



Fort Eustis

Civilian Personnel Advisory Center Bulletin

www.eustis.army.mil/cpac

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670 Lee Blvd, Fort Eustis, VA 23604-5096



2007 Health Benefits Open Season

The Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB), Flexible Spending Accounts (FSA) and Federal Employees Dental and Vision Insurance Program (FEDVIP) open seasons will be held 13 November 2006 to 11 December 2006. During the open season, eligible employees can enroll in FEHB, FSA or FEDVIP and make changes to their health benefits or flexible spending accounts. To enroll/change health benefits, employees must access the Army Benefits Center - Civilian website at <https://www.abc.army.mil/> or call the toll-free number at 1-877-276-9287. Information on FEHB plan rates for 2007 can be found at <http://www.opm.gov/insure/health/index.asp>. To enroll in the FSA program go to www.fsafeds.com or call their toll-free number at 1-877-372-3337. **Remember, current FSA Program participants must re-enroll to participate.** Employees may enroll in the FEDVIP on the new BENEFEDS website during open season. More details on the enrollment process will be available prior to open season. Rate and Benefits Summary for the new FEDVIP can be found at <http://www.opm.gov/insure/dentalvision/07rates.asp>.

Health Fairs

Health Benefits Fairs will be held at the following locations and dates:

Fort Eustis Health Fair	Fort Story Health Fair
Youth Services Center, Bldg 1102	Recreational Center, Bldg 720
Tuesday, 31 October 2006	Wednesday, 1 November 2006
10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.	11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Representatives from each of the FEHB providers will be on hand to answer any questions you may have concerning their health benefits plan.

Civilian Education System Pilot Courses

This is a reminder of the opportunity to be on the cutting edge of Army's Leader Development. On 29 Aug 06, an Army message solicited participation in 3 pilot courses from the new Civilian Education System (CES). The CES is Army's new and standard way of providing leadership training for civilians. These 3 pilot courses are the Basic, Intermediate and Advanced. They will all be centrally funded. Course sites will be at either the Army Management Staff College (AMSC) campus at Fort Belvoir or Fort Leavenworth. Specific information on the various courses to include the intended audience is available at the following web site - http://www.amsc.belvoir.army.mil/CES_Trifold_Web.pdf. For information on how to apply for the Basic and Intermediate Course Pilots, contact Ms. Carrie Criqui, Registrar, AMSC, Leavenworth Campus at (913) 758-3506 or DSN 585-3506. The POC for the Advanced Course is Ms. Jane Turner, Registrar, AMSC, Belvoir Campus, (703) 805-4757/56. The application process is not yet automated.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 1 2007 Health Benefits Open Season
- 1 Health Fairs
- 1 Civilian Education System Pilot Courses
- 2 Political Activity in the Federal Workplace
- 2 Voting and Excused Leave
- 3 Annual Leave-Use It-Don't Lose It
- 3 Tapes Reminder
- 3 Using Time Off Awards
- 4 Are You Ready to Submit Your Retirement Paperwork?
- 4 Post-56 Military Deposit
- 5 Benefits-Thrift Savings Plan
- 5 Hurricane Katrina-Emergency Leave Transfer Program
- 5 Feedback

Update on the Federal Employees Dental and Vision Insurance Program (FEDVIP)

During the open enrollment period of 13 November - 11 December 2006, employees will be able to elect supplemental dental and/or vision insurance benefits. Although plan brochures are not yet available, the Office of Personnel Management has a FEDVIP Homepage at <http://www.opm.gov/insure/dentalvision/> that includes information on the carriers, premiums, and a helpful FAQ section.

The FEDVIP will be administered by the "BENEFEDS Portal". Employees may now visit www.BENEFEDS.com to link to the plan websites. Beginning 13 November, employees who wish to enroll in a dental and/or vision plan will do so by accessing BENEFEDS by web or telephone.

Visit these sites often for the latest information!

Additionally, OPM has just established a toll-free FEDVIP Information Line. Employees may contact the information line at 1-866-639-3917 with questions concerning premiums, types of enrollment (self+1, self and family), life events for changes, etc. Please note that at this time, the information line cannot provide specific benefit information on the various plans. The information line is now available weekdays from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. EST. Beginning with the first day of the open enrollment period, 13 November, employees will contact the BENEFEDS Portal to elect dental and/or vision benefits, or to obtain program assistance. Additional information will be provided as soon it is received.

