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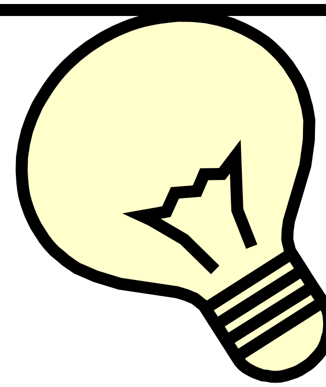

Shedding Light on the HR World

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This publication is issued to ensure the Fort Benning commanders, managers, supervisors, and employees are kept informed of employment and staffing issues.

Monthly issuances will contain updated information on specific employment topics (i.e., compensation, recruiting procedures, travel entitlements, classification issues, the Maneuver Center of Excellence (MCOE) civilian transition, etc.).

This newsletter is an apercu of articles written by CPAC staff [members] as well as information excerpted from various sources which include, but is not limited to, the Government Executive Newsletter, FedWEEK, the Federal Manager's Daily Report, FEDSmith, and the ABC-C Newsletter.

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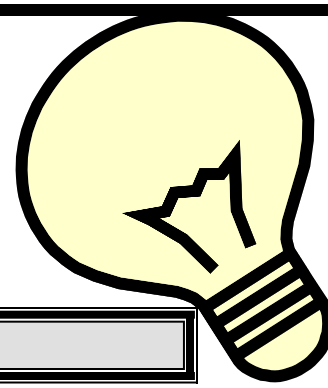


Retirement, Life/Health Insurance, TSP, Social Security and Such

FEGLI Benefits Payable to the Terminally Ill (Living Benefits). Did you know that an employee, annuitant, or compensationer enrolled in the FEGLI Program who has been diagnosed as terminally ill with a life expectancy of 9 months or less can apply to receive FEGLI benefits while still living, rather than paid to a beneficiary or survivor after death? This provision of the FEGLI Program is known as "living benefits."

Only the terminally ill person can apply for a living benefit. No one else (i.e., a guardian, someone with power of attorney, etc.), can apply for a living benefit on the insured's behalf. Also, in order to receive living benefits, the Office of Federal Employees' Group Life Insurance (OFEGLI) must agree with the diagnosis, and the employee must not have assigned his/her insurance.

Current employees can elect either a full living benefit, (i.e., all of Basic insurance), or a partial living benefit (which must be expressed as a multiple of $1,000). Annuitants and compensationers can elect only a full living benefit.

Although a sensitive subject, living benefits could significantly help with financial and/or other personal needs during times of illness and possible absence from work for the individual and/or family caregivers.

Employees may seek counseling on this subject from the Army Benefits Center-Civilian (ABC-C). However, individuals who wish to apply for a living benefit must contact the Office of Federal Employees' Group Life Insurance (OFEGLI) at 1-800-633-4542.

ABC-C Employee Benefits Information System (EBIS). Effective 1 October 2011, the Army Benefits Center-Civilian (ABC-C) Employee Benefits Information System (EBIS) will be accessible only by Common Access Card (CAC). This change is mandated in order to comply with DOD and Army policy.

EBIS will only be accessible from a computer with an installed and operational CAC reader. Most, if not all, DOD computers are already configured this way.

This will affect users who access EBIS from their home computers. Home users may still access EBIS if they have installed and configured a CAC reader on their home computers.

Additionally, benefit transactions can still be made by through our Interactive Voice Response System (IVRS) which is our automated self-service program you can access

from a touch-tone telephone system. IVRS is available 24 hours a day. The toll-free number is 1-877-ARMYCTR (1-877-276- 9287).
Debts

Investing in the TSP. The TSP offers you two approaches to investing your money:

• The L Funds — These are "Lifecycle" funds that are invested according to a professionally designed mix of *stocks, bonds, and Government securities*. You select your L Fund based on your "time horizon," the future date at which you plan to start withdrawing your money. Depending upon your plans, this may be as soon as you leave or further in the future.

• Individual Funds — You make your own decisions about your investment mix by choosing from any or all of the individual TSP investment funds (G, F, C, S, and I Funds).

These investment options are designed so you can choose either the L Fund that is appropriate for your time horizon, or a combination of the individual TSP funds that will support your personal investment strategy. However, you may invest in any fund or combination of funds. Because the L Funds are already made up of the five individual funds, you will duplicate your investments if you invest simultaneously in an L Fund and the individual TSP funds.

