

# The HR Advisor

Volume 1, Issue 11

December 2008

DoDEA  
Human Resources  
Regional Service Center

## Seasons Greetings!



The Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) Human Resources Service Center would like to wish all of you a safe and wonderful holiday season. This time of the year makes us truly appreciate all of the exceptional employees who make DoDEA such a wonderful organization. We would like you to know that we are available to assist you with any human Resource related questions or problems you may have. School level employees should seek assistance from the school secretary or school administrator. Each district is serviced by a senior human resource specialist for guidance and help to all employees in that district. Also, the DoDEA website is a useful tool for information on what's new at DoDEA and it provides you with links to all of your personnel matters.

## 2008 Department of Defense U.S. Savings Bonds Program

The U.S. Savings Bonds Program offers an affordable investment to help increase personal savings and provides competitive interest rates with the convenience of a systematic savings plan.

Effective November 1, 2008, Series EE bonds will earn 1.30% while Series I bonds will earn 5.64%. These rates are in effect until May 2009. Some benefits of savings bonds are:

- Attractive interest rates,
- Tax advantage - earnings are tax exempt until the bond reaches final maturity or is redeemed,
- Safety - the principal and earned interest are safe and cannot be lost because of market changes,
- Affordability - savings bonds can be purchased for as little as \$50 or a very small payroll deduction, and
- Convenience - the easiest way to purchase savings bonds is through MyPay with an automatic allotment.

Employees may purchase both Series EE and I bonds through MyPay at <https://mypay.dfas.mil/mypay.aspx>. MyPay allows employees to start, change, or stop savings bonds.

To purchase savings bonds in MyPay, an employee should have the following information on hand: the bond owner's name and social security number, the mailing address for the bond, and the name of the co-owner or beneficiary, if any. There is a limit of one owner and one co-owner or beneficiary per bond.

For Series EE and I savings bonds, the minimum holding period is 12 months. The minimum holding period is the length of time from issue date that a savings bond must be held before it is eligible for redemption.

Additional information about U.S. Savings Bonds is available at [www.savingsbonds.gov](http://www.savingsbonds.gov). For help using MyPay, contact the Centralized Customer Support Unit at 1-888-332-7411, of (DSN) 580-5096 (7:00 a.m. - 6:30 p.m./Eastern time). For specific pay account related questions, contact your Customer Service Representative.

Seasons Greetings!	1
2008 Department of Defense U.S. Savings Bonds Program	1
Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) Elections	2
MyBiz & MyWorkplace	2
Renewal Transportation Agreements for Married Couples	3
Training Tidbits	3
Requesting a Presidential Retirement Letter	3
Educational Travel	4
Implementation of New Right Fax Numbers	4

### Did You Know:

#### ECP is Back!

The Educators Career Program (ECP) will be announced in December for educators in both DoDDS and DDESS to apply for administrator positions. Please watch for the announcement

The HR Advisor is a platform used to publish HR related articles and announcements for all DoDEA employees. If you have any articles that you would like published that may be beneficial to other employees, please email your articles to Latonya Boose at:

[Latonya.boose@hq.dodea.edu](mailto:Latonya.boose@hq.dodea.edu)

## Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) Elections

Section 402, of the Internal Revenue Tax Code limits the amount of income that you may elect to defer under all cash or deferred arrangements during a tax year. The total amount of the employees' 2008 contribution to the Thrift Savings Plan (TSP), cannot exceed the elective deferral limit of \$15,500. When the elective deferral limit is reached, your employee contributions must be suspended for the remainder of the year. The TSP will not accept any contributions that exceed this limit unless you are over age 50, in which case your contributions cannot exceed the sum of the Internal Revenue Code elective deferral limit plus the "catch-up" contribution limit for that year. The catch-up contribution limit for 2008 is \$5,000. Employees wanting to ensure their TSP elections reach the maximum contributions for 2008 are reminded there are only a few pay periods left for calendar year 2008 in which you can make TSP contributions and they will be credited to the 2008 tax year. TSP contributions are credited to the tax year in which TSP receives the contribution; therefore any contributions received by the TSP in 2009; even if the pay period ended in December 2008, will be credited toward the 2009 tax year. Employees should monitor their Leave and Earnings Statement to ensure the proper deductions are being withheld and to determine whether or not you will reach the maximum elective deferral limit within the timeframe that you wish to do so.