Below are a few basic facts on FEDVIP:

- Eligibility rules for employees and family members are the same as that for the FEHB program. If you are eligible for FEHB enrollment, you will be eligible for the FEDVIP program.
- This benefit is optional - you do not have to enroll if you do not wish to have supplemental dental and/or vision benefits. No action is required if you do not wish to have supplemental coverage.
- You may enroll in the FEDVIP even if you are not enrolled in a FEHB plan, or if you plan to cancel your FEHB coverage for next year.
- Your dental and/or vision insurance provider does not have to be the same as the FEHB plan for which you are enrolled (for example, if your FEHB enrollment is with Aetna, you do not have to elect Aetna as your dental provider.)
- You can enroll in just the dental insurance, just the vision insurance, both dental and vision (or neither of the two).
- For both the dental and vision benefits, you can elect to cover yourself only (self only), yourself plus any one eligible family member (self + 1) or yourself and all of your eligible dependents (self + family). This option works separately between the dental and vision benefits. For example, you may elect self only for the vision benefit and self plus family for the dental benefit.

Hot News!!

**Check this
OUT!**

Just In!!

Political Activity in the Federal Workplace

It's election time again, and time to review the "MAYs and MAY NOTs" for federal employees who may engage in partisan political activity.

Under the 1939 Hatch Act, federal employees faced significant restrictions on their ability to participate in political activities. In 1993, Congress amended the Hatch act to permit more political activity by federal employees. The penalties for violating the Hatch Act are very severe, up to and including removal from government service. Therefore, it is very important that employees understand these restrictions. Below is a list of permitted/prohibited activities:

Federal Employees **May**:

- Be candidates for public offices in nonpartisan elections
- Register and vote as they choose
- Assist in voter registration drives
- Express opinions about candidates and issues
- Contribute money to political organizations
- Attend political fundraising functions
- Attend and be active at political rallies and meetings
- Join and be an active member of a political party or club
- Sign nominating petitions
- Campaign for or against referendum questions, constitutional amendments and municipal ordinances
- Campaign for or against candidates in partisan elections
- Make campaign speeches for candidates in partisan elections
- Distribute campaign literature in partisan elections
- Hold office in political clubs or parties

Federal Employees **May Not**:

- Use official authority or influence to interfere with an election
- Solicit or discourage political activity of anyone with business before their agency
- Solicit or receive political contributions (may be done in certain limited situations by Federal or other employee organizations)
- Be candidates for public office in partisan elections
- Engage in political activity while on duty, in a government office, wearing an official uniform, or using a government vehicle
- Wear partisan political buttons on duty

Voting and Excused Leave

Election time always brings questions concerning granting employee's excused absence to vote. Such excused absence is limited and must be requested and approved in advance of Election Tuesday. Federal employees may be excused to report for work 3 hours after the POLLS OPEN or leave work 3 hours BEFORE the POLLS CLOSE, whichever results in the LESSER amount of TIME OFF. For example, the polls are open from 6:00 a.m. (0600 hours) to 7:00 p.m. (1900 hours). The employee's tour of duty begins at 6:30 a.m. and ends at 3:00 p.m. The employee has 4 hours (at least 3) BEFORE the POLLS CLOSE to vote after the end of the tour of duty, therefore there is no basis to grant excused leave. Another example would be a tour from 8:00 a.m. (0800 hours) to 5:00 p.m. (1700 hours). The polls are open 2 hours before the beginning of the tour and 2 hours after the end of the tour. The employee could be excused 1 hour to vote, either in the morning or the afternoon, subject to approval by their supervisor. An employee working a compressed work schedule from 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. could be excused for 1 hour in the morning to vote since excusing the employee in the morning requires the LESSER amount of TIME OFF.



Annual Leave - Use It – Don't Lose It

Civilian employees normally forfeit unused annual leave in excess of 240 hours at the end of the leave year.

Leave Year Beginning and Ending Dates

A leave year begins on the first day of the first full biweekly pay period in a calendar year. A leave year ends on the day immediately before the first day of the first full biweekly pay period in the following calendar year.

The beginning and ending dates of leave year 2006 shown below apply to **most employees**.