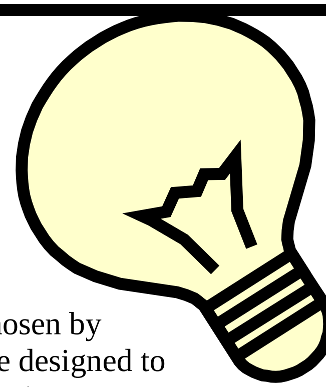
The L Funds

The L Funds are designed for participants who may not have the time, experience, or interest to manage their TSP retirement savings.

The five L Funds are:

L 2050 — For participants who will need their money in the year 2045 or later.
L 2040 — For participants who will need their money between 2035 and 2044.
L 2030 - For participants who will need their money between 2025 and 2034.
L 2020 — For participants who will need their money between 2015 and 2024.
L Income — For participants who are already withdrawing their accounts in monthly payments, or who plan to need their money between now and 2014.

The assumption underlying the L Funds is that participants with longer investment time horizons are able to tolerate more risk while seeking higher returns. The funds automatically adjust to reflect a reduced ability to sustain risk as the investment time horizon approaches.



Each L Fund invests in a mix of the five individual TSP funds. The mix is chosen by experts based on each fund's time horizon. The L Funds' asset allocations are designed to achieve the highest expected rate of return for the amount of risk taken. If the time horizon is a long time from now, the L Fund will be more exposed to risky assets, such as stocks in the C, S, and I Funds. As time horizons shorten, allocations gradually shift toward less volatile Government securities and bonds (G and F Funds).

The L Income Fund is designed to preserve your account balance while protecting against inflation.

Here are the investment mixes for each L Fund (rounded to whole percentages):

Asset Allocation of L Funds as of January 2011

	L2050	L2040	L2030	L2020	L Income
G	4%	11%	22%	36%	74%
F	7%	9%	8%	7%	6%
C	43%	40%	36%	30%	12%
S	19%	17%	14%	10%	3%
I	27%	23%	20%	17%	5%

Each L Fund is rebalanced each business day to restore the fund to its intended investment mix. Each quarter, the funds' asset allocations are adjusted to slightly more conservative investments. When an L Fund reaches its designated time horizon, it will roll into the L Income Fund, and a new fund will be added with a more distant time horizon.

Investing in the L Funds does not eliminate risk, and the funds are not guaranteed against loss. The L Funds are subject to the risks inherent in the underlying funds and can have periods of gain and loss.

The Individual Funds

The TSP has five individual investment funds:

The Government Securities Investment (G) Fund — The G Fund is invested in short-term U.S. Treasury securities. It gives you the opportunity to earn rates of interest similar to those of long-term Government securities with no risk of loss of principal. Payment of principal and interest is guaranteed by the U.S. Government. The interest paid by the G Fund securities is calculated monthly based on the market yields of all U.S. Treasury securities with more than 4 years to maturity; the interest rate changes monthly.

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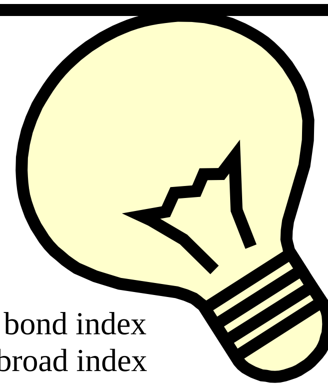


The Fixed Income Index Investment (F) Fund — The F Fund is invested in a bond index fund that tracks the Barclays Capital U.S. Aggregate Bond Index.* This is a broad index representing the U.S. Government, mortgage-backed, corporate, and foreign government sectors of the U.S. bond market. This fund offers you the opportunity to earn rates of return that exceed money market fund rates over the long term (particularly during periods of declining interest rates).

The Common Stock Index Investment (C) Fund — The C Fund is invested in a stock index fund that tracks the Standard & Poor's 500 (S&P 500) Stock Index. This is a market index made up of the stocks of 500 large to medium-sized U.S. companies. It offers you the potential to earn the higher investment returns associated with equity investments.

The Small Capitalization Stock Index (S) Fund — The S Fund is invested in a stock index fund that tracks the Dow Jones U.S. Completion Total Stock Market (TSM) Index. This is a market index of small and medium-sized U.S. companies that are not included in the S&P 500 index.
It offers you the opportunity to earn potentially higher investment returns that are associated with “small cap” investments, but with greater volatility.

