

Buckley AFB, CO - RETIREE ACTIVITIES OFFICE (RAO) NEWSLETTER - June 2021

18401 East A-Basin Ave, Stop 95, Buckley AFB, CO 80011

Building 606, Room 104, phone **720-847-6693**, e-mail address: **460sw.rao.org@spaceforce.mil**

Normal Hrs: Mon 1000-1600, Wed 0900-1400, Thurs 0800-1500 & Fri 0900-1430

Director: Steve Young, Lt Col, USAF, Ret

RETIREE ACTIVITIES OFFICE (RAO) LOCATION: We are in Rm 104 of Bldg 606, close to the main building entrance. As you come in the main entrance, turn left, enter the first hallway on your right and Rm 104 is the first room on your left. Remember, we assist military retirees from **all** Services!

COVID-19 IMPACTS ON BUCKLEY AFB: Since the COVID-19 outbreak in Mar 2020 there have been significant changes to Buckley AFB operations - some directly impact military retirees/surviving spouses. As of 26 Apr, the base is allowing a maximum of 75% of non-mission essential personnel to work on site. **The gym opened to military retirees on 26 Apr '21 (racquetball courts are NOT open) but base legal is still closed to retirees. For the most current info on base facilities and additional details on days/hours, etc. please check the Buckley AFB and 460 FSS FaceBook (FB) pages and Buckley AFB website.**

<https://www.facebook.com/BuckleyAirForceBase/> Col Chellgren still does FB Live broadcasts each Wed at 1800
[https://460th Force Support Squadron | Facebook](https://460thForceSupportSquadron.com/Facebook)

<https://www.buckley.af.mil/> Click on the COVID-19 block in the upper right and review ALL data on that page
<https://www.460fss.com/>

- The 6th Ave gate is still open Mon-Fri from 0600-1800 inbound/outbound (Mississippi Gate still open 24/7/365)
- Vets with a VHIC card who haven't registered at the Visitor Control Center (VCC) by the 6th Ave gate can now register - call 720-847-9381. You can bring your spouse on base if they get a visitor pass at the VCC.
- The commissary and Exchange are limiting purchases of some items due to COVID (see the Buckley AFB Facebook page for details) and only 100 customers at a time in each facility.
- For all intents and purposes, you must wear a mask anytime you are inside a public building on base
- Reminder - barber shop is open Mon thru Fri 0900-1700, Sat 0900-1600, Sun 1000-1700 (720-859-0933)
- The info below on **ID cards** is from the MPF in Building 606 on base (**this guidance doesn't necessarily apply to the 140th ANG or NOSC ID card facilities on base - call them for details.**)

Bldg 606 ID card service hours are: Mon/Tues/Thurs/Fri 0800 to 1500; Wed 0800-1200

MPF Call Center: Mon/Tues/Thurs/Fri: 1200-1500; 720-847-4357, Option 2 (Questions or make appts)

Retiree & Dependent ID Cards (Appts Only)

- **ID cards that expired after 1 Jan 2020 remain valid until 30 Jun 2021.**
- **Retirees & dependents with expired ID cards (or within 90 days of expiration) can make appointments during expanded MPF hours in June: Tues/Thurs 1600-1900 and the following Saturdays 0900-1300: 5/19/26 Jun.**
- Agent Letter (allows others to shop commissary, BX, etc for retirees not able to - **walk-ins OK!**)

To find the ID facility nearest you and make an appointment online please go to the RAPIDS Site Locator at the following link: <https://idco.dmdc.osd.mil/idco/#/>

Once you get to the RAPIDS site, click on the "ID Card Office Locator & Appointments" Continue box. The page that comes up should default to the "Search for Site by Address" tab. Ensure "All" is selected under the "Search For" area, then enter your zip code in the "Enter Location" area, select an entry from the "Radius" drop-down menu, and click on the "Search" box. A list of sites will pop up and then you can select "More Info" for the site you want to use, and the "Schedule an Appointment" block. A calendar will come up for that site where you can

scroll through the months on the calendar to see when appointments are available. During the pandemic some locations may not show any appointments available. When you pick a day with appointments you will see a list of the times available for that day below the calendar and you can pick the one you want and click on "Book This Appointment." **Just FYI, right now you will typically find more online appointments available on the 140th ANG and NOSC sites - both on Buckley AFB - than at the MPF in Bldg 606.**

OBSERVANCES IN JUNE: 6 June - D-Day anniversary; 12 June - Women Veterans Day; 14 June - Army B-Day & Flag Day; 23 June - Coast Guard Auxiliary B-Day; 27 June - PTSD Awareness Day.

GUARD/RESERVE RETIREES - FEEDBACK ON SETTING UP RETIREMENT PAY: Have you experienced problems submitting your retirement package? Have you had to wait months without any confirmation or communication that your claim was received? Did you encounter problems because your retirement pay and health care coverage began at different times? During my three years in the Buckley AFB RAO we have heard from many customers who have experienced such issues. Well, the Military Officers Association of America (MOAA) has also heard from National Guard and Reserve retirees that setting up and receiving retirement pay is a confusing process plagued by bureaucracy and delays and they would like to push for solutions to improve the process. They are requesting your help to gather information in support of this effort. So, here is your opportunity to make a difference and hopefully help future Guard & Reserve retirees.

