prior to the authorization of PL 106-65, employees called to inactive duty training were required to use annual leave,

compensatory time earned, credit hours earned or leave without pay (LWOP). 5 U.S. 6323 (a) (1) is amended to permit an employee to use their entitlement to 15 days of military leave to include inactive duty training. An employee is entitled to military leave without loss of pay, time, or performance or efficiency rating for active duty training, inactive duty training, or engaging in field or coast defense training. This change does not impact time and attendance systems. Active and inactive duty training will be input into the time and attendance system using the leave code for military duty.



### **VETERAN'S PREFERENCE FOR SERVICE IN KOSOVO**

President Clinton issued Executive Order 13154 on May 3, 2000, establishing the Kosovo Campaign Medal. The Campaign Medal will be awarded to Members of the Armed Forces for service in Kosovo or its contiguous waters or airspace after March 24, 1999, and before a terminal date yet to be set by the Secretary of Defense. The Secretaries of each of the military departments will decide who is eligible to receive the medal.

Recipients of a campaign medal are eligible for veterans' preference if they served for at least 24 months and were released from active duty under honorable conditions. Reservists are eligible if they were released under honorable conditions for the full period for which ordered or called to active duty. Veterans with compensable service-connected disabilities, or those who were discharged or released from active duty are exempt from the minimum service requirement for:

- a disability incurred or aggravated in line of duty, or

- for hardship or other reasons under 10 U.S.C. 1171 or 1173.

Please note that the Executive order specifies that "any such member may be awarded the Kosovo Campaign Medal in lieu of the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal (AFEM), or the Armed Forces Service Medal, but no person may be awarded more than one of these three medals by reason of service in Kosovo..." The Department of the Army informed us that the Campaign Medal was awarded *instead* of an AFEM, and that no AFEM will be awarded for Kosovo.

Employees who wish to claim veterans' preference or to claim service credit based on their service in this campaign should submit the appropriate documentation showing the award of the campaign medal to their personnel office.



### **FEDERAL EMPLOYEES GROUP LIFE INSURANCE (FEGLI) FOR PART-TIME EMPLOYEES**

On 9 February 1999, a memorandum was issued by the Defense Finance Advisory Service (DFAS) which served as notification of certain underpayments involving the calculations of FEGLI for part-time employees. The memorandum further stated that it had been discovered that the calculation used by the DCPS for the computation of FEGLI deductions for part-time employees was in error. FEGLI deductions for part-time employees should be based on the employees' scheduled tour of duty. However, when DCPS was originally developed, the computation was based on an Office of Personnel Management (OPM) proposed rule published in the Federal Register on October 14, 1988, that stated

deductions should be computed on actual hours of work. OPM subsequently withdrew the proposed rule on October 24, 1991, but the system design was not modified. Therefore, part-time employees having FEGLI coverage whose hours worked were greater than their tour of duty have had their contributions over-withheld, and are due a refund.

The DCPS was modified effective 7 November 1999, to withhold FEGLI deductions by using the part-time scheduled tour of duty hours instead of the actual hours of work.

DFAS has issued another memorandum dated 24 March 2000, which provides instructions for processing of claims which may result from part-time employees having FEGLI coverage whose hours worked were greater than their tour of duty, who had their contributions over-withheld, and are due a refund. These instructions are as follows:

#### EMPLOYEE NOTIFICATION

Each employee must submit a claim in order to receive payment. If claims are submitted without the specified documentation, the payroll office will return them. It is not necessary for civilian payroll offices to provide individual notification to employees.

#### EMPLOYEES COVERED

Employees covered are those employees occupying part-time positions, paid from appropriated funds through the Defense Civilian Pay System (DCPS) that worked hours different from their normal tour of duty.

The retroactive entitlement applies to current, transferred, and separated employees. Separated employees may contact their former employing activity's personnel office or their former Customer

Service Representative (CSR) for information regarding the preparation of a claim.

#### CLAIM FORMS

A copy of the claim form may be obtained from the Civilian Personnel Advisory Center (CPAC) or a DFAS Customer Service Representative (CSR).