International Stock Index Investment (I) Fund — The I Fund is invested in a stock index fund that tracks the Morgan Stanley Capital International EAFE (Europe, Australasia, Far East) Index. This is a broad international market index, made up of primarily large companies in 22 developed countries. It gives you the opportunity to invest in international stock markets and to gain a global equity exposure in your portfolio.

The chart below compares these five funds and provides more information about each.

Because the TSP funds are trust funds that are regulated by the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency and not by the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), they do not have ticker symbols (i.e., unique identifiers assigned to securities (including mutual funds) registered with the SEC). You can, however, obtain additional information about the underlying indexes that certain TSP funds track by visiting the following websites:

TSP Fund	Index TSP Fund Tracks
F Fund	Barclays Capital U.S. Aggregate Bond Index* (www.barcap.com)
C Fund	Standard & Poor’s 500 Stock Index

	(www.standardandpoors.com)
S Fund	Dow Jones U.S. Completion Total Stock Market (TSM) Index (www.djindexes.com)
I Fund	Morgan Stanley Capital International EAFE Stock Index (www.msci.com)

* Formerly Lehman Brothers U.S. Aggregate (LBA) Index

Comparison of the TSP Funds

The chart below provides a comparison of the available TSP funds. For **more detailed information** about each fund, see the **TSP Fund Information Sheets** (available on the TSP website, from your agency or service, or from the TSP)

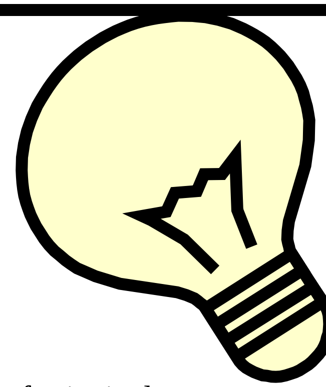
	G Fund	**F Fund***	**C Fund***	**S Fund***	**I Fund***	**L Funds****
Description of Investments	Government Securities (Specially issued to the TSP	Government, corporate, and mortgage-backed bonds	Stocks of large and medium U.S. companies	Stocks of small to medium-sized companies not included in the C Fund	International stocks of 22 developed countries	Invested in the G,F,C, S, and I Funds
Objective of Fund	Interest income without risk of loss of principal	To match the performance of the Barclays Capital U.S. Aggregate Bond Index	To match the performance of the Standard & Poors (S&P 500) Stock Index	To match the performance of the Dow Jones U.S. Completion TSM Index	To match the performance of the Morgan Stanley Capital International EAFE (Europe, Australasia, Far East) Stock Index	To provide professionally diversified portfolios based on various time horizons, using the G,F,C,S, and I Funds
Risk	Inflation risk	Market risk, credit risk, prepayment risk, inflation	Market Risk inflation Risk	Market Risk, inflation risk	Market risk, currency risk, inflation risk	Exposed to all the types of risk to which the individual TSP funds are exposed – but

						total risk is reduced through diversification among the five individual funds
Volatility	Low	Low to moderate	Moderate	Moderate to high – historically more volatile than C Fund	Moderate to high – historically more volatile than C Fund	Asset allocation shifts as time horizons approaches to reduce volatility
Types of Earnings* **	Interest	Change in market prices Interest	Change in market prices Dividends	Change in market prices Dividends	Change in market prices Change in relative value of currency Dividends	Composite of earnings in the underlying funds
Inception Date	1 April 87	29 Jan 88	29 Jan 88	1 May 01	1 May 01	1 Aug 02****

* The F, C, S, and I Funds also have earnings from securities lending income and from temporary investments in G Fund securities. These amounts represent a very small portion of total earnings.
** Each of the L Funds is invested in the individual TSP funds (G, F, C, S, and I). The proportion of your L Fund balance invested in each of the individual TSP funds depends on the L Fund you choose.
*** Income from interest and dividends is included in the share price calculation. It is not paid directly to participants' accounts.
**** The L 2010 Fund reached its time horizon and was retired on December 31, 2010, making way for the L 2050 Fund, which has an inception date of January 28, 2011.

Fund Risks

There are various types of risk associated with the TSP funds. There is no risk of investment loss in the G Fund. However, investment losses can occur in the F, C, S, and I Funds. Because the L Funds are invested in the individual TSP funds, they are also subject to the risks to which those underlying funds are exposed.



These risks include:

• Credit risk — The risk that a borrower will default on a scheduled payment of principal and/or interest. This risk is present in the F Fund.