You can tell them about your experiences in this area by emailing MOAA directly at editor@moaa.org. Please include "Reserve Retirement" in the subject line and include your rank, service branch, and when you separated in the message.

THE HONOR BELL FOUNDATION: For those planning a funeral for a veteran here in Colorado, there is something you can look into in addition to the typical military honors the funeral home will normally arrange for you (honor guard, flag, taps, etc.). The Honor Bell Foundation, Inc. is a Colorado nonprofit, 501(c)(3) corporation based in Denver. Its primary purpose is to provide a unique funeral honor for deceased military veterans through the slow ringing, known as tolling, of a ceremonial bell. To accomplish this mission, the Foundation produced the [Honor Bell](#) and renders "[Bell Honors](#)" at the funerals of U.S. military veterans and personnel killed in action to augment the dignity and respect that should be paid to those that have served our nation. **Bell Honors are a free service offered to veterans' families.**

The Honor Bell is the first tolling bell cast in U.S. history with the sole purpose of rendering a final honor to United States Service Members killed in action and United States Armed Forces Veterans. It is tolled exclusively by veterans and active-duty servicemembers. It is a custom-designed, thirty-seven-inch diameter, forty-inch tall, stationary bronze bell that weighs one thousand pounds. The Bell's motto is "Forged From Honor." **During the casting of the Honor Bell, artifacts from twelve deceased Colorado servicemen from World War II to the Global War on Terror were added to the molten bronze, representing veterans past, present and future.** With these artifacts forever part of the bell, it can be truly said that "the Honor Bell has been Forged From Honor."

The Honor Bell was dedicated for service at a Memorial Day 2016 ceremony. At interment ceremonies, the Honor Bell is guarded and tolled by the Bell Guard. Rendering Bell Honors is performed in a tradition known as the "ancient tolling method". After the folded flag of the United States of America is presented to the next of kin, the Bell Guard provides a tribute of dignity, honor and respect when the bell is tolled seven times, with seven seconds between each toll. The seven tolls represent the many stages in a veteran's life.

For more information on the Honor Bell you can visit their website at [Honor Bell Foundation: a Colorado Veteran Non Profit Organization](#). At this time, Bell Honors are only available for services at Fort Logan National Cemetery (memorial service requests outside Fort Logan may be accommodated on a case-by-case basis). You can submit a request form from the website and you will normally get a response within 24 hours. If you have any issues with the form or prefer to speak with someone, you may also contact them directly at 720-295-4582.

VA NATIONAL CEMETERIES NO LONGER RESTRICTING GATHERING SIZES AT COMMITTAL & MEMORIAL SERVICES: The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) National Cemetery Administration (NCA) recently announced it would lift all restrictions on gathering sizes at committal and memorial services in VA national cemeteries starting on Wednesday, May 26, 2021. Prior to that, the NCA announced it had adjusted its rules for visitors and staff members in accordance with the CDC's new guidance, Interim Public Health Recommendations for Fully Vaccinated People. Fully vaccinated persons are no longer required to wear masks and physically distance themselves while at a national cemetery.

Consistent with the new CDC guidance, NCA still requires persons who are not fully vaccinated to practice the safety procedures recommended by the CDC, such as wearing face coverings and maintaining physical distancing, while visiting a cemetery or attending a service.

For more information, please visit the NCA website, <https://www.cem.va.gov> or contact your local national cemetery

FORCE SUPPORT SQUADRON (FSS) EVENTS IN JUNE: The FSS will be showing two movies on base in June. "Capt Marvel" is on 4 June and "Raya and the Dragon" on 18 June. Movies are generally shown "drive-in" style by the base softball fields with parking opening up at 1845 and the movie starting at 2045. Often some sort of snacks are provided by organizations like the USO, USAA, etc. There is also a 3k/5k run planned for 25 June. You can check for details/updates on the 460 FSS Facebook page: [460th Force Support Squadron | Facebook](#) If you care to leave the FSS feedback on any of their facilities/services you can fill out a customer satisfaction survey at [ICE – 460 FSS](#)

BASE EXCHANGE (BX) NEWS: Food trucks are typically located in the BX parking lot every Tuesday and Thursday and every other Wednesday and Friday. There is also a Turkish Carpet and Bazaar in the mall until 27 June. You can find additional info on the BX website [Shop Army & Air Force Exchange Service \(shopmyexchange.com\)](#) and Facebook page [Exchange | Facebook](#)

EBENEFITS WEBSITE: The eBenefits Portal is an online resource for tools and benefits-related information for Wounded Warriors, Veterans, Active Duty Servicemembers, their families, and those who care for them. The President's Commission on Care for America's Returning Wounded Warriors established by Executive Order 13426 recommended the creation of a My eBenefits (a.k.a. eBenefits) web portal to provide the wounded, injured and ill service members/Veterans, their families and care providers a single sign-on, central access point to online benefits and related services. (Check on a claim status, get a DD-214, get a VA Home Loan Certificate of Eligibility, etc)

eBenefits is located at www.ebenefits.va.gov. Before you can access and use eBenefits you must be listed in the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System (DEERS) and have a DS Logon. Service members can access eBenefits with a DS Logon or Common Access Card (CAC). You can choose from two levels of registration: DS Logon Level 1 (Basic) or DS Logon Level 2 (Premium). If you are a veteran and have no DEERS info you must contact the VA to get your login information. For more information on creating an account see [ebenefits.pdf \(uscg.mil\)](#)

