



@USNPEOPLE WEEKLY WIRE

1.) Congress Agrees On 1.3 Percent Military Pay Raise for 2016/ 28 SEPT 15 [\[LINK\]](#)

MILITARY TIMES, Leo Shane III

House and Senate negotiators on Tuesday reached agreement on a \$612 billion defense authorization bill for fiscal 2016 that includes a 1.3 percent pay raise for service members, trims to some military benefits and a dramatic overhaul of the military retirement system.

2.) TSC, CSADD Great Lakes Hosts First-Ever Suicide Prevention, Awareness Fall Fest / 28 SEPT 15 [\[LINK\]](#)

Training Support Center Great Lakes Public Affairs Office

Throughout September Sailors have been taught the 1 Small ACT methods of support and intervention as well as re-enforced the myriad of other ways Sailors are taught to take care of their shipmates. Sailors also posted countless "I will ..." messages to social media and throughout their barracks to show how they will support their fellow Sailors.

3.) Navy Sweetens Incentives Like Child Care To Keep Its Best Sailors/ 1 OCT 15 [\[LINK\]](#)

USA TODAY, Tom Vanden Brook

Navy brass, anxious to stay ahead of a potential recruiting and retention crisis, are launching a series of initiatives aimed at keeping its best young sailors, including expanded maternity leave and child care and partnerships with industry.

4.) Maximizing College Credit for Your Service / 29 SEPT 15 [\[LINK\]](#)

MILITARY TIMES, Adam Stone

Turning experience into college credit is straightforward. The American Council on Education provides policy guidance for the Joint Services Transcript, a widely accepted document that validates a service member's military occupational experience and training. JST gives the details; ACE determines what it's all worth.

5.) 21st Century Sailor bi-weekly roll-up:

Every other week, we roll up the latest news from the 21st Century Sailor office. Below are the latest:

- Resiliency Retreats Improve Relationships [\[LINK\]](#)
- Controlling What You Own: Seeking Out Chaplain Support [\[LINK\]](#)
- Lifelink Newsletter September [\[LINK\]](#)
- One-Small Act N17 Interview and Photo gallery Recap [\[LINK\]](#)

To sign up for the @USNPeople Weekly Wire, email usnpeople@gmail.com,
or find it online at www.navy.mil/cnp

1.) Congress Agrees On 1.3 Percent Military Pay Raise for 2016/ 28 SEPT 15 [\[LINK\]](#)

MILITARY TIMES, Leo Shane III

House and Senate negotiators on Tuesday reached agreement on a \$612 billion defense authorization bill for fiscal 2016 that includes a 1.3 percent pay raise for service members, trims to some military benefits and a dramatic overhaul of the military retirement system.

The proposal also includes language requiring military facility commanders to develop individual policies for troops carrying firearms on base, in response to the mass shooting in Chattanooga, Tennessee, in July that killed five service members.

The measure also includes outlines for an extra \$38 billion in overseas contingency funds to help the Defense Department get around mandatory spending caps for the new fiscal year that begins Thursday — a move that has prompted threats of a White House veto of the bill.

Retirement overhaul: Bigger matches, lump-sum payouts

As lawmakers unveiled the deal's details Tuesday, Pentagon spokesman Peter Cook said Defense Secretary Ash Carter will still recommend a veto of the legislation.

House Armed Services Committee Chairman Mac Thornberry, R-Texas, called those threats foolish. "We need a defense authorization act now," he said. "We need to show our troops and the world that our institutions can function properly and that we're ready to stand up and defend our nation."

Thornberry said the compromise measure will be brought to a full House vote on Thursday. But the measure still faces significant Democratic opposition in both chambers.

Senate Armed Services Committee Ranking Member Jack Reed, D-R.I., said he will not vote for the final compromise bill because of concerns about the war funding workaround. But he would not say whether he thought chamber Democrats would prevent any vote on the measure, sparing President Obama from the possibility of vetoing a measure packed with military benefits and reforms.

Obama has threatened to veto each of the last six annual defense authorization bills of his presidency over a series of policy and budget fights, but eventually signed all of them into law.

The military retirement overhaul would replace the current 20-year, all-or-nothing retirement with a "blended" compensation system featuring a 401(k)-style investment plan that promises all future troops will leave the service with some money for retirement, even if they don't serve 20 years.

Military advocates praised that reform as a boost for the 83 percent of troops who leave service with no retirement benefits. But they had hoped for a larger pay raise than the 1.3 percent backed by Pentagon officials, arguing that figure fails to keep up with the rate of growth in private-sector wages.