• Currency risk — The risk that the value of a currency will rise or fall relative to the value of other currencies. Currency risk occurs with investments in the I Fund because of fluctuations in
the value of the U.S. dollar in relation to the currencies of the 22 countries in the EAFE index.

• Inflation risk — The risk that your investments will not grow enough to offset the effects of inflation. This risk is present in all five funds.

• Market risk — The risk of a decline in the market value of the stocks or bonds. This risk is present in the F, C, S, and I Funds.

• Prepayment risk — A risk associated with the mortgage-backed securities in the F Fund. During periods of declining interest rates, homeowners may refinance their high-rate mortgages and prepay the principal. The F Fund must reinvest the cash from these prepayments in current bonds with lower interest rates, which lowers the return of the fund.

Contribution Allocations and Interfund Transfers

There are two types of investment transactions you can make:

• A contribution allocation
• An interfund transfer

Contribution Allocations. A contribution allocation specifies how you want to invest money *going into* your TSP account.

Your contribution allocation will apply to all future deposits to your account. These include: employee contributions; agency contributions (if you are FERS); any special pay, incentive pay, or bonus pay that you contribute as a member of the uniformed services; any money you move
into the TSP from other retirement plans; and any TSP loan payments. Your contribution allocation *will not* affect money that is already in your account.

Your contribution allocation will remain in effect until you submit another one.

Interfund Transfers. An interfund transfer moves the money *already in* your account among the TSP investment funds. When you make an interfund transfer, you choose the new percent you want invested in each fund. You cannot move specific dollar amounts among the funds.

Making a contribution allocation or interfund transfer. You can make either of these transactions on the TSP website or the ThriftLine (using the automated system or by speaking to a TSP Participant Service Representative).

To make a contribution allocation or interfund transfer on the website, you will need your TSP account number (or customized user ID) and your Web password.

To make a contribution allocation or interfund transfer on the ThriftLine, you will need your account number and your 4-digit Personal Identification Number (PIN). Contribution allocations or interfund transfers made on the TSP website or the ThriftLine before 12 noon Eastern time are ordinarily processed as of that business day. You will receive a confirmation of your transaction.

Which way to Retirement?. This article is written by Kelley Green.

If you are on the verge of retirement, the past few weeks must have seemed like a horror movie. Just when you thought you had emerged from the wreckage of 2008 with your savings intact, another market storm erupted.

Lynette Robinson, a 65-year-old executive director of a consortium of colleges, was planning on retiring this November—until her investments took a hit this past week.

"The really sad thing is that I am back where I was after the 2008 crash," says Ms. Robinson, who lives in Boston. Now she is considering other alternatives, including working longer or taking on work as a consultant.

"It's scary because you are going along one path and then suddenly you have to shift your plans," she says.

The worst thing you can do now is panic. Hitting the "sell" button on your stock portfolio, after the Dow Jones Industrial Average has fallen 11.1% in three weeks' time, could hurt you more than anything else. Not only would you be locking in losses prematurely to preserve capital you might not need for years, but you also would miss out on any future rally.

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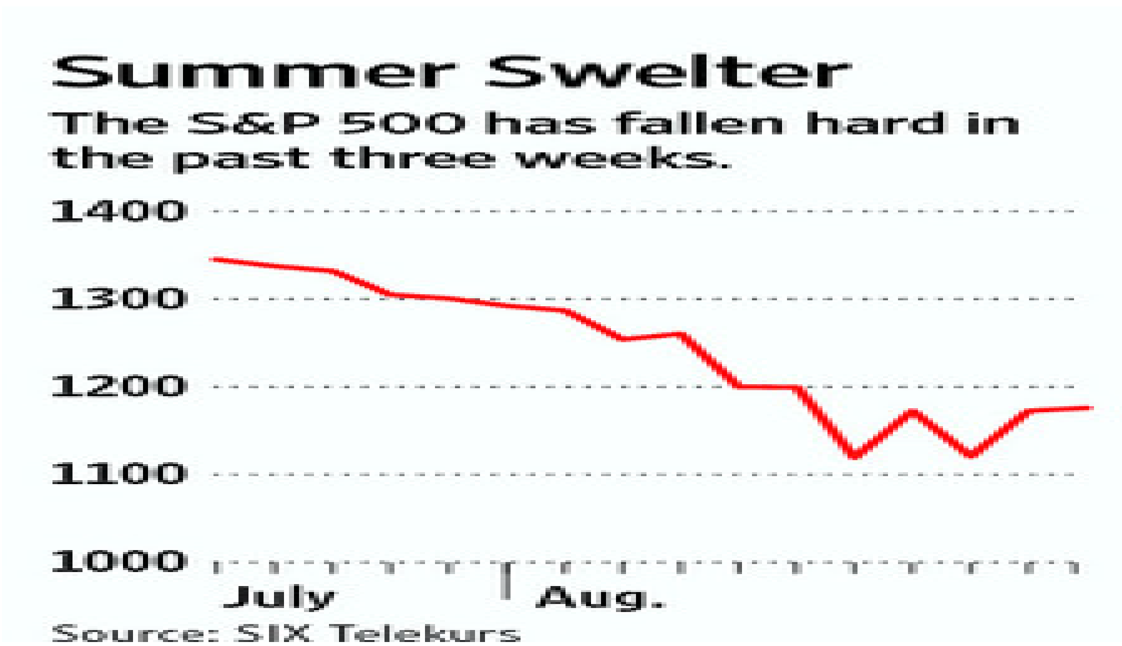
"If what this crisis has done is focus your attention on the fact that stocks are risky, make a note to act on that knowledge later," says Alicia Munnell, director of the Boston College Center for Retirement Research. "But don't sell now."