GYM OPERATIONS FOR RETIREES: As you know, the gym reopened to retirees on Mon, 26 Apr. As I mentioned in our initial e-mail, **not all** parts of the gym are open for use, **like the racquetball courts**. I've already been contacted by one several retirees asking why the racquetball courts can be used for aerobics classes but not racquetball. Under the current COVID restrictions, you still have to physically distance while exercising in the fitness center. Contact sports such as racquetball do **not** allow for physically distancing, while non-contact activities, like aerobics, do. **I have been informed that retirees can also sign up for 24/7 fitness center access which allows access during the evening hours and weekends when the center is closed.** The facility is still supporting the COVID vaccination efforts so half of the fitness center is closed on Thursdays and Fridays when the Medical Group sets up mass vaccination stations. You can still work out on these days, but the main basketball court and weight room are blocked off. The Showers and locker rooms are open, but the saunas are not. Hours of operation for the Fitness Center are 0530-2100 Monday - Friday.

MEDICARE AND TRICARE FOR LIFE (TFL) BASICS: We hear from quite a few folks who aren't clear on how Tricare for Life (TFL) works with Medicare so we thought we would provide some general info on the subject. All military retirees have been required to enroll in Medicare since it was established in 1965. Before Medicare, retirees either relied on space available at the base hospital, which is still an option in some locations, or they were on their own in the community. (VA health care is a separate subject) By law, TRICARE Prime and TRICARE Select end at age 65, which requires service retirees to enroll in Medicare at age 65 to maintain a major health care plan and TRICARE benefits. TRICARE For Life (TFL), established in 2001, acts as your Medicare supplement, and allows you to continue using the TRICARE pharmacy. TFL was established in acknowledgment that military retirees were promised health care for life. It was the result of a compromise worked out among various organizations advocating for military retirees, Capitol Hill, and DoD. While you must pay the Medicare Part B premiums, there are no other costs for TFL. The Medicare/TFL plan ensures retirees pay nothing more than the Medicare Part B premiums – a great deal for retirees, especially with the ever-increasing costs of healthcare. You must have Medicare Parts A and B *and TFL* to continue using the TRICARE pharmacy at age 65. The US Family Health Plan (USFHP) is a contracted TRICARE program under which the TRICARE Prime benefit is offered to eligible military beneficiaries. It required beneficiaries to enroll and is offered through six participating non-profit plans in different regions of the country. Members enrolled in USFHP since September 2012 and prior can stay in the USFHP at age 65. Members enrolled in USFHP in October 2012 or later will be disenrolled from USFHP at age 65 and are required to enroll in Medicare/TFL. Both USFHP and TRICARE strongly recommend USFHP members enroll in Medicare Parts A&B at age 65, even if they can stay in the USFHP. If you have the option to stay in a USFHP after age 65, you need to understand the cost differences and reasons behind the recommendation to go Medicare/TFL.

BX/PHARMACY/COMMISSARY PARKING LOT REPAIRS: The Exchange, Commissary, and Pharmacy parking lots are scheduled to have phased crack repair, seal and restriping done from 5 April to 18 June, weather permitting. As part of the 460th Civil Engineer Squadron's Sand and Seal BX Parking Lot Project, phased parking lot closures will be needed for initial crack repairs. Sealing and striping will have follow-on notices once crack repairs are completed. The first phase will impact the area of the parking lot in front of the pharmacy so you should be prepared for longer walks to the pharmacy during the time that portion of the lot is closed off. **We have posted a map showing the sections of the parking lot to be done during each phase on the RAO website.** You can also refer to the Buckley AFB FaceBook page for updates.

DFAS MYPAY ACCOUNT TWO-FACTOR AUTHENTICATION STARTED 27 APRIL: Effective 27 Apr, myPay's Two-Factor Authentication became mandatory for all myPay accounts. Two-factor authentication helps keep your online accounts secure and prevents someone from stealing your personal and financial information. When you access your account on or after that date you will be required to select your preferred method (mobile phone or email) to receive a random one-time PIN when using your Logon ID and password. You then enter that PIN into a field and submit it to gain access to your account. This will happen every time you access your account. More information on myPay's Two-Factor Authentication is available at <https://www.dfas.mil/mypayinfo/2FA/>. **Since the two-factor authentication will be required we suggest you review your mobile phone and email addresses currently registered in your myPay profile and update the information if needed. If this info is incorrect obviously you won't get the code DFAS sends you and won't be able to access your account.**