Defense Department planners had insisted the lower-than-anticipated pay raise is needed to help pay for other training and modernization initiatives, and to keep personnel costs from overwhelming the budget.

They argued the same for other benefits trims included in the measure.

Under the authorization plan, growth in the Basic Allowance for Housing would be reduced steadily in coming years to cover only 95 percent of troops' average off-base housing costs. Also, Tricare co-pays would be increased next year for individuals filling prescriptions at off-base pharmacies.

The measure also includes language prohibiting the Defense Department from closing detention facilities at Naval Station Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, provisions to supply defensive weapons to Ukrainian fighters battling Russian separatists, and new Pentagon acquisition reforms.

Lawmakers also added language allowing commanders to develop their own policies for both personal and military firearms on base for self-defense, in accordance with local laws. Thornberry said the goal is to get rid of the military's current "one size fits all" approach in favor for a smarter, more practical policy for individual facilities.

No timetable has been set for a Senate vote on the compromise bill. In recent years, the authorization bill typically has not reached the president's desk for signature until December.

2.) TSC, CSADD Great Lakes Hosts First-Ever Suicide Prevention, Awareness Fall Fest / 28 SEPT 15 [LINK](#)

Training Support Center Great Lakes Public Affairs Office

GREAT LAKES, Ill. (NNS) -- Smoke billowed across the open parking lot long before the first students arrived for the first-ever Training Support Center (TSC) and Coalition for Sailors Against Destructive Decisions (CSADD) Great Lakes Suicide Prevention and Awareness Fall Fest, Sept. 24.

Sailors were busy putting a sear on their culinary creations and locking in that deep smoky flavor in hopes of being named the top taste of the event.

The unmistakable smell of a cookout was the dinner bell that brought the TSC staff and Sailors to the parking lot, but it was the celebration of a month-long focus on suicide prevention and awareness that was the real reason for this gathering.

Throughout September Sailors have been taught the 1Small ACT method of support and intervention as well as re-enforced the myriad of other ways Sailors are taught to take care of their shipmates. Sailors also posted countless "I will ..." messages to social media and throughout their barracks to show how they will support their fellow Sailors.

Suicide prevention and awareness is an everyday concern but extra emphasis being placed during Suicide Prevention and Awareness Month (September) as Sailors both new and seasoned are able to emphasize the need to take look out for their fellow shipmates.

"We speak to the Sailors about the fact that we are a community so events like this give the Sailors a chance to come out and, in an informal manner, enjoy each other's company as well as enjoying food and just stop and relax," said Lt. Adrienne Townsend, TSC deputy chaplain and suicide prevention coordinator.

In addition to the food, Sailors also created flags that signified their ship as well as a message of support for their fellow Sailors. The friendly competition helped the creative side of each ship show through.

"Events like this encourage people to be able to step outside of themselves and allow them to be able to have positive interactions with life in general," Townsend said.

The food competition was won by the USS Wisconsin (BEQ 831). The USS New Jersey (BEQ 838) won for best flag. Additionally, there was an inflatable obstacle course, Pugil stick bouts and a pie in the face contest during Fall Fest.

Sailors were able to enjoy the festivities and a smorgasbord of food as well as get to know their shipmates outside of the classroom and barracks all in the name of preventing suicide.

"If you need help, ask for help and if you see somebody that needs help, put your bystander intervention hats on and put that somebody in the direction where they can get the proper help that they need," TSC Commanding Officer Capt. John B. Vliet reminded the Sailors. "That's what we do as a family is we take care of each other."

For more news from Training Support Center, Great Lakes, visit www.navy.mil/local/tscgl/.

3.) Navy Sweetens Incentives Like Child Care To Keep Its Best Sailors/ 1 OCT 15 [\[LINK\]](#)

USA TODAY, Tom Vanden Brook

WASHINGTON — Navy brass, anxious to stay ahead of a potential recruiting and retention crisis, are launching a series of initiatives aimed at keeping its best young sailors, including expanded maternity leave and child care and partnerships with industry.

The initial sign of a military recruiting problem — the Army's struggle this year to meet its annual goal of new soldiers — has attracted the attention of top officials at the Pentagon. An improving economy tends to shrink the pool of candidates for military service.

"Since the inception of the all-volunteer force, a strong economy and low unemployment have always been our biggest competitors for attracting and keeping great sailors," Vice Adm. Bill Moran, the Navy's top officer for personnel, said in a statement.

The Navy's response includes: beefed-up programs for maternity leave, child care and education and mid-career internships with industry.