That doesn't mean you should sit tight, however. If you are consumed by worries, there are other steps you can take right away, from ramping up on "alternative" investments and annuities with guaranteed payments to restocking your cash accounts and rethinking your budget.



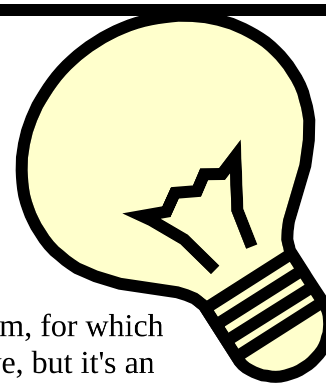
Here's what to do now.

Check Your Spending

Before you sell any stocks or buy any alternative investments, pin down your core living expenses—and do a gut check on your risk tolerance.

To figure out your real spending, Thom Hall, a certified financial planner in Midvale, Utah, recommends tracking your expenses free of charge on sites such as Intuit Inc.'s Mint.com.

"When I sit down with people and say, 'How much money do you need?' They don't really know," he says. "That is by far the most common error."



He also asks clients to take an online risk-tolerance survey at FinaMetrica.com, for which he pays $890 a year to subscribe. (It costs $45 for individuals.) "It's expensive, but it's an impartial tool, and there are people who say, 'I'm really conservative,' but their portfolio has really aggressive investments."

Moves to Make Now

Planning to retire soon and shaken up by the markets? Here are some pointers:

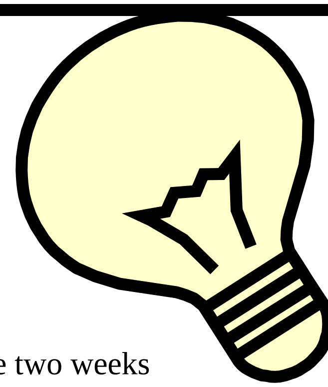
- Don't automatically sell battered investments. You'll be locking in losses with little time to make up the difference with additional savings.
- Work out your essential living expenses now. Then you can figure out how to replace your paycheck with a combination of annuity or pension payments and Social Security.
- Invest the cash portion of your nest egg in an FDIC-insured money-market fund or savings account, since money-market funds with higher risk are paying low interest rates as well.
- For the money you'll need in three to five years, consider investing in FDIC-insured indexed CDs or other low-risk structured products.

Don't expect your spending to fall significantly when you retire; some people even spend more in retirement as they tackle household projects, buy new sports gear or travel.

Chris Roberts, for example, is set to retire in December, though his last day at work before using up vacation days is Aug. 22. A natural-gas-utility worker in Los Angeles, he and his wife, who is retiring later this year, are hoping to take a trip to Ireland next year, along with shorter visits to Las Vegas and Utah.

They still are on track, he says, but they are going to check on their investments before buying the tickets abroad. "If things do better, maybe we'll go farther," he says. "If they do worse, we'll adjust."

Many expenses can be postponed if they would force you to sell battered investments—but you need to know what is discretionary and what isn't before you can make those calls.



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Secure Your Cash

Some people nearing retirement had the foresight to dump some stocks in the two weeks leading up to the debt-ceiling deadline and have stayed in cash since. Selling when stocks are high isn't a bad idea, of course, as long as you aren't trying to time the market.

