



COLUMBIA VOYAGER

<http://www.TriCitiesMOAA.org>

chapter@TriCitiesMOAA.org

February 2012

Doc Hastings at the Bamboo Garden

We will return to an old favorite for the February meeting, the Bamboo Garden on Grandridge Ave., west of Columbia Center Blvd. As in the past, the chef is preparing much more food than we can eat and at an affordable price.

Our speaker will be Doc Hastings, our representative in the House of Representatives. Doc Hastings was elected to the House in 1995 and has been reelected ever since. Before serving in Congress, Doc served eight years in the Washington State Legislature.

After graduating from Pasco High School, Doc studied business administration at Columbia Basin College and at Central Washington University. Later, he ran his family's small business, Columbia Basin Paper and Supply.

Doc founded the bipartisan Congressional Nuclear Cleanup Caucus to promote the cleanup of nuclear waste sites like Hanford. Each year Doc works to ensure that Hanford's cleanup progress is accomplished as safely, quickly, and efficiently as possible.

Doc and his wife Claire live in Pasco. They have three children and eight grandchildren.

The February meeting will give us a chance to hear directly from our Congressman about events in the capital and to enjoy a good meal. Reservations to Bob Allen by

Tuesday, February 14.

Dues

Membership dues for 2012 are \$15. If you haven't paid, please

bring your dues to the February meeting or send your check made out to "Lewis & Clark Chapter," to:

Paul Seipt
232 Somerset Street
Richland WA 99354-1964

From Hq MOAA . . .

Serve Longer - Pay More

Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta released details on significant defense cuts in the soon to be released FY2013 President's budget.

The Pentagon's FY2013 budget request is a \$6 billion dollar reduction compared to the FY2012 budget. The impact of the cuts to military members and retirees runs deep.

Retiree health care benefits takes a significant hit – most affected will be working age retirees under age 65. DoD's proposed changes include:

1. New enrollment fees and additional fee increases for retirees under age 65 enrolled in TRICARE by creating a "tiered" approach based on retired rank. This will require senior grade retirees to pay more for their health care than junior retirees.
2. An enrollment fee for TRICARE for Life beneficiaries 65 and older.
3. Increases in pharmacy co-pays.

The "tiered" approach to health care fees would make military retirees the only group of government retirees subject to healthcare means-testing. This is a concept we've fought ardently because it flies in the face of logic for a military service incentive – basically, the longer and more successfully you serve, the less benefit you earn.

The proposal doesn't include any changes to retirement pay, but

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DoD will ask Congress to establish a commission to review of the military retirement system. DoD reiterated that any changes resulting from the study would only affect future recruits.

Now we have to wait for details on exactly how steep the health care fee hikes will be. These should emerge once the President releases his budget on February 13.

"Doc Fix" Talks Begin - Slowly

In December, Congress agreed to a two month patch to avoid a 27% cut to the Medicare/TRICARE physician reimbursement rate (doc fix).

Congress agreed to establish a 20 member conference committee to hash out a long term extension of this and related issues when Congress returned to Washington in 2012.

On Jan 24, that panel of legislators met for the first time.

Aside from appointing a chairman and vice-chairman, the panel didn't accomplish much in their first meeting.

In the opening dialog both parties appeared to be entrenched along partisan lines much as they

were in 2011. The Democrats continue to insist that increased tax revenues must pay for part of the extension, while Republicans refuse to consider new taxes and want to pay for the extension solely through budget cuts.

One interesting development is that both sides seemed open to using projected war savings as one way of paying for the fix.

Congress has until February 29 to come up with an extension, but it seems negotiations have a long way to go. Thankfully the panel is supposed to meet again next week to continue the dialog.

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

Bamboo Gardens
8021 W. Grandridge Blvd.
Kennewick,

Social hour at 6:30
Dinner at 7:00
\$20.00 per person

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

February Meeting

Tuesday, February 21

Reservations by
Tuesday, February 14

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

Menu

Won Ton Soup
Egg Roll
Sweet and Sour Pork
Almond Chicken
Sweet and Sour Chicken
Beef with Snow Peas
Chicken with Vegetables
Stir Fried Mixed Vegetables
Coffee, Tea, dessert