



Now that a relaxed (?) 2011 Labor Day weekend of activities has past, schools around the Commonwealth are back in the "reading, writing, and arithmetic" mode, and Congress is about to return from their August recess visitations with constituents back home, it comes time for us to re-focus on some of the major crises at hand. Among these are increased congressional polarization, jobs for returning war veterans, deficit-reduction initiatives, reduced Medicare and TRICARE payments to doctors, reduced military retirement benefits, reduced military manpower levels, a possible military pay raise freeze, homeless veterans, and the controversial **super congressional committee of twelve** to resolve the country's current budget crisis.

And, if they cannot resolve that budget situation, then there will be the automatic legislative budgetary triggers (cuts) with a straight up or down Congressional vote. In researching just what is contained in those "automatic triggers," here is what was determined. The triggers will focus on cutting discretionary spending in two major areas: *Defense budget* (major) and *Medicare* (not so major).

MOAA, on July 25th of this year, sent a note that stated, "We don't have to tell you that Congress is about to consider an array of major deficit-reduction initiatives. What you may not know is that they include options to:

- Freeze military pay raises and/or reduce military manpower levels; despite the terrible wartime strains already imposed on currently serving troops and families.
- Dramatically reduce the military retirement package for future service entrants and perhaps even for many currently serving.
- Significantly increase out of pocket healthcare expenses by up to \$2,000 or more per year for retired military families under 65, and up to \$6,000 for retired couples over 65 with Medicare supplements (including TRICARE for Life)".

The MOAA message went on to say that "Congress still must act before the end of the year to stop a 30% cut in Medicare and TRICARE payments to doctors now scheduled for January 1, 2012 under current law. Such a huge cut raises risks that many more doctors will stop seeing military and elder patients". See article titled "Doc Fix" Last Budget Priority? *Debt ceiling and funding bills come first* on page 32 of the August *Military Officer*.

In that same "Doc Fix" article, it states that: "Congress will face another crisis around October 1 as deficit hawks exact an additional budget-cutting price for approving appropriations bills for the new fiscal year [FY2012]." Although the House has passed an FY 2012 Defense Authorization Bill (H.R. 1540) and Senate version has been approved by the SASC (S.1253), there is a long way to go. Both bills are outlined on pages 34 and 35 of the August *Military Officer*. With all of these major challenges arising at once, it is imperative that we let our legislators know how we feel.

In the August 5th legislative up-date, MOAA urges all members to send a note to our elected officials. You can find that note at:

<http://capwiz.com/moaa/issues/alert/?alertid=51851501&PROCESS=Take+Action>

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