



# COLUMBIA VOYAGER

<http://www.TriCitiesMOAA.org>

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## November 2011

### Shared Memories

For the November meeting, we will repeat a program from a few years ago. We'll ask everyone to bring an object from their military career – a souvenir from an exotic place, a memento of your job. Be prepared to spend about 2 minutes explaining what it is and why it is important to you. Everyone had a lot of fun with this last time we did it, so start digging through those boxes in the back of the closet.

Our meeting will be at the Red Lion in Richland, the Hanford House, on George Washington Way in Richland. The staff there will serve a plated dinner. There are two choices, a chicken breast crusted with aged cheddar cheese, roasted and served with chive butter sauce; or a medley of roasted vegetables in pastry with charred tomato and pepper sauce, topped with feta cheese. Please be ready to indicate your choice when making your reservation.

You will notice that the price is a little higher than in recent meetings. The inflation that is driving our COLA has hit the restaurant business. We can bid a fond farewell to \$20 dinners, and \$25 meals will be rare in the future.

Reservations to Bob Allen by noon, Thursday, November 10.

### From Hq MOAA . . .

#### Benefits in danger

Many Hill leaders proudly note that, in the last-ditch event of a sequester that imposes \$1.2 trillion in across-the-board budget cuts, there's language in the sequester law that protects VA healthcare and

other VA programs from taking any cuts.

But there's no such protection for any military TRICARE programs, and the Administration has proposed significant fee hikes for military beneficiaries of all ages.

Please send your legislators a message asking why currently serving, retired, and surviving military families should be any less deserving of protection than VA beneficiaries.

#### The 798-Pound Medicare/ TRICARE Problem

This week, Medicare announced that payments to health care providers through Medicare and TRICARE would be cut by 27.4% on January 1 without Congressional action. This figure is slightly lower than the 30% Medicare has estimated previously.

But the technical change (based on updated estimates of Medicare costs and assumptions) won't make the consequences any less devastating if Congress fails to pass a legislative fix before the end of the year to prevent this large cut.

Either number will cause significant numbers of doctors to stop seeing elderly and military patients.

The new Medicare announcement serves as a reminder that Congress has less than two months to take action, and their schedule is filling up fast, with debate on the "Super Committee's" findings likely to take up much of December.

This is another problem worth writing to your elected officials about.

#### Part B Premium Surprise

On Thursday Medicare officials announced the new Part B premium

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rates for 2012 – and they were significantly lower across the board than most people had expected. And for the first time in memory, large numbers of seniors will actually see their premiums drop significantly.

Most beneficiaries with incomes under \$85,000 (or \$170,000 for couples) will see a small increase in monthly premiums from \$96.40 to \$99.90 – an increase of 3.6%.

But for some in that category (specifically, those who first became eligible for Medicare in 2010 and

2011) the \$99.90 rate will be less than what they paid in 2011.

Similarly, beneficiaries with incomes above \$85,000 (\$170,000 for married couples) will see their premiums drop by \$20-\$50 per month.

Why the declines? Because these two groups (new eligibles and upper-income beneficiaries) were hit with extra premium hikes for the past two years. That happened because the law generally bars any drop in Social Security benefits when there's no COLA. That means most people had their Part B pre-

miums frozen for the last two years. But new eligibles and upper-income people were exempt from the freeze, so they absorbed not only their share of the 2010 and 2011 hikes, but also had to cover the share of all of the "frozen" beneficiaries.

Now that the premiums for those 75% of beneficiaries who were held harmless are able to rise, Medicare was able to lift the extra premium burden previously imposed on the unprotected 25%.

Lewis and Clark Chapter  
Military Officers Association of America  
106 Hills West Way  
Richland WA 99352-9446

Red Lion Inn (Hanford House)  
802 George Washington Way  
Richland

Social hour at 6:30  
Dinner at 7:00  
\$30.00 per person

***A reservation made  
is a reservation paid.***

## ***November Meeting***

**Tuesday, November 15**

Reservations by  
**Noon Thursday, Nov 10**

Bob Allen  
627-6226  
moaa.tricities@charter.net

### ***Menu***

**Tillamook Cheddar Chive  
Chicken**

or

**Medley of Roasted Vegetables**

House Salad  
Chef's Choice Starch  
Fresh Seasonal Vegetables  
Rolls & Butter  
Chef's Choice Dessert  
Regular & Decaffeinated Coffee,  
Hot Tazo Tea, and Iced Tazo Tea  
Pay-as-you-go Bar