“INDEF” ID CARDS FOR DEPENDENTS TURNING 65 - GLITCH: For many years spouses of military retirees got a new ID card when they turned 65 (due to Medicare eligibility) and then had to renew the ID every 4 years until they turned 75. On 21 Sep 20 the Undersecretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness signed a memo changing this policy so spouses getting a new ID card at age 65 (or renewing one prior to age 75) are authorized an ID card with the expiration date listed as “INDEF”, the same as is done for the military retiree. **Unfortunately, when we checked with the MPF on 24 May, the DEERS software has still not been updated to reflect this policy so ID cards for these specific dependents are still being issued with an expiration date. We have been unable to get an answer from DEERS, DMDC, etc. on when the software update will be implemented to allow these ID cards to be issued IAW the new policy.**

EXTENDED ID CARD HOURS FOR RETIREES/DEPENDENTS WITH EXPIRED ID CARDS: The Buckley AFB Military Personnel Flight (MPF) in Bldg 606 has enacted extended service hours for retirees/dependents with ID cards that expired sometime on/after 1 Jan 2020, or are within 90 days of expiration. **Currently they are open every Tuesday and Thursday from 1600-1900 and the following Saturdays 0900-1300: 5, 19 and 26 Jun.** You should call 720-847-4357, Option 2 on Mon/Tues/Thurs/Fri from 1200-1500 to make an appointment for these times.

PHARMACY - PATIENT ADVOCATE E-MAIL ADDRESS: As you know, pharmacy patient advocates are available to hear your comments and concerns related to pharmacy operations. There are forms available in the pharmacy for you to submit comments to them, but with the pandemic you don't have access to those. The pharmacy has established an e-mail inbox for the patient advocates so you can now e-mail them directly at the pharmacy patient advocate org box: usaf.buckley.460sw-mdg.mbx.pharmacy-patient-advocate@mail.mil.

PHARMACY - NEW ONLINE PRESCRIPTION REFILL & "ACTIVATION" CAPABILITY: For well over a year now the RAO has been advocating for a more user-friendly prescription "activation" process at the pharmacy for military retirees. The current phone in process has caused frustration for many retirees - why it was required in the first place, long times spent on hold on the phone waiting to talk with a tech, calls being dropped and having to call in again, etc. Finally, on 19 Jan, the base pharmacy notified me a new online option to complete prescription refills and "activations" was available using the Tricare Online Patient Portal. You will need to have a Tricare Online Patient Portal account, if you don't already. **We have posted the instructions on creating an account on our website. While we have heard from some retirees who have used the process and were happy with it, we have also heard from retirees whose doctors submitted refill requests to the pharmacy and they never showed up online, who were told a prescription would be available on a specific day but when they went to pick it up it wasn't there, etc. We have made the pharmacy aware of these issues and they are working the problem.** If you have multiple members of your family that get meds from the base pharmacy the sponsor will have the capability to use this for **all** the family members, they won't need their own account. The RAO is **not** the expert on the new process, so if you have any questions related to it please contact the pharmacy, perhaps one of the patient advocates at: usaf.buckley.460sw-mdg.mbx.pharmacy-patient-advocate@mail.mil

WHERE CAN I GET RID OF UNUSED/UNWANTED MEDICATIONS? Do you have unused/unwanted medications you are trying to dispose of safely/properly? The Buckley AFB pharmacy does **not** take your unwanted medications, but you can locate a place that will using the following link: [Colorado Household Medication Take-Back Program | Department of Public Health & Environment](#) You can also try the following links: [Medication Disposal Near Me | CVS Pharmacy](#)
[Safe medication disposal | Walgreens](#)
[Drug Drop Box | Littleton CO \(littletongov.org\)](#)

HOW TO CREATE A MYPAY ACCOUNT WITH DEFENSE FINANCE & ACCOUNTING SERVICE (DFAS): If you don't have a MyPay account with DFAS I recommend you create one. With your own account you can download your Form1099 for taxes, print a copy of your Retiree Account Statement (RAS), set up beneficiaries for Arrears of Pay, update your mailing and e-mail address, adjust federal and state withholding for taxes, etc. You start by requesting an initial password on the myPay homepage ([myPay Web Site \(dfas.mil\)](http://myPay.WebSite(dfas.mil))) using the "Forgot or Need a Password" link. The password will be mailed to the address you have on file with DFAS and you will receive it in about 10 business days. Once you receive your password in the mail, you return to the myPay homepage and log in with your social security number and the password you received in the mail to create your myPay profile. DFAS has a downloadable step-by-step Get Started Guide to myPay on their website and a how-to video on the DFAS YouTube channel. For additional info on obtaining a MyAccount you can visit: <https://www.dfas.mil/retiredmilitary/manage/mypay/>

VETERANS ADMINISTRATION (VA) NEW WEB FEATURE & PHONE NUMBER: The VA has launched a new web feature and new phone number designed to ease frustrations faced by veterans trying to connect with services and resources.

Beneficiaries can now update their contact information via their [VA.gov profile](#), and the change will synchronize across VA networks. Veterans can enter demographic information - including a phone number, email addresses, home addresses, and disability ratings *one time* and have it change across networks addressing health care, disability compensation, pension benefits, claims/appeals, and the Veteran Readiness and Employment (VR&E) program. Previously, if a veteran needed to change any demographic information, they were required to call *each individual VA network* where that information is on file. (Veterans still must connect with separate offices to change details regarding education and home loan benefits, CHAMPVA, Veterans' Mortgage Life Insurance, and The Foreign Medical Program.) Step-by-step instructions on changing your address are available [at this link](#).