The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) has released the elective deferral limits for 2009. The annual maximum contribution to a regular TSP account is \$16,500, a \$1,000 increase from 2008 and the limit on Catch-up Contributions for 2009 is \$5,500; increased by \$500.

To be eligible to make catch-up contributions, you must be:

- Age 50 or older during the calendar year in which the catch-up contributions are made
- Currently employed and in pay status; and
- Making regular contributions to a civilian or uniformed services TSP account, and/or an equivalent employer plan that will equal the maximum allowed by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), which is \$15,500 in 2008.

TSP elections can be made at any time with no percentage or dollar limits on employee contributions. The only limits are those imposed by the Internal Revenue Code for elective deferral limits. Employees should access EBIS at <https://hq-w3.dodea.edu/> to make their elections. To determine the maximum amount you should contribute each pay period use the online calculator available on the TSP website <http://www.tsp.gov/calc/contributions/index.html>.

Employees may elect TSP contributions for calendar year 2009 through the Employee Benefits Information System (EBIS) beginning December 7, 2008.

If you need further assistance with making your election through EBIS, please contact your local HR Representative, email the Benefits Unit at [Benefits@hq.dodea.edu](mailto:Benefits@hq.dodea.edu) or call the Benefits Unit directly at 703-588-3981 or DSN 425-3981. For additional information on the Thrift Savings Plan, visit the TSP website at [www.tsp.gov](http://www.tsp.gov).

## MyBiz & MyWorkplace

MyBiz and MyWorkplace are important tools for employees and supervisors. Not only are they the key for the National Security Personnel System (NSPS), they also give employees and supervisors access to valuable human resources data. Employees can use MyBiz to view specific personal and position data on themselves, as well as to update certain data elements such as ethnicity, disability status, foreign language proficiency, email address, and emergency contact information. MyWorkplace allows managers and supervisors to see key information on the positions they supervise. Together, both systems give employees and supervisors under NSPS the ability to create and update performance appraisal information. Employees will be able to view and print SF-50 transactions in MyBiz. Over time, more functionality will be added to MyBiz, giving employees even more access to their personal information while ultimately empowering employees to initiate certain personnel actions for themselves.

To adhere to DoD IT security policies, the Defense Civilian Personnel Data System (including MyBiz and MyWorkplace) is now Common Access Card (CAC) enabled. This means you need your CAC card and personal identification number (PIN) to access My Biz/MyWorkplace and you must access the system from a DoDEA computer. All employees are encouraged to access MyBiz and update their ethnicity, disability status, emergency contact information, email address, and foreign language proficiency.

For more assistance on new user registration or how to navigate MyBiz and MyWorkplace after registration, go to: <http://www.dodea.edu/offices/hr/news/documents/CACRegistrationforMyBizUsers.pdf>.



## Renewal Transportation Agreements for Married Couples



In accordance with the Joint Travel Regulations, Volume 2, paragraph C5568, when a husband and wife are both Government employees in the same OCONUS duty station, the renewal agreement is negotiated either with (1) each separately (if this option is elected, the other employee may not be treated as a spouse and other dependents may not benefit twice); or (2) one as head of the household and the other treated as a spouse. The couple must elect either alternative (1) or (2) in writing signed by both husband and wife. An employee who elects travel and transportation allowances as a spouse does not forfeit travel and transportation allowances for return of self, dependents, or household goods upon separation accrued under an initial agreement. If you and your spouse are both employees at the same OCONUS duty station under separate transportation agreements for renewal agreement travel and have not already signed an election form, please contact your servicing Human Resources Specialist on the Customer Operations Team for an election form.

