



Fort Eustis CPAC Civilian Personnel Advisory Center Bulletin

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2011 BENEFITS OPEN SEASON

The next Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB), Flexible Spending Accounts (FSA) and Federal employees Dental and Vision Insurance Program (FEDVIP) Open Seasons will be held 8 November 2010 to 13 December 2010. 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 (ABC-C) website at <https://www.abc.army.mil> or call the toll-free number at 1-877-276-9287. Information on FEHB plan rates for 2011 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 BENEFEDS website (<https://www.benefeds.com>) during open season. Rate and Benefits Summary for the FEDVIP can be found at <http://www.opm.gov/insure/dental/index.asp> and <http://www.opm.gov/insure/vision/index.asp>.



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FORT EUSTIS HEALTH BENEFITS FAIR

The Fort Eustis Health Benefits Fair will be held at the Fort Eustis U.S. Army Transportation Museum Auditorium (Building 300) on Tuesday, 9 November 2010, from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 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.





FSAFEDS & HEALTHCARE REFORM LEGISLATION – HOW HEALTHCARE FLEXIBLE SPENDING ACCOUNTS (FSAs) WILL CHANGE AS A RESULT OF THE HEALTHCARE REFORM LEGISLATION



Beginning January 1, 2011, currently eligible over-the-counter (OTC) products that are medicines or drugs (e.g., acne treatments, allergy and cold medicines, antacids, etc.) will not be eligible for reimbursement from your Health Care FSA – unless, you have a prescription for that item written by your physician. The only exception is insulin – which will not require a prescription from January 1, 2011 forward. Other currently eligible OTC items that are not medicines or drugs, such as bandages and nasal strips, will not require a prescription. Dependent Care Flexible Spending Accounts (DCFSA) are not impacted by the Healthcare Reform Legislation.

Source: FSAFEDS, online <https://www.fsafeds.com/fsafeds/news.asp#OTCChanges>

VOTING AND EXCUSED LEAVE

Generally, where the polls are not open at least 3 hours either before or after an employee's regular work hours, an agency may grant a limited amount of excused absence that will permit the employee to report for work 3 hours after the polls open or leave from work 3 hours before the polls close, **whichever requires the lesser amount of time off**. An employee's regular work hours should be determined by reference to the time of the day the employee normally arrives at and departs from work. Employees on **flexible work schedules** can be excused only for those hours that cannot be accommodated by their flexi-time schedule. Normally, where the polls are open either three hours before or three hours after the employee's regularly scheduled duty hours, no time off is granted. This is the case in most jurisdictions.



Virginia polling hours begin at 6:00 a.m. and close at 7:00 p.m. **Examples:** If an employee's working hours are 8:00 a.m. until 4:30 p.m., that employee could be granted 30 minutes of excused absence (from 4:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.), which would allow the 3 hours before the polls close. That would be the lesser amount of time off. If an employee's working hours are 9:00 a.m. until 5:30 p.m., the employee would not be entitled to excused absence because he/she would have 3 full hours when the polls open before reporting to duty. However, the granting of limited amounts of excused absence is always at the discretion of the supervisor.



POLITICAL ACTIVITY IN THE FEDERAL WORKPLACE

The primaries and midterm November elections are quickly approaching. As government employees, we have to be cautious with our political activity. The law that governs a federal employee's involvement in political activities is the Hatch Act of 1939. 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

More detailed information about the Hatch Act and federal employee political activities can be found at this website: http://www.osc.gov/documents/hatchact/post_ha1.pdf.



PLANNING TO RETIRE SOON?

If you are planning to retire soon, please note that the Army Benefits Center-Civilian (ABC-C) strongly recommends that you submit your retirement application package to ABC-C within 120 days of your intended retirement date.



Your early submission will help to ensure a timely receipt of your first annuity payment from the Office of Personnel Management. If you submit your retirement package to the ABC-C with less than 60 days notice, you should be financially prepared for a delay in the receipt of your first annuity payment.

Although there are circumstances that may cause a delay in an employee's application submission, the ABC-C strives to complete all packages expeditiously. However, employees are encouraged to follow the ABC-C's 120-day recommendation whenever possible to help achieve a smooth financial transition into retirement.

For more information on retirement, visit the ABC-C web site at <https://www.abc.army.mil>.

NSPS TRANSITION BY THE NUMBERS



As of the pay period beginning August 29, 2010, 135,568 employees have transitioned out of the National Security Personnel System (NSPS). Data can be found online at: <http://www.cpms.osd.mil/nsps/docs/TransitionStatus08Sep2010.pdf> .

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. The CPAC uses the Interactive Customer Evaluation (ICE) and we would appreciate you taking the time to rate us and provide feedback on the service you receive from our office. Just click on the following website: http://ice.disa.mil/index.cfm?fa=site&site_id=439