The administration also has officially launched the **My VA hotline**, which will serve as the starting point to all VA contact centers and will help veterans find the right person to address their needs. Veterans can call 1-800-MyVA411 (1-800-698-2411) with the option to press 0 to be immediately connected with a customer service agent to answer questions or connect to the appropriate VA expert. The hotline operates 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. **Please remember you always have access to local Veteran Service Officers (VSOs) here in CO. Locate the one closest to you using the following link:** <https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/vets/county-veterans-service-offices>

The VA also maintains the Veterans Crisis Line at 1-800-273-8255, by chat at veteranscrisisline.net and by text message at 838255. The VA also maintains the White House VA Hotline at 1-855-948-2311 which can be used "for Veterans and their families to share compliments and concerns," per the release.

MILITARY BENEFITS BY STATE: The "MyArmyBenefits" website has a map that allows you to view the benefits available to you by each U.S. state or territory. You just click on a specific state on a map or select it from the drop-down menu. State benefits include tax benefits, education benefits, employment benefits, health insurance benefits, and more. Each fact sheet contains details of the benefits available and eligibility to the military member and family members. You can check out the site at the following link: <https://myarmybenefits.us.army.mil/Benefit-Library/State/Territory-Benefits>

BUCKLEY AFB AGENT LETTERS - WHAT ARE THEY? Did you know if you are a family member of an elderly military retiree, or their surviving spouse, that has trouble getting around on their own you may be able to get authorization to shop for them, as their "agent", at the commissary, exchange and base pharmacy? You will require a letter from the care provider of the retiree/surviving spouse, which you will then take to the MPF in Bldg 606, where you (the "agent") and the retiree/surviving spouse will fill out a "Commissary/AAFES/MWR Escort Authorizations" form. You will need two forms of ID, the agent's driver's license the sponsors military ID. Once the form is completed you will be issued an "Agent Letter" which you will take to the Visitor Control Center (VCC) by the 6th Ave gate and Security will issue you a card/letter which will allow you to access the base and use those facilities without your retiree/surviving spouse being with you. For any questions, or more details, on this process please contact the MPF at 720-847-6974 (per the above form).

CASUALTY ASSISTANCE: If you know of a recently deceased military retiree, surviving spouse of a military retiree or a veteran who was receiving a disability payment from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) the RAO can provide guidance making the necessary notifications. For those receiving a military pension, Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) payments, VA disability payments or Dependency and Indemnity payments notifications must be made to the Defense Finance & Accounting Service (DFAS), VA, etc. The RAO can put you in touch with the Buckley AFB Casualty Assistance Representative (CAR), provide you with a "checklist" to help guide you through process, provide you with phone numbers and websites for various organizations, etc. Please contact the RAO (720-847-6693) with any questions.

WEBSITE TO SUBMIT SURVEYS & SUGGESTIONS ON BUCKLEY AFB SERVICES: The following link below will take you to the Buckley AFB ICE site: https://ice.disa.mil/index.cfm?fa=site&site_id=385
On this site you can select which base Service you want to comment on (Health, Personnel Services, Recreation, etc) then select the desired area to a specific survey you can fill out. On the survey form will be a place for

“Comments and Recommendations for Improvement.” While there is no specific listing for the base pharmacy you can select “Health” then “460th Medical Group (Buckley AFB)” and use that survey form. This website was only recently provided to me when I asked how pharmacy customers could submit comments/suggestions now that the building itself is closed and retirees don’t have access to the suggestion forms inside the building. **This way you should be able to submit comments on the MPF, Outdoor Rec, gym, pharmacy, Exchange, etc.**

EMPLOYMENT SERVICES FOR VETERANS: Arapahoe/Douglas Works! (A/D Works!) Workforce Center is a member of the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment and provides a variety of no-cost services to veteran job seekers; resources and workshops for a self-directed job search, one-on-one employment counseling, customizing resumes, referrals to other state and federal agencies and training assistance. For more information you can visit their website at <http://www.adworks.org/> Just FYI, there is an A/D Works! Veterans Employment Specialist that works several days a week in Bldg 606 on base (when non-mission essential personnel are allowed back in their offices on Buckley AFB). For more info you can also contact the AD Works! Call Center at (303) 636-1160 and ask to be contacted to a Veterans Employment Team Member.

ASKDFAS WEBSITE AVAILABLE: DFAS has the askDFAS website available with a specific category for “Retirees and Annuitants.” When you click on that category you will find general categories related to MyPay, mailing address, tax statements, reporting a retirees death, arrears of pay, etc. This site allows you to submit questions to DFAS via e-mail instead of using the customer service number so some may find it more convenient. You can check it out at <https://www.dfas.mil/dfas/AskDFAS/>

HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED UNSATISFACTORY SERVICE FROM THE RAO? We are staffed completely with volunteers who do their very best to help with your issues. While we always strive to provide you with the best possible support, we realize there may be times you experience what you consider to be unsatisfactory customer service when you contact the RAO. Perhaps you never received a response to a voice mail/e-mail you left, you got inaccurate information regarding a question you had or the person who helped you was unable to provide an adequate answer to your question. **If you are ever dissatisfied with the support you get from the RAO please contact the RAO Director to discuss the situation.** The best way to reach me is via my home e-mail - elkfive@centurylink.net.