Leave Year	Leave Year Beginning Date	Leave Year Ending Date	Date for Scheduling "Use or Lose" Annual Leave
2006	8 Jan 2006	6 Jan 2007	6 Jan 2007



Employees may have forfeited leave restored to them if the leave was scheduled in advance with the employee subsequently being denied the opportunity to take that scheduled leave due to the exigencies of public business, a lengthy period of illness, or an administrative error. In cases of the leave being denied due to an exigency of public business, the leave must have been **scheduled/rescheduled in writing, prior to the beginning of the 3rd bi-weekly pay period before the end of the leave year (i.e., 25 November 2006).** An Office of Personnel Management (OPM) 71, Request for Leave or Approved Absence, may be used for this purpose.

As an alternative to having your “use or lose” annual leave restored, please consider donating the excess to the employees enrolled in the Voluntary Transfer of Annual Leave Program. The Administrative Point of Contact for your organization should have a list of all employees enrolled in the program. Someone will appreciate the gesture and the leave will not be wasted. Donation of use or lose leave is limited to the lesser of the following:

- One-half of the annual leave to be accrued during the leave year in which it is donated OR,
- Hours donating employee is scheduled to **work and receive pay** (not on leave) in the remainder of the leave year.

Questions concerning the restoration of forfeited leave should be addressed to the CPAC Human Resources Specialist assigned to your organization.

TAPES Reminder

The GS/WS 9-12 performance appraisal cycle ends 31 October 2006, and evaluation reports are due at the CPAC by 15 December 2006. Only one copy of the DA Form 7222 and DA Form 7222-1 are required to be submitted for the official record. The employee copy and official record copy should not contain any award data. Award nominations should be submitted by making an extra copy of the Evaluation Form, DA Form 7222.

Using Time Off Awards

Time Off awards must be scheduled and used within one year of the approval date. Unless an employee is given a copy of the DA Form 1256 or informed of the date a TOA was approved, the employee has no way of knowing when the one-year count down begins. Supervisors should ensure that employees schedule and use the time off award. The Defense Civilian Pay System (DCPS) automatically forfeits time off awards on the first day of the biweekly pay period in which the one-year anniversary day falls. For example, a time off award approved on 14 December 2005 must be used by 9 December 2006 or be forfeited. The last day of the pay period before the one-year anniversary date is 9 December 2006. The pay period beginning 10 December 2006 includes the anniversary approval date of 14 December. The employee could not use the TOA on 12 December because the award is automatically forfeited on 10 December 2006. There is no provision for restoring time off awards.

Are You Ready To Submit Your Retirement Paperwork?

About six months to one year before your retirement date, call the ABC-C and ask for a retirement estimate. You may also obtain your retirement estimate through either the ABC-C's web or phone systems. However, if any of the following items pertain to your service history, please contact an ABC-C counselor to prepare your retirement estimate: Part-time work schedule (current or past); NAF service; elected to transfer to FERS; taken a refund of retirement contributions for a past period of service; not paid a deposit for Post 56 military service, or if you have not paid a deposit for a period of nondeduction (temporary) service.

The retirement package forms can be obtained from the ABC-C web site at <https://www.abc.army.mil/Information/ABCRetirement/Forms/Forms.asp> or on the Office of Personnel Management's web site at <http://www.opm.gov>. You can also call the ABC-C and obtain the forms by selecting the option to request forms by fax. We recommend that you complete the forms to the best of your ability. If you have questions or concerns regarding your forms, contact Karri Dobson (757-878-1368) at the Civilian Personnel Advisory Center, Fort Eustis, VA or an ABC-C counselor for assistance.

Employees are strongly encouraged to mail the application package to the ABC-C within 90-120 days in advance of the retirement date. This will ensure timely receipt of your first annuity payment. Make a copy of your package for your records, and then send to:

United States Army Civilian Human Resources Agency (USACHRA)
Southwest Region Operations Center
Army Benefits Center-Civilian
301 Marshall Avenue
Fort Riley, KS 66442-5004

Notify your supervisor of your intended retirement date and ask that he/she initiate a Request for Personnel Action (RPA). Your supervisor will need to complete a RPA for retirement and submit electronically to the ABC-C.

If you need to speak with a benefits counselor when completing the retirement package or at any time during the retirement process, call the ABC-C toll-free at 1-877-276-9287, Monday through Friday, from 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. (Central Time) (except on Federal holidays).

