



The purpose of this newsletter is to keep Nashville District employees informed about personnel issues, concerns, and topics. You are encouraged to review the information and disseminate to your organization. If there are particular areas of interest that you would like to see addressed in future issues, an article of general interest, or general comments, please contact John Restey at 615-736-5538 or John.G.Restey@lrn02.usace.army.mil.

Upcoming Key Dates in HR

- **1 July-31 December 2002-----Long Term Care Open Season**
- **15 October-31 December 2002----TSP Open Season**
- **1 October-30 September 2002----GS/GM-13 to GS/GM-15 Appraisals completed appraisals due NLT to HR by the 15 November 2002**
- **1 November-31 October 2002---GS/FWS/WS-1 to GS/FWS/WS-12 Appraisals completed appraisals due NLT to HR by the 16 December 2002**
- **11 November-9 December 2002---FEHB Open Season**

General News:

Panel Sets 2003 Locality Pay Rates

Federal employees would receive pay increases ranging from 4.02 % to 4.87 % in January under recommendations that will be submitted to the Bush administration and most likely adopted.

The proposed raises, endorsed by the Federal Salary Council at a meeting Tuesday, would include a 3.1 % across-the-board increase plus locality-based raises ranging from an additional 0.98 % to 2.04 %.

President Bush could ultimately reject the proposed raises, but recent history suggests that the council's recommendations will take effect in January. As part of the 2003 Treasury-Postal appropriations bill, Congress is likely to approve a 4.1 percent average pay increase for federal workers. Following a formula in federal law, Bush is then likely to set the 3.1 percent across-the-board increase and then follow the council's recommendations for the locality raises. **Taken from govexec.com by Brian Friel**

Annual Leave Carry Over

Scheduling: The 2002 leave year ends on 11 January 2003. This is a good time for employees and supervisors to review "use or lose" leave balances and ensure that all leave that would otherwise be forfeited at the end of the leave year is scheduled for use.

Carryover: Public Law 93-181 provides three conditions under which the normal rule that requires forfeiture of annual leave in excess of permissible (normally 240 hours) carryover may be waived. The conditions are:

a. Loss through administrative error. Administrative errors uncovered that had resulted in forfeiture of annual leave due to the maximum carryover rule can be corrected to permit restoration of all of the leave.

b. Exigencies of public business were of such importance as to preclude the use of scheduled annual leave and there was no reasonable alternative to the cancellation of scheduled leave. A specific beginning and ending date of the exigency must be fixed. The situation must be documented and personally approved by the local commander in accordance with local procedures. These requests must be submitted at the time of the exigency. DO NOT wait until the end of the leave year.

c. Sickness precluded the employee from using scheduled annual leave. The period of absence due to sickness must have occurred at such time late in the leave year that the annual leave could not be rescheduled.

The employee must submit a request in writing through supervisory channels to have leave restored that has been forfeited as a result of an exigency or illness. The leave must have been scheduled at least three pay periods before the end of the leave year.

Supervisors will submit the following supporting documentation to the CPAC: (1) The supervisor's written certification showing the date the leave was scheduled for use, the date the leave was approved, the date the leave was canceled and why it was not rescheduled for use and (2) a copy of the commander's approval of the exigency.

Annual leave forfeited under the conditions set forth above will be restored in a special annual leave account. Such restored special leave must be used no later than the end of the leave year ending two years after the termination of the exigency or after the sick employee returns to work.

Please contact your local CPAC for submission deadlines on leave restoration requests.

Donating to a Voluntary Leave Bank:

If the district has a Voluntary Leave Bank program in place, use or lose leave which would otherwise be forfeited may be donated to the Voluntary Leave Bank. The maximum amount of leave that may be contributed during the leave year is the lesser of:

- a. One-half of the amount of annual leave to which entitled during the leave year in which the contribution is made, or
- b. The number of hours remaining in the leave year, as of the date the contribution is made, for which the donor is scheduled to work and receive pay.

There are provisions for waiving the limitation described above; however, donating more than the limitation is not encouraged.

Donating to a Voluntary Leave Transfer Program Recipient

If there are approved leave recipients under the Voluntary Leave Transfer Program, use or lose leave may be donated to that employee. The same restrictions discussed above under the Voluntary Leave Bank apply to donations under this program.