## Training Tidbits

### Mentoring

Mentoring is usually a formal or informal relationship between two people. Mentoring has been identified as an important influence in professional development in both the public and private sector. The campaign for talent is creating challenges for organizations, not only to recruit new talent, but to retain talent. Benefits of mentoring include increased employee performance, retention, commitment to the organization, and knowledge sharing.

Within the Federal Government, mentoring is often a component in developmental programs like the Senior Executive Service Candidate Development Program (SESCDP), Presidential Management Fellow (PMF) Program, or the USDA Graduate School Executive Leadership Program (ELP). Many agencies run formal stand-alone mentoring programs to enhance career and interpersonal development.

If you are interested in learning more about Mentoring go to <http://www.opm.gov/hrd/lead/Mentoring.asp> or contact your Human Resource Development Specialists at 703-588-3801.

## Requesting a Presidential Retirement Letter

There will be no Presidential Retirement letter request processed after January 2009, under the current Presidential Administration. All request received after the cutoff date will have to wait until the new Administration puts out new guidance. It takes approximate 30 days for the whole process therefore; all requests should be submitted before December 31, 2008.

To Request the Presidential card or letter the following information is needed 30 days in advance of the requested date.

- Name
- Grade
- Years of service
- Home address
- Organization
- Disposition Instructions
- Date requested (date the Presidential Card or Letter is needed)



This information should go through your servicing HR Specialist to HQ LMER ([jeannette.euille@hq.dodea.edu](mailto:jeannette.euille@hq.dodea.edu)). The information will then be put in proper format for the Deputy Director's signature and forward to Washington Headquarters Service (WHS).

### Who is Eligible:

You must have 30 or more years of government service to be eligible for the Presidential Card or Letter. Those retiring with 30-34 years of service will be issued the Presidential Card and those with 35-plus years of service will receive a Presidential Letter.

## Educational Travel



Educational Travel may be authorized for dependents of employees who are eligible for a living quarter's allowance. This entitlement permits one round trip annually between school and the foreign post of assignment for dependents who are under the age of 23 and attending a college, university, technical or vocational school on a full time basis. This benefit is primarily intended to reunite a full-time student attending a college, technical or vocational school with the employee serving the U.S. Government in the foreign area. Requests for educational travel are submitted in advance of the travel through the Travel Order Processing System (TOPS) on line. Additional information on Educational Travel is available from the Department of State's web page at the following address: [http://aoprals.state.gov/content.asp?content\\_id=250&menu\\_id=81](http://aoprals.state.gov/content.asp?content_id=250&menu_id=81)

## Implementation of New Right Fax Numbers



The Defense Finance and Accounting Service ( DFAS) Travel Pay Operations strives to pay travel claims accurately and in a timely manner. To ensure that your travel claims are paid timely, DFAS has moved to digital fax lines beginning November 1, 2008. New Right-Fax numbers and lines have been implemented for the civilian PCS travel customers in an effort to move away from all the Windows 2000 machines and upgrade to new machines. Although, the new fax numbers have been listed on the customer service website, the previous fax numbers beginning with a (614) area code, have still been operational and are still being used by some customers. Effective December 2008, all pre-existing fax numbers with a (614) area code used to submit claims or documents to Columbus Travel will be disconnected and no longer operational.

Fax numbers for submitting Permanent Duty Travel (PDT) vouchers/advance requests are listed below. If you unable to fax your claims/requests you have the option to email to the fax numbers below by utilizing the following however, we recommend the fax option over the e-mail; CCO-Complete Fax number followed by: @DFAS.MIL ( Example: CCO-216-367-3422@DFAS.MIL)

Customer Service 1-800-756-4571 Option 4

PDT Voucher Submissions fax (216)367-3422, 3423/3424

Set-up or change electronic Funds Transfer (EFT), fax a completed DD2762 to (216)367-3430

E-mail to Fax line CCO-Complete Fax # followed by: @DFAS.MIL

E-mail questions only to [col-travel-claims@dfas.mil](mailto:col-travel-claims@dfas.mil)