Employees should complete the claim form and submit it with all supporting documentation to their servicing civilian payroll office. The DFAS payroll office will manually calculate the retroactive differences in FEGLI withholdings.

#### SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Supporting documentation must be provided for each pay period that the entitlement exists. Employees may provide copies of their Leave and Earnings Statements (LES), or if not available, copies of Time and Attendance (T&A) records maintained by supervisors and/or timekeepers, and Standard Form 50s to support the claim.

#### CLAIM PERIOD COVERED

Based on the Statute of Limitations, a claim may be filed for a period of up to six years. The payment consideration period will end the date the claim is filed and be for a period of 6 years prior to that date. Effective November 7, 1999, DCPS automatically recalculated those pay periods maintained online. The claim period will cover retroactive periods prior to that date.

| <u>CATEGORY</u>  | <u>CLAIM PERIOD</u> |
|--|---------------------|
| Educators Employed by DoDEA                                  | 2-28-98 and prior   |
| Overseas Employees receiving Living Quarters Allowance (LQA) | 6-06-98 and prior   |
| All Other Employees  | 10-24-98 and prior  |

#### CALCULATIONS AND DEDUCTIONS

Claims will be calculated by comparing the FEGLI amounts withheld, which is derived

by using the actual part time hours worked, to amounts calculated based on the scheduled part time hours set in the tour of duty. Basic life insurance and Option B-Additional life insurance will be affected by the calculations. Taxable income and taxes will not be affected.

**APPROPRIATIONS**

Since the over or under-withholdings have been forwarded to the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), funds to satisfy individual employee claims will be obtained from the OPM receipt account. For further information, contact the Fort Polk CSR, Ms. Jackie Rubar, at 531-8757.



**THRIFT SAVINGS PLAN**  
**OPEN SEASON**

The next Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) open season begins 15 May 2000 and ends 31 Jul 2000. During open season, employees can begin to contribute, increase/decrease the amount of employee contributions, and/or change their future fund allocations. The details are set forth in Civilian Personnel Bulletin No. 11-00 dated 8 May 2000.

**TSP RATES OF RETURN**

Rates of Return as of May 8, 2000.

The monthly C, F, and G Fund returns represent the actual total rates of return used in the monthly allocation of earnings to participant accounts. The returns are shown after deduction of accrued TSP administrative expenses. The C and F Fund returns also reflect the deduction of trading costs and accrued investment management fees. The most current C, F, and G Fund

rates of return are shown below. Percentages in ( ) are negative. RETURNS ARE UPDATED AFTER THE MONTHLY ALLOCATION OF EARNINGS, USUALLY BY THE 7TH BUSINESS DAY OF THE MONTH.

|   | <u>C Fund</u> | <u>F Fund</u> | <u>G Fund</u> |
|---|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| April 2000                                  | (2.98%)       | (0.29%)       | 0.52%         |
| <u>Last 12 Months*</u><br>(5/1999 - 4/2000) | 9.99%         | 1.27%         | 6.43%         |

\*The C, F, and G Fund returns for the last twelve months assume, except for the crediting of earnings, unchanging balances (time-weighting) from month to month and assume earnings are compounded on a monthly basis. Additional information on the TSP can be obtained by accessing the Army Civilian Personnel Online at <http://cpol.army.mil> home page, clicking on PERMISS, then click on the Master Index of topics, click on T, click on Thrift Savings Plan. For the monthly returns for the last 12 months, see the C, F, and G Fund Monthly Returns Fact Sheet. For the monthly returns from January 1988 through December 1999, see Historical Rates of Return. If you have questions about the information presented on the Rates of Return page, read Questions about Rates of Return.

**ARTICLES FOR BULLETIN**

If you have suggested topics or articles you would like addressed in future bulletins, submit them to :

Civilian Personnel Advisory Center  
7041 Radio Road,  
Fort Polk, LA 71459-5341  
ATTN: Bill R. Chance or  
Nora Fletcher

Or you can call 531-4020/4708. If at all possible, suggested topics will be addressed.

DONALD R. MALLET  
DIRECTOR, CIVILIAN PERSONNEL  
ADVISORY CENTER