Moving more money into cash before retirement is a smart move. The standard financial-planning advice for people nearing retirement is to stash in cash what you would need to cover at least a year's worth of basic expenses, including food, shelter, health care and transportation. Keep in mind that this is after any other income you might get from Social Security payments, a pension or other regular income.

In addition to protecting your pocketbook, carving out "two years of grocery money provides a psychological benefit. You're able to be more patient with your investment portfolio," says Lane Jones, chief investment officer of Evensky & Katz LLC in Coral Gables, Fla.

If you have more than a year's worth of income in cash, Mr. Jones recommends keeping a second year's income in a bond fund with a one-year maturity, such as the Pimco Enhanced Short Maturity Strategy Fund.

To play it safest, invest that sizable cash portion of your nest egg in a Federal Deposit Insurance Corp.-backed money-market account or savings account, since money-market funds with higher risk are paying low interest rates as well. "At least control the one thing you can control," says Mark Cortazzo, a certified financial planner in Parsippany, N.J. "Get the highest-yielding money-market you can with a bank that's strong."

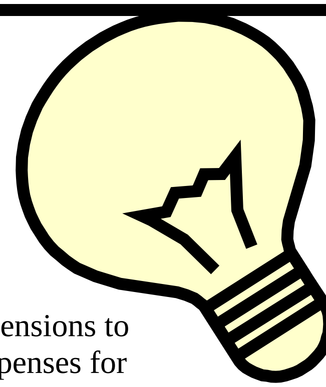
How Are You Doing?

Use the new SmartMoney Retirement Planner to see if you are on track for retirement.

He is using EverBank's high-yield money-market account, which is paying 1.01%—better than what many money-market mutual funds are offering.

Pick a Good Annuity

If you are close to retiring, it might be time to overhaul your investment portfolio—regardless of what happened in the markets over the past few weeks.



Increasingly, retirement advisers are counseling retirees without traditional pensions to buy annuities that will generate enough income to cover their basic living expenses for the rest of their lives. With any money left over, you can invest in a more traditional mix of stocks and bonds, with up to 60% in equities.

Joyce Kovacs, a 65-year-old registered nurse in Mankato, Minn., is planning to retire in February. Two weeks ago, she says, she got nervous about her investments after a friend received an email from her financial planner suggesting the friend switch to an FDIC-backed money-market fund.

On the advice of her financial planner, Ms. Kovacs kept most of her long-term stock investments intact, but moved her savings meant for the first part of retirement from stock mutual funds to a variable annuity with principal protection that should cover her basic living expenses to age 80.

She will be charged about 3% of the account's value each year—but her money has more growth potential than it would in a savings account, says Ryan McKeown, her planner.

If you have a 15% hit to your principal the day before you start withdrawing, and your portfolio goes from $1 million to $850,000 and you need that same $60,000 withdrawal each year, your chance of running out of money jumps up to 56% from 16%, Mr. Cortazzo says. "And people expect a 15% hiccup sometime in retirement. So avoiding risk and transferring risk those few years before retirement is critical."

In the past, the cheapest, most efficient way to get lifetime income was through a single-premium immediate annuity, in which a buyer pays one large chunk of savings in exchange for a lifetime income stream. But the size of the payments the annuity holder gets is determined in part by interest rates.

And with interest rates so low, it makes more sense for many people to buy a variable annuity with a guaranteed benefit, typically in the 5% to 6% range of what you invested, meaning the holder gets a regular income stream and picks equity-like investments that could lead to potentially higher payments down the road.

Be warned: They are complicated, and can be costly, Ms. Munnell says.

You should expect to pay up to 4.5% a year, with fees of 0.5% to 1.5% apiece for the guarantee, money management, and mortality and expenses, says Moshe Milevsky, an associate finance professor at York University in Toronto who researches retirement planning.

Seek out an annuity with a floor that increases with inflation, Mr. Milevsky says. The government's consumer-price index for the elderly is a safer inflation gauge, he says. It regularly outpaces the CPI for the general population, in part because of medical costs.

Also, given the markets' volatility, look for an annuity that evaluates whether to reset the floor frequently. One Transamerica Corp. product looks at monthly market benchmarks, and uses the month with the best performance each year to calculate a new baseline for an account's value and payments, says Jim Otar, an engineer and CFP in Thornhill, Ontario. Allianz SE and MