

## **NDA 2019: Some of the Overlooked Parts**

Now that all the hubbub about the 2019 defense budget and the 2.6 percent pay raise has died down, let's check out some of the overlooked parts of the law that could affect you.

### **Pay Raise**

Sure, a 2.6 percent pay raise is a good thing, but what will you really be getting. Well, an E-5 with 8 years' service will see around an \$81 increase each month, before taxes. After taxes it will probably be closer to \$50, still not bad. This still doesn't include your tax-free allowances like BAH or BAS, those numbers won't be available until January, but it looks like those amounts will probably go up by a similar amount, so an E-5 with 8 years of service could be looking at around \$100 more in their monthly check. Check out <https://www.military.com/newmembers/militarypay-calculator> for your specific details.

### **Personal Money Allowance Going Away**

Currently only available to the Navy, the Personal Money Allowance was paid to O-9 or above, officers in certain command positions, and also to the MCPON (E-10). Starting next year, it will no longer be paid.

### **Changes To Officer Personnel Systems**

Major changes are afoot in the officer ranks. The new law seeks to end standardized officer promotions based on years in service, instead allowing top performing officer to promote faster or even early. Branches will also be allowed to make temporary promotions in critical career fields. It will exempt some officers from promotion boards and allow officers to stay in for up to 40 years. The law also removes the dreaded "up or out" provision which discharged those officers who didn't promote in two cycles. Another provision allows services to bring in new officers at a higher rank than O-1 if they have sufficient civilian experience.

### **Career Intermission Program**

The Career Intermission Program has now been made permanent across all services. Service members can take a career intermission of up to three years under the new law. This works in tandem with the officer personnel changes above. Theoretically, an officer could leave the service as an O-1, get an advanced degree or civilian experience and come back in as an O-4.

### **Transition Assistance Changes**

The Transition Assistance (TAP) program will now have to begin a full year before separation for almost everyone. Previously it could start within 90 days of separation. TAP will now have at least three separate "pathways" depending on your situation. These pathways will be different depending on if you are being medically discharged, looking for work, planning to go to school, retiring, etc. The law gives DOD one year to come up with a plan.

### **Medals and Awards**

- Atomic Veterans - The law creates a new "Atomic Veterans Service Certificate", to honor retired and former members of the Armed Forces who are radiation-exposed veterans. Since most Atomic Veterans are pretty old, or have passed (the testing ended in 1962), this certificate will also be available to family members.

- Military Working Dog Handlers - The law will create a medal and commendation that will be available to military working dog handlers.

### **MWR Use for Veterans**

Purple Heart, Medal of Honor, service-connected disabled veterans, and family caregivers will be eligible to use MWR retail and lodging facilities starting in 2020. They may have to pay a surcharge. No word on how base access will be worked out for those who don't already have it.

### **Space-A Travel**

Totally disabled veterans are now eligible for Space-A travel.

### **Navy**

Lots of changes for sailors, most of these relate to OPTEMPO and were related to the ship collisions last year. The one that stands out is the requirement for a 'Permanent Logbook'. "The Secretary of the Navy shall require that, commencing not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this act, key watchstanders on Navy surface ships shall maintain a career record of watchstanding hours and specific operational evolutions." Yep, career record. That means your permanent record, forever. So if you are an OOD, EOW, Conning Officer, or presumably any other high-profile operational position like JOOD, TAO, etc. you will have to maintain a record of all your watchstanding, showing every evolution you participated in.

### **New UCMJ Article**

Article 128b will be added to the UCMJ, addressing domestic violence. It includes assault, intimidation, violation of a protective order, and damaging property or injuring animals in a domestic assault situation.

### **High-Deployment Allowance for Reservists**

Adds reservists mobilized under Section 1104(b) to those eligible for the high-deployment allowance of up to \$1,000 per month. SGLI For Combat Zones - Deploying to a combat zone? Your SGLI will automatically be increased to the maximum amount of \$400,000. No exceptions.

### **TRICARE Dental For Families**

TRICARE Dental for retirees will be going away in January 2019 and replaced with FEDVIP, the same dental insurance used by civil service members and government retirees. The new law will give active duty family members the option of purchasing dental insurance through FEDVIP instead of TRICARE in 2022.

### **No More Flat Rate Per Diem**

If you are TDY for more than 30 days at one location you used to be able to get flat rate per diem which paid you 75 percent of the maximum lodging allowance plus 75 percent of the Meals & Incidental Expense (M&IE) for your 18 location. You didn't need to submit receipts for your lodging. Effective 13 AUG, the day the legislation was signed, all lodging expenses must be substantiated by receipts. If you are TDY for more than 30 days you will get reimbursed the actual expense (not to exceed the location limit) for your lodging, and the full M&IE expenses.