The Navy's programs mirror a broader trend at the Pentagon to modernize its compensation system in order to attract and keep needed talent, said Todd Harrison, a military budget expert at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, a non-partisan think tank.

"If you want to be retaining and recruiting the best and brightest, you've got to offer them a career model that is competitive to what they're being offered on outside," Harrison said.

The newest program starts Monday, sending three sailors to Amazon and two to FedEx as part of a Navy internship program with private industry. The internships last nine months, paid by the Navy, and allow sailors to learn business practices, techniques and technologies, said Lt. Cdr. Nate Christensen, a Navy spokesman.

Amazon, the online retailer, finds troops and veterans fit its culture, said Ashley Robinson, a company spokeswoman.

"Amazon values the leadership skills and problem-solving abilities that military members bring to our company," Robinson said. "We have found that those with military experiences, current and past, are leaders who can invent, think big, have a bias for action and deliver results on behalf of our customers."

For Lt. Cdr. Jared Loller, 36, a Navy pilot, the work at Amazon on a team to improve customer service "from shelf to doorstep" allows him to step away from a job on a military staff.

The private-sector experience "takes him out of my comfort zone, which is flying," Loller said. He'll return to the Navy with a different take on leadership and new problem-solving skills. Already pilot buddies are asking him how they can land a similar job, he said.

"It will go a long way toward retaining high-quality officers," Loller said.

Other Navy programs aimed at finding and keeping top sailors:

- The Navy plans to expand hours at its child-care centers in 2016, opening them earlier and closing their doors later. "This will help accommodate the needs of Navy and Marine Corps families subject to high operational tempo," Christensen said.
- The Career Intermission Program allows 40 sailors a year to take a three-year break while retaining health care and base privileges. The Navy is seeking authority from Congress to expand the program 10 times to 400 sailors per year. The program will allow them to return to school or start a family.
- Maternity leave has been expanded to 18 weeks, the highest among the armed services. The Navy is also seeking to extend the leave to fathers and for adoption.

"We are modernizing policies and retention tools that will allow commanders and the institution to see the competition coming and deal with recruiting and retention challenges when the time comes," Moran said. "The sailors we have in the Navy today are the best we've ever seen. We aim to keep it that way."

4.) Maximizing College Credit for Your Service / 29 SEPT 15 [\[LINK\]](#)

MILITARY TIMES, Adam Stone

Former Army Sgt. Michael Harrington's time in service earned him more than a steady paycheck. It gave him life experience — and when he left the service in 2014 that experience turned into college credits.

As a former cavalry scout, he earned 16 credits for his work experience in areas such as management, physical education, criminal justice, automotive tech and a computer elective at Pikes Peak Community College.

On the flip side, "none of them have helped, because of the degree that I am in," the computer networking major said. "If I had gone for an associate in general studies or in arts, it might have helped, but not in this field."

Harrington got half the equation right. He milked his experience for every possible credit, but they weren't the right credits.

Here's how to both find every credit you've earned and make them count toward a degree.

The basics

Turning experience into college credit is straightforward. The American Council on Education provides policy guidance for the Joint Services Transcript, a widely accepted document that validates a service member's military occupational experience and training. JST gives the details, ACE determines what it's all worth.

But none of this is guaranteed. Colleges may take or reject whatever they wish, which can be good news for veterans looking to get the most credit for their experience. There are ways to make the system work in your favor.

Find a friendly institution

Translating military experience into college credits takes some finesse. There are the JTS and ACE, but not everyone knows how to handle those. So you need to find a military-friendly school, suggests Daniel Ridley, career mapping specialist and VA certifying official at Gateway Community and Technical College in the greater Cincinnati area. (We have the lists of vet-friendly schools here.) Or go a step further and find a collaborative that reaches across multiple states to help veterans get credit.

If you can find an institution that has experience in this, “it can significantly shorten the time it's going to take to get that college credential,” Ridley said.

Have a plan

The point here is not to get credit, of course. The aim is to get a degree and get into the workforce. To do that, you need to chart a course before chasing credits you may not even need.

“You need to see how many core requirements, major requirements and electives you will have to take to complete your degree,” Janet Colvin, a specialist in credit for prior learning at Pikes Peak, said.

At St. Cloud Technical and Community College in Minnesota, “we have had faculty scour through military experience that could count for meaningful credits,” Tarryl Clark, interim dean of sciences, technology and math, said. “Other colleges may give them credit for electives, but that may not really help them forward.”

Don't take 'no'

JST and ACE are pretty thorough in their translation of careers to credits, but they're not perfect. If a school denies a credit, the veteran can ask for a review — and often come out ahead.