Post-56 Military Deposit

Some periods of military service may be creditable for retirement if you make a deposit for the service. In order to begin the process, you must submit an application and supporting documentation to the ABC-C. The application will vary depending on your retirement coverage.

The first step is to obtain your estimated earnings by completing a RI 20-97, *Estimated Earnings During Military Service*, and mail it along with copies of your DD 214 Forms to the appropriate military finance center. The form, as well as a listing of the military finance centers, is located at <https://www.abc.army.mil>. The completed form or letter showing your estimated earnings will be completed by the finance center and returned to you.

Once you receive your estimated earnings, you should complete the personal information on the SF 2803, *Application to Make Deposit or Redeposit (CSRS)*, or SF 3108, *Application to Make Service Credit Payment (FERS)*, as applicable. Then, submit the estimated earnings, SF 2803 or SF 3108, and all your DD 214s to ABC-C. ABC-C will estimate the amount of the deposit and send the information to the Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS). DFAS will contact you to begin making payments on your military deposit.

Additional information and forms can be found at the ABC-C website, <https://www.abc.army.mil>.



Benefits-Thrift Savings Plan

For 2006, the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) annual limit on elective deferrals for Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) contributions is \$15,000. You are strongly encouraged to check your TSP year-to-date contributions under the "Deductions" section of your Leave and Earnings Statement (LES) to ensure that your contributions do not exceed the limit prior to the end of the pay year. When the maximum contribution limit is reached, your employee contributions will be suspended for the remainder of the year. If you are a FERS employee, your agency matching contributions will also be suspended. (Employees over 50 years of age will still be able to continue participation in the TSP Catch-up program even if the regular employee contributions exceed \$15,000.)



If you are under FERS, it is very important for you to ensure that you are making employee contributions throughout the entire year in order to avoid losing agency matching contributions. You may change your contribution election at any time via the ABC-C systems. The TSP Fact Sheet entitled "Annual Limits on Elective Deferrals" describes in detail the elective deferral limits and especially how it affects TSP contributions of FERS employees. You may view the TSP Fact Sheet entitled "Annual Limits on Elective Deferrals" at the following link <http://www.tsp.gov/forms/oc91-13w.pdf>. Additional information is available on line at <https://www.abc.army.mil/>. If you have questions, please contact a counselor at the Army Benefits Center - Civilian toll-free at 1-877-276-9287. Numbers for our overseas and/or hearing impaired customers can be found at <https://www.abc.army.mil/Information/ABCGeneral/Information/ABCMenu.htm>.

Hurricane Katrina-Emergency Leave Transfer Program

The Director, Office of Personnel Management (OPM), issued a memorandum dated September 14, 2006 announcing a Government wide program to coordinate the interagency transfer of annual leave donated under the Hurricane Katrina Emergency Leave Transfer Program (ELTP) and requesting that all employees be notified of the current urgent need for donated annual leave for affected employees. A copy of the memo is available on OPM's web site at <http://www.opm.gov/oca/compmemo/2006/2006-08.asp>.

Employees interested in donating annual leave to the program should complete OPM Form 1638, Request to Donate Annual Leave Under the Emergency Leave Transfer Program, available at http://www.opm.gov/Forms/pdf_fill/opm1638.pdf. The information requested on the form is self-explanatory except **block 8**, where donors should enter "**Hurricane Katrina.**" Donors may only donate annual leave. An emergency leave donor may donate a minimum of 1 hour of annual and a maximum of 104 hours of annual leave. Agencies may waive the 104-hour limitation if sufficient annual leave is not donated. An emergency leave donor may NOT donate annual leave for transfer to a specific emergency leave recipient. **Leave donation forms must be submitted to the Civilian Personnel Advisory Center.**

For additional information, contact your servicing Human Resources Specialist in the Fort Eustis CPAC.

Feedback

This bulletin is designed to inform employees and supervisors of new civilian human resources issues and refresh their knowledge of existing policies and procedures.

We welcome your [feedback](#); contact your servicing Human Resources Specialist.

The bulletin is available on our web page, <http://www.eustis.army.mil/cpac> Request you print and post on Bulletin Boards throughout your organization for those employees who do not have access to our web page.