If you have questions, please contact your Civilian Personnel Advisory Center.

Health And Benefits:

2003 Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB) Program Open Season

The Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB) Open Season for 2003 begins 11 November through 9 December 2002. You may get a head start on open season by previewing the open season guide, the health plan changes, and the new premiums. The 2003 open season web pages will be posted in late October 2002 on the FEHB website www.opm.gov/insure. The 2003 plan rates are now available for review on the website.

Thrift Savings Plan Open Season

The next Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) Open Season begins on October 15, 2002 and end December 31, 2002. During this next open season, you may begin contributing to the TSP or change the amount of your TSP contributions. During this open season, employees covered by FERS may elect to contribute to the TSP up to 13% of the basic pay they earn each pay period; employees covered by CSRS may elect to contribute up to 8% of the basic pay they earn each pay period.

To make a contribution election or change, contact the Army Benefits Center (ABC-C) through the internet website <https://www.abc.army.mil> or call the toll free number 1-877-276-9287.

If your election is completed before 1 December 2002, the earliest it may be effected will be 1 December 2002. Your leave and earnings statement will reflect this election. If your election is completed after 1 December 2002, it will become effective no later than the first full pay period after it is received. Be sure to make your elections with ABC by the open season ending date of 31 December 2002.

You may invest in any of the five TSP investment funds. To change the investment of future contributions to your TSP account, you must request a contribution allocation. To change the investment of money already in your account, you must request an interfund transfer. To request a contribution allocation or an interfund transfer, use the TSP website www.tsp.gov, the Thriftline (504) 255-8777, or form TSP 50 (Investment Allocation). You may request a contribution allocation or interfund transfer at any time. Contribution allocations are processed daily, and your contribution allocation request will generally be effective no later than 2 business days after it is received. (Interfund transfers are processed monthly after accounts have been valued; your interfund transfer request must be received by the fifteenth of the month (or, if the fifteenth is a not business day, the next business day) for the interfund transfer to be effective as of the end of the month.) Be sure to have your TSP Pin number available to make your changes.

You will find TSP information in detail in the booklet, Summary of the Thrift Savings Plan for Federal Employees. The latest version of this booklet is dated May 2001 and is available on the TSP website.

If you have additional questions about the TSP, contact your Human Resources generalist.

NEW FEGLI RATES ANNOUNCED - And New Age Bands Effective January 1, 2003

New premiums and age bands will apply in the Federal Employees' Group Life Insurance program announced OPM. The premium for Basic insurance-which provides coverage

equal to salary rounded up to the next \$1,000 plus \$2,000-will drop from 15.5 cents per biweekly pay period per \$1,000 of coverage to 15 cents.

There will be no change in Option A insurance, which provides \$10,000 of additional coverage, but premiums will be reduced slightly for Option B insurance, which provides coverage of up to five multiples of salary, starting with the age bands applying to those 45 and older. Those age 45-49 will pay 9 cents biweekly per \$1,000 of coverage rather than 10 cents, those age 50-54 will pay 14 cents rather than 15, and those age 55-59 will pay 28 cents rather than 31.

In addition, OPM is creating new age bands for Option B as well as for Option C, which provides coverage for immediate family members of up to five multiples of \$5,000 on a spouse and \$2,500 on a child. Currently under option B the cost is 70 cents biweekly per \$1,000 of coverage for all those over age 60. Under the new system, those 60-64 will pay 60 cents, those age 65-69 will pay 71 cents, those age 70-74 will pay 87 cents, those age 75-79 will pay \$1.07, and those age 80 and over will pay \$1.27. Currently under Option C all those age 70 and over pay \$3.40 per multiple biweekly.

Under the new system, that rate will apply to those age 70-74, while those age 75-79 will pay \$4.50 and those age 80 and over will pay \$6.00. OPM said the additional age bands are needed because of the increasing number of individuals with unreduced coverage under those options after age 65.

For a detailed look at the upcoming FEGLI changes, go to <http://www.fedweek.com/HotFreeNews/default.asp>. TAKEN FROM FEDWEEK.COM

Food for Thought

The early bird may get the worm, but the second mouse gets the cheese