“Sometimes ACE has simply not evaluated something, it's not on the list or it's not up to date. So you will want to dig a little deeper,” Colvin said. “If you think your learning or your experience has exceeded the level that ACE has recommended, you may usually request further assessment from your college.”

Of course, each school will have its own policy on whether to undertake a review. But it's always worth asking.

“Maybe you can pull down more information from the ACE site, more evidence of what competencies you have,” she said.

Sometimes a sympathetic faculty adviser can help the deciding authority to connect the dots.

Do the legwork

For a school that's not military-savvy, or isn't responding as expected, veterans may need to take up their own cause. Maybe someone is failing to see the connection between JST and ACE. At smaller schools in particular, “there typically isn't anyone at the college who can do that,” Ridley said.

Most schools tackle veterans' credits on a case-by-case basis, which means a veteran willing to shoulder the load will likely get a better deal. "It's not automated at all, so a lot of the legwork has to be done by the veteran," Ridley said.

Don't overload

With diligence, it's possible to convert a lot of military experience into college credits. Here's the catch: If you pile up credits that exceed 150 percent of what you need for your degree, financial aid typically cuts off.

Suppose you need 120 credits for a bachelor's degree. With all the credits you've racked up for time in uniform, along with courses and certificates and other activities, you've got 181 credits in hand — but many of them fell outside your major, and you still haven't finished your degree. You're over the line and financial aid is in jeopardy.

That's what nearly happened to Harrington, the former Army sergeant. Rather than giving him a boost, his 16 experience-based credits have muddled his efforts to get a two-year degree in computer networking.

"If anything, it has come close to hurting me when it comes to financial aid," he said. He's going to stay under 150 percent, but only by a hair. If he wanted to change majors, he said, he would blow the numbers.

It's one more reason to plan carefully. "You don't necessarily want to put on credit if it is not going to help you meet your degree," Colvin said.

A cavalry scout lets his teammates know about a possible

A cavalry scout lets his teammates know about a possible enemy target during a training exercise. The experience that military personnel gain in the service can be translated into college credits, but planning and research are essential. (Photo: Sgt. Samuel Northrup/Army)

Stay with what you know

It doesn't make sense to pick a major based on how many credits you can cull from your military experience. You pick a major based on life interests, career ambitions and job security. On the other hand, it's easier to get credits when your experience lines up with your aspirations.

"For example, suppose you've done paralegal work and you want to parlay that into a job in a law firm," Clark said. "You've already demonstrated the basic competencies, things like legal research and writing. That's helpful; schools can build off of that. If you want to be a network administration professional, on the other hand, they are not going to move a lot of that experience into credits."

Don't think too narrowly

It's true that in the big picture, you want college credits that will apply to your degree, credits that will keep you moving forward through the academic process. It's also helpful to identify those experiences that may be more general but can still help you knock off some of the gut courses.

"You've been dealing with leadership, you've shown you can deal with a crisis, you've done a lot of writing," Clark said. "That work experience might help you with some of your basic requirements, depending on the college."

What is your experience worth?

How much college credit can veterans earn for experience in uniform? Here are a few examples from the American Council on Education, which sets the standards:

- Aviation electronics technician. For lower division baccalaureate/associate degree (see definitions here), three semester hours in beginning electrical/electronics laboratory, one in applied physics, 12 in avionics technology and additional credit in avionics technology on the basis of institutional evaluation.
- Quartermaster. In the vocational certificate category, three semester hours in practical mathematics and one in applied meteorology. In the lower-division baccalaureate/associate degree category, three semester hours in seamanship, three in recordkeeping, three in personnel supervision and one in practical marine instrumentation.
- Senior signal sergeant. In the lower-division baccalaureate/associate degree category, if ASI was J7, WHCA Console Control Operations, the following credit applies: one semester hour in computer literacy, two in files management and three in introduction to voice communications networks. In the upper-division baccalaureate degree category, for all individuals: three semester hours in organizational management and three for field experience in management.

Detailed information about translating experience to credits can be found at the ACE website.

5.) 21st Century Sailor bi-weekly roll-up:

Every other week, we roll up the latest news from the 21st Century Sailor office. Below are the latest:

- Resiliency Retreats Improve Relationships [\[LINK\]](#)
- Controlling What You Own: Seeking Out Chaplain Support [\[LINK\]](#)
- Lifelink Newsletter September [\[LINK\]](#)
- One-Small Act N17 Interview and Photo gallery Recap [\[LINK\]](#)