RAO VOLUNTEERS NEEDED: We currently have only 7 permanent RAO volunteers that support our “Help Desk” (720-847-6693) which, when all volunteers are available, means the office has someone present during some hours of the morning and afternoon Mon-Fri. You can leave a voice mail anytime, and we check Voice Mails frequently to return calls. We can still find time slots during the week to use one or two volunteers. **If you think you might be interested, or just have questions, please contact me (Steve Young) at my home e-mail - elkfive@centurylink.net.**

COAST GUARD NATIONAL RETIREE HELP DESK (NRHD) HOTLINE: For any questions a retiree or retiree spouse has regarding benefits (other than those related to pay) such as health care issues, assistance obtaining important forms and/or papers, etc. call 1-888-224-6743 or e-mail nrhdesk@gmail.com. For questions concerning pay call 1-866-772-8724 or e-mail ppc-dg-customer@uscg.mil.

BUCKLEY AFB LEGAL OFFICE: Due to COVID, **the base legal office is still closed to military retirees and surviving spouses.**

CORRECTING & REQUESTING MILITARY RECORDS: **On 5 Apr 2021 the Department of the Air Force debuted a new website for past and present Airmen and Space Guardians to correct their military records.** To make the portal accessible to both active-duty and retired service members, the website does **not** require a Common Access Card (CAC). Instead, a unique e-application number will be provided to track each case. While members can still submit applications via mail, processing times may be slower. Members can use their unique e-application number to check the status of their application, whether it was submitted online or via mail.

The application portal has a decision tree that guides members through the process of figuring out which board they should apply to and determine their eligibility to apply based on their service and the issue they're trying to get corrected for the records.

Members, and those submitting on their behalf, can submit applications and supporting documents to four boards: The Air Force Board for Correction of Military Records, Air Force Discharge Review Board, Department of Defense Discharge Appeal Review Board and Department of Defense Physical Disability Board of Review.

The **records correction website** is at <https://Afrba-portal.cce.af.mil>.

In many instances, records that are available in electronic formats may also be accessed directly by veterans, without involvement from National Personnel Records Center (NPRC - 866-272-6272). We understand these are **not** CAC card sites and all you need is a DS Logon or ID.ME account. Basically, each of the options listed here are veteran's self-service portals for VA claims, VA healthcare and retiree DFAS pay. Some options are below:

Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) eBenefits application at <https://www.ebenefits.va.gov/ebenefits/homepage>

Department of Defense milConnect application at <https://milconnect.dmdc.osd.mil/milconnect/>.

Modern military medical records may be accessed through the VA's Blue Button application at <https://www.va.gov/health-care/get-medical-records/>.

For more information regarding the online availability of VA and military records, please visit <https://www.va.gov/records/>

If a veteran has filed for disability or pension benefits before, the VA may have pulled their DD-214. If so, VSOs who have access to the Veterans Benefits Management System (VBMS) can look into their file and retrieve it. Be aware this is dependent on each individual VSO and the counties they work in as to whether this is possible. **Even if requesting records from NPRC we recommend contacting your VSO to assist in the request.**

Another place you can request a copy of your DD-214 is through the State Veterans Department from whichever state was your home of record at discharge. As mentioned, you can always contact a local Veteran Service Officer (VSO) to request assistance in getting a copy of your records. You can find a VSO closest to you using the following website: [Veteran Service Officers - List of Where to Find \(nvf.org\)](http://www.nvf.org)

You can also request a copy of your records (DD-214, Official Military Personnel File, Replacement Medals, Medical and Health Records) from the National Archives in a number of ways. You can make your request online at the National Archives website, you can fill out and submit a form SF-180 and mail/Fax it or you can write a letter to the National Archives.

You can find additional information on getting copies of your records from the National Archives web site at <https://www.archives.gov/personnel-records-center/military-personnel> or calling 314-801-0800.

REPORTING THE DEATH OF A RETIREE TO DFAS ONLINE: **DFAS has re-introduced the option to report the death of a retiree online.** To use the online Notice of Death option, click on the link at the top of the Retired Military & Annuitants main page, which is located at <https://www.dfas.mil/retiredmilitary.html>. This will take you to a form where you will enter all of the pertinent information. When reporting a retiree's death, be sure to have the following information available:

- Retiree's full name
- Retiree's SSN
- Retiree's date of death
- Cause of death

- Marital status (if married, the wedding date)

The form also asks for your name, address, phone number and email address. If you are completing this form on behalf of someone else, such as the spouse or child of the deceased retiree, please use the contact information of the person you are helping to make the report. Updates on the status of the claim will be sent to the email address provided, including an email verifying that the notification was received. If you need any assistance you can always contact the Buckley AFB Casualty Assistance Representative, Loretta Lopez, at 720-847-6946.

