

2009: Year of the Military Family

H.CON.RES.64 urges the President to designate 2009 as the “Year of the Military Family.” This legislation—which passed the House in March with a unanimous 422-0 roll call vote—expresses the deepest appreciation to the families of America’s service members, and recognizes the contributions that military families make. The resolution also encourages the people of the United States to share in the appreciation for the sacrifice of military families.

Military Families Get Help Selling Homes When PCSing

The Army Corps of Engineers’ (USACE) Homeowners Assistance Program (HAP) has been expanded to help service members who have received PCS orders and are forced to sell their homes. The recent stimulus package included \$555 million to help individuals who meet eligibility criteria. The Department of Defense (DoD) would reimburse individuals up to 95 percent of the value lost on the home if it was purchased before July 1, 2006. The DoD also has the option to purchase the home for up to 90 percent of the fair market value. The program is also available to the widows of Defense Department civilian employees killed in the line of duty. It is modeled on an existing DoD program for civilians affected by base closures under BRAC. For more information please visit the USACE’s HAP website at www.sas.usace.army.mil/hapinv/index.html

Military Spouses Residency Relief Act

S. 475, a bill reintroduced in the new Congress—it had passed the House before the last Congress adjourned, would enable a military spouse to claim the same home state as the service member to whom they are married. Under current law, a service member can continue to claim his or her home state as their permanent state of residency for voting and tax



Photo of the Capitol Building courtesy of the Washington D.C. Convention and Visitors Association.

purposes, no matter where the military sends him or her. But the spouse does not have that same privilege and becomes a resident of the state in which they physically live.

Military Ups Leave Carry-over Policy

A new military leave policy, part of the 2008 National Defense Authorization Act, allows members to carry over 75 days rather than the previous 60 days into the next fiscal year. The policy, in place until Dec. 31, 2010, is intended to reduce the amount of lost leave caused by the current high operating tempo.

New BAH Rates

In 2009, Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH) increased an average of 6.9 percent. In those areas where BAH rates went down, a built-in rate protection ensures that no BAH recipients saw their allowances fall—their rate on Dec. 31, 2008 is guaranteed to be at least as much as what they receive in 2009. See 2009 BAH rates online at www.defensetravel.dod.mil/perdiem/bah.html

Legislation Supports Lifetime Care for Families

HR 917 would amend the TRICARE program to require that, when a member of the Armed Forces dies on or after September 11, 2001, because of a combat-related injury incurred while on active duty for a period of more than 30 days, the member’s dependents receiving benefits under a contract for medical and dental care shall continue to be eligible for benefits under TRICARE Prime. Currently, surviving spouses are subject to the same TRICARE fees as retirees after a three-year period of free health care following the service member’s death.

Tax Credit for Helping Military

H.R.1090 would amend the tax code to allow a credit for care packages provided for soldiers in combat zones and a credit for providing volunteer service to military families through the America Supports You program of the Department of Defense.

For more information, including updates on this and other legislation, visit <http://thomas.loc.gov>, where you can search by keyword or bill number.