



Legislative Update

AUSN Joins Senate Veterans Jobs Caucus

Yesterday AUSN became a signatory to a [letter by Senator Joe Manchin III \(D-WV\)](#) which is being sent to all members of the Senate. The letter invites members to Join the Senate Veterans Jobs Caucus and take a number of steps to improve the unemployment situation of our Veterans.

- 857,000 Veterans do not have jobs
- 20%+ of women veterans, post 9-11 do not have jobs.

This issue is one reason why AUSN is a partner with VetJobs.

Congressional Budget Office releases deficit forecast

- The CBO reported on 1 February that for the fourth year in a row the national deficit exceeded one trillion dollars, more than they forecast just last August.
- Debt service alone is approaching the cost of the Medicaid program.
- CBO forecasts that if Congress bypasses the required \$1.2T in cuts agreed to in the Budget Control Act (sequestration), and extends the Bush tax cuts, \$4.7T more will be added to the national debt in the next four years.

President's 2013 budget to go to Congress on 13 February

Navy to do reasonably well but expected cuts include:

- Retire seven cruisers early.
- Delay SSBN(X) by two years.
- Retire two LSDs early and delay replacements
- LCS build two fewer over the next five years, one from each builder.
- Build only one Virginia Class boat in 2014.
- Slip LHA class one year.

As usual the fix to budget numbers in the shipbuilding program is, retire them early and fix things in the out years. This allows new technology to be built and infused into the fleet while meeting budget restrictions. Probably a good decision on Navy's part but early retirements and delayed replacements means that 313 ship floor is unattainable.

Secretary Panetta says "increase TRICARE fees"

As predicted, and as President Reagan was fond of saying, "there you go again."

- DoD calling for TRICARE for Life enrollment fees.
- DoD says Congressional capping of TRICARE Prime fee increases at no more than the percentage increase in COLA for retirees, not good enough- will ask for bigger increase in fees in 2013 and beyond.
- Free medical care for those serving and their families to remain untouched.

This is not unexpected and we encourage you to use our [CAPWIZ system](#) to let Congress know your feelings. This will be a tough fight this year as always and requires all hands on deck to preserve your EARNED benefits.

This presents what we see as an interesting dichotomy for the White House. President and Mrs. Obama have done a great deal to support our Veterans, particularly through increased VA funding and a focus on the jobless veteran. Yet we are about to see a Presidential budget for 2013 which seeks to 'fix' the DoD medical costs by doing it all on the backs of the retiree, the Veteran.

And, as usual, DoD has made little or no progress on creating efficiencies within the service medical programs before just passing costs on to the retired. If you are still serving, thank you, but beware of the future. If you are retired you should be hopping mad by now.

AUSN and TMC continue to work Blue water Agent Orange issue

We encourage passage of [S.1629](#) and [H.R.3612](#) which would establish eligibility for presumptive service-connection for "blue water" Navy Vietnam-era Sailors.

AUSN and TMC work to expand USERRA rights for TSA Reservists

We encourage passage of [S.1990](#) and [H.R.3670](#) which would establish employment and reemployment rights for Transportation Security Administration workers who are members of the Guard and Reserve.

The two issues above illustrate why the legislative activity of AUSN and sister organizations is never complete. In spite of positive progress and many 'victories,' there are always cracks and holes in existing legislation that need plugging and shoring up. That is why your support as members is so critical. As we say, in five minutes time you can easily weigh in and be heard in Congress. You can matter but only if you act.