STATE VA BENEFITS: Everyone knows about the federal benefits available to veterans, but did you know many *states* also offer great benefits to their veterans? State benefits range from free college and employment resources to free hunting and fishing licenses. Most states also offer tax breaks for their veterans and specialized license plates, some states even provide their veterans with cash bonuses just for serving in the military. A handy summary of the benefits each state and territory offers can be found here: <https://militarybenefits.info/state-veterans-benefits/> There may be a benefit available to you or your family that you didn't know about!
Other **Federal VA benefit numbers:** life insurance 800-669-8477; status of headstones and markers, 800-697-6947; special issues such as Gulf War/radiation/Agent Orange/Project Shad call 800-749-8387; and GI Bill and education matters call 888-442-4551. Visit the Federal website at www.va.gov/ for more info.

DENVER VA REGIONAL BENEFITS OFFICE HOURS & LOCATIONS: *Do you have a question about your VA Benefits? Compensation Claim, Pension Claim, Aid and Attendance, Appeals, survivor and burial benefits, Home Loans, Employment, or Education*

The VBA Office in the Rocky Mountain Regional VA Medical Center is holding office hours:

Office Hours: Monday - Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. (last appt. at 3:30 p.m.)

Phone: (800) 827-1000

Location:

Rocky Mountain Regional VA Medical Center

Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA)

1700 North Wheeling Street

Aurora, CO 80045

Sign up to meet with a counselor in the Pharmacy waiting room.

We also have a Veterans Affairs Office on Buckley AFB in Bldg 606 with Benefits Advisors (Mr Tyrone Groce & Ms Deloris Evans) who can normally be reached at 720-847-4838 from Mon-Fri 0800 - 1600. During the pandemic you can reach them at 571-461-8505/571-344-2335.

LOCAL ID CARD RENEWAL LOCATIONS: While you need to verify who is still operating and their hours of operation during the pandemic, below are **locations** where you can get an ID card.

MPF at Buckley AFB (Bldg 606 on 18401 E A-Basin Ave) - by appointment only. You can call them at 720-847-4357 to schedule an appointment.

ANG at Buckley AFB (18860 E Breckenridge Ave, Hangar 801, Rm N224) - Call 720-847-9295, closed Monday.

NAVOPS Space Ctr at Buckley AFB (7 N Snowmass St, Bldg 1301) - you can call 720-847-7808, Closed Monday

CO HQ Army NG in Centennial (6848 South Revere Pkwy) - you can call 720-250-1315, Closed on Monday.

NOAA Facility in Boulder (Skaggs Bldg, Rm GB515 - 325 Broadway) - you can call 303-497-6119, open Mon-Wed-Fri by appointment only.

GRAY AREA RESERVISTS: We get quite a few calls in the RAO from Gray Area Reservists approaching 60 who have questions regarding the processing of their retirement package, when they can anticipate their first pension check, what they need to do regarding Tricare, etc. Below is some POC information for Guard/Reserve members from the various services. We can also provide you with a copy of DoD Fm 2656 (current version is Oct 2018) if you are having trouble downloading it.

Air Force Guard/Reserve:

Air Reserve Personnel Center (ARPC): <https://www.arpc.afrc.af.mil/retirement/> or 1-800-525-0102. If you experience trouble reaching ARPC with this number, please get in touch with us and we will use our back-channel contacts at ARPC to try and assist. ARPC encourages retirees to file retirement packages using a MyPers account. There is a retirement application status bar in MyPers so applicants can track the status of their submitted package. Instructions on the status bar can be found at:

<https://www.arpc.afrc.af.mil/Portals/4/Documents/Retirement%20application%20status%20bar%20instructions.pdf?ver=2019-11-20-120624-723×tamp=1574269784796>

Army Guard/Reserve Personnel in CO

88th Readiness Division Retirement Services Office (RSO) - 60 South O Street, Ft. McCoy, Wisconsin 54656 608-388-7448/9321 or DSN 280-0596. Locally, **Mr. Randy Stroud (1SG, Ret) is the Retirement Services Officer (RSO) for the Army National Guard, but he can assist with Reserves. He can be reached at 720-250-1341.**
<http://soldierforlife.army.mil/retirement/reserve-component-retirement-services>

Navy Guard/Reserve Personnel

PERS-912: 1-866-827-5672 or 1-833-330-6622

https://www.public.navy.mil/bupers-npc/support/retired_activities/Pages/default.aspx

The Navy also has a MyNavy Career Center website at <https://www.public.navy.mil/bupers-npc/organization/npc/MNCC/Pages/default.aspx> or you can call 1-833-330-6622 for assistance.

USMC Reserve Personnel

MMSR-5 Reserve Retirement & Separation Section: 703-784-9306/9307

Coast Guard Reserve Personnel

National Retiree Help Desk Hotline (unless it is a pay related issue): 1-833-224-6743 -
For pay related issues call 1-800-772-8724 or 785-339-3415

<https://www.dcms.uscg.mil/Our-Organization/Assistant-Commandant-for-Human-Resources-CG-1/Retiree-Services-Program/>

Colorado Transition Assistance Advisor (TAA)

This office assists Service members in accessing Dept of VA health care services & benefits. The TAA initiative was started in May 2005 when the National Guard Bureau (NGB) signed a MoA with the VA.

