



RSO NOTE



ARMY G-1, RETIREMENT SERVICES OFFICE

In this Note

1. [Nominations of Retired Soldiers to serve on the Chief of Staff, Army Retired Soldier Council and issues impacting the retired community](#)
2. [Phase-Out of the Survivor Benefit Plan \(SBP\)/Dependency and Indemnity Compensation \(DIC\) Offset](#)
3. [TSP Automatic Enrollment Increase to 5%](#)
4. [DFAS letters with incorrect SBP cost debt information mailed on August 18 to SBP annuitants](#)
5. [Coroners putting COVID-19 on Veterans' death certificates instead of the underlying issues as the cause of death.](#)

Information

[1. Nominations of Retired Soldiers to serve on the Chief of Staff, Army Retired Soldier Council and issues impacting the retired community](#)

Nominations are currently being accepted for the 2011-2024 CSA Retired Soldier Council. This 14-member group of Retired Soldiers is co-chaired by LTG (Ret) David Halverson and SMA (Ret) Raymond F. Chandler. Council members are appointed by the CSA for a term not to exceed 4 years unless extended by the CSA. They are recalled to active duty and meet at least annually to confer with members of the DOD and ARSTAFs, analyze issues nominated by local Retired Soldier councils, formulate recommendations, and advise the CSA.

Nominees must be:

- (a) Currently serving as a member of an Army Service Component Command or installation retiree council;
- (b) Active in both retired military and civic affairs;
- (c) knowledgeable of and conversant with retired military issues and concerns; and
- (d) Not a previous member of the CSA Retired Soldier Council.

Before the 61st meeting, to be held in the Pentagon 19-23 April 2021, three Council members will complete their terms of service creating vacancies that must be filled. It is important to note that the Council Charter includes specific demographic requirements in order to adequately

represent all Retired Soldiers. This year's three selectees must include one noncommissioned officer and one commissioned officer. Another demographic requirement required to be filled by this year's three selectees includes one Retired Army Reserve Soldier. Request you encourage all interested Retired Soldiers to apply.

Nominations must be submitted in the attached format and forwarded through appropriate channels to Army Retirement Services NLT 1 November 2020. Upon arrival, the nominations will be assembled and forwarded to the CSA Retired Soldier Council Co-Chairmen, who will make the final selection recommendation to the CSA.

Issues of concern your retiree councils judge are appropriate for discussion by the CSA Retired Soldier Council should be submitted using the enclosed process and format (Enclosure C). Issues must reach the Army Retirement Services Office NLT 1 December 2020.



TAB A G1
memosigned.pdf



TAB B Charter.pdf



TAB C Issues
format.docx



TAB D Nominee
format.docx

2. Phase-Out of the Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP)/Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) Offset

The MyArmyBenefits Survivor Benefits Calculator now includes the phase-out of the Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP)/Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) offset. The phase-out of the SBP/DIC offset became law with the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) of 2020, which directed a phased elimination of the offset (reduction) of survivors' monthly SBP payments by the DIC amount. After January 1, 2023, survivors eligible for both SBP and DIC will receive them concurrently, with no offset; and payments of the Special Survivor Indemnity Allowance (SSIA) will cease. RSOs may view the impact of these changes using the RSO Gateway feature in the Survivor Benefits Calculator on the MyArmyBenefits website at <https://myarmybenefits.us.army.mil/>.

For more information about the phase-out of the SBP/DIC offset visit:
<https://www.dfas.mil/RetiredMilitary/survivors/SBP-DIC-News/>

3. TSP Automatic Enrollment Increase to 5%

In accordance with Federal government-wide regulations, automatic enrollment of new Uniformed Service members into the Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) increases from 3 percent to 5 percent on October 1, 2020.

This change will impact all automatically-enrolled BRS members with a Pay Entry Base Date on or after October 1, 2020. It will also impact any BRS member previously automatically enrolled in TSP who is not contributing to TSP as of December.

A memorandum explaining this change is included below. The memo describes in more detail who is specifically impacted, but understand that this does not impact the vast majority of members who were serving prior to October 1, 2020. Only new members after that date, those subject to automatic re-enrollment on January 1 of any year, and any BRS member who leaves service and returns later following a break-in-service are impacted.



BRS Memo - TSP
Automatic Enrollment

4. DFAS letters with incorrect SBP cost debt information mailed on August 18 to SBP annuitants

For your situational awareness, DFAS learned on August 31, 2020 that a small group of SBP annuitants received an incorrect Survivor Benefit Plan cost debt letter from DFAS dated August 18, 2020. A technology issue caused these incorrect letters to be mailed in error.

Some of the annuitants do NOT have an active SBP cost debt and the letter contained an erroneous cost debt amount. Some do have an active SBP cost debt and the letter may have contained incorrect information.

DFAS promptly posted a general statement on the retiree/annuitant webpage on DFAS.mil, on the Cleveland Customer Care webpage, and on Facebook. Also, DFAS Customer Care Center partners are aware and prepared to handle calls.

DFAS is mailing new letters to each of the annuitants with the correct information.

DFAS sincerely apologizes for the confusion this caused for annuitants who received an incorrect letter.

For further information, annuitants should contact DFAS directly.

5. Coroners putting COVID-19 on Veterans' death certificates instead of the underlying issues as the cause of death

For your situational awareness, according to the VA, existing Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) guidance provides instructions for claims processors to properly evaluate or assist in cases where there is an interceding cause of death (such as COVID-19) and contributing service connected (SC) conditions are not listed on the death certificate.

VA is committed to providing timely service without unnecessary burden for survivors. VA's existing guidance in 38 CFR § 3.312 provides instructions on processing claims for service-connected death by considering the primary and contributory cause(s) of death along with the Veteran's service-connected condition(s). Existing guidance also addresses VA's duty to assist and when to request a

medical opinion. If the claim cannot be otherwise granted and there is an indication that at least one of the Veteran's service-connected disabilities may be related to the principal or contributory cause of death, a medical opinion would be requested.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, VA issued a specific reminder to claims processors on April 23, 2020 regarding the processing of service-connected death claims. The guidance reinforced that claims processors must review all facts and circumstances surrounding the death of the Veteran to determine if there is a reasonable probability of service-connected death. The guidance explained that the complete clinical picture of COVID-19 is not fully known and people with serious underlying medical conditions seem to be at higher risk for developing severe COVID-19 illness. The guidance also reinforced VA's duty to assist when service connection for the cause of the Veteran's death cannot be granted based on the evidence of record.

Existing VA guidance also outlines scenarios where a medical opinion is not necessary to grant DIC benefits. If reasonable probability of service-connected death is found based on at least one of the following conditions, DIC can be granted without a medical opinion:

- service connection was granted for a condition affecting any vital organ
- the Veteran was rated 100 percent for a service-connected disease or disability, or
- the Veteran was entitled to individual unemployability.

DIC may also be paid in the same manner, as if the death were service-connected (without a medical opinion), if a Veteran was in receipt of, or entitled to receive, disability compensation for a service-connected disability which was totally disabling for:

- 10 or more years immediately preceding death
- a continuous period of not less than five years from the time of separation from service until death, or
- 1 or more years immediately preceding death if the Veteran was a former prisoner of war.

For more detailed information about their specific cases, survivors should contact the VA directly.

L. Peterson