Amy Eagen - 720-250-1173 (works Tues-Fri)

MyPay ADDRESS CHANGE: The simplest and quickest solution for updating your mailing address is through myPay, using the online account management system. For any questions or concerns regarding myPay, call 888-332-7411 (option 5) for a customer service representative. Both retirees and annuitants may call DFAS Retired and Annuitant Pay at 800-321-1080. If you call MyPay have your banking information available - you may need **routing and account information** before they will talk with you.

MAIL OPTION: Please include: both your old and new mailing address, effective date for the new address, your name, social security number and signature with date on your request. For retirees, use the address below:

DFAS U.S. Military Retired Pay
8899 E 56th Street
Indianapolis, IN 46249-1200
Or FAX DFAS Retired Pay at 800-469-6559

If you are an annuitant please mail your request to:

DFAS U.S. Military Annuitant Pay
8899 E 56th Street
Indianapolis, IN 46249-1300
Or FAX DFAS Annuitant Pay at 800-982-8459

LIFE CHANGING EVENT? KEEP DFAS INFORMED: Ensuring your retired pay comes to you accurately and on time is the primary goal at DFAS. To do this, they need your help to keep your account up to date. *Keeping your account up to date includes making sure your mailing address, banking information, allotments, tax withholding status, and your beneficiary choices are current. Be sure to report any change of life events as soon as they happen. These life-changing events include:*

- Marriage
- Divorce
- Death of a spouse or child
- Birth or adoption of a child

Some changes, especially those regarding SBP, have a one-year time limit, so it is very important that DFAS is notified of life-changing events when they happen. When you notify them, be sure to include supporting documents, such as birth or marriage certificates. Keeping your contact information updated is also key to staying informed. DFAS occasionally sends out correspondence regarding changes in the law that affect your pay, and a new Retired Account Statement (RAS) is sent when your net pay changes (unless you are on **myPay** where the new RAS is available online). **If your mailing address is not correct and you are not on myPay, they have no way of notifying you about changes. The easiest way to stay up to date is to use myPay. You can use myPay to change your mailing address, your direct deposit information, Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) coverage, certain allotments and your tax withholding status. You can create a myPay account at <https://mypay.dfas.mil/>**

Reporting the Death of a Retiree

Do your loved ones know who to contact in the event of your death? Casualty Assistance Representatives (CARs) stand ready to lend a hand with your casualty assistance needs. Call them for an appointment to talk about what you should have ready for your loved ones in the event of your passing. **If you are not sure who your AF Casualty Assistance Representative (CAR) is, you can call 877-353-6807, enter your zip code, and you will be automatically transferred to the base CAR responsible for your area.**

Buckley AFB Casualty Assistance Office (Loretta Lopez) - CAR/SBP Rep 720-847-6946

Retired Air Force.....	1-877-353-6807
Retired Army.....	1-800-626-3317
Retired Coast Guard.....	1-800-772-8724
Retired Marines.....	1-800-847-1597
Retired Navy.....	1-800-368-3202
Retired Civil Service.....	1-888-767-6738
Receiving VA Compensation.....	1-800-827-1000
Social Security Administration.....	1-800-772-1213

BUCKLEY AFB WEB SITE - RETIREE PAGE: Check our Retiree page on the Buckley AFB website at <http://www.buckley.af.mil/Units/Retiree-Activities-Office/> There are links to informative websites related to ID

cards, military/retiree support organizations and online news, reporting the death of a service member/spouse, retiree information/resources, veteran's records, survivor assistance, travel & lodging, etc. The last three issues of our newsletter are posted here. We welcome your feedback on the site!

AFTERBURNER: Air Force Retiree Services (AFRS) at Randolph AFB, TX publishes the Afterburner twice a year. You can find copies of the Afterburner at the following link: <https://www.retirees.af.mil/library/afterburner/>

BUCKLEY AFB OUTDOOR REC & ITT: Buckley AFB Outdoor Rec and Information Tickets & Travel (ITT) (Bldg 1022) provides many programs and services to the Buckley community, as well as the worldwide US Department of Defense community. Stop by and check out ITT where they sell many in-state and out-of-state tickets to theme parks including Elitch Gardens, Disney and Universal Studios, plus local professional sports games such as the Nuggets and Rockies. For skiers and snowboarders, they sell lift tickets and season passes to most Colorado ski areas. For their ticket list, stop by ITT or give them a call at **720-847-6100**.

Other services provided by Outdoor Rec include an RV storage lot, Williams FamCamp RV Park, guided trips, outdoor adventures, ski and snowboard tuning services and retail sales of outdoor apparel and equipment. They also offer a wide variety of equipment for rent at very reasonable prices (camping gear, home & garden equipment, picnic needs, sports equipment & games, campers & trailers, party equipment, etc). See their website for additional information: <https://www.460fss.com/outdoor-rec-itt/>

Currently, Outdoor Rec's pandemic hours are **Mon/Tues/Thurs/Fri from 0900 to 1500** for all your rental needs. They will also begin "Meet Up" adventure trips. Patrons will travel to the site in their own vehicles and adhere to the social distancing and mask wear/face covering guidelines.

This newsletter is a RAO publication for retirees, annuitants and surviving spouses. Content is not to be construed as the official view of, or endorsement by, the RAO, the U.S. Government, the Department of Defense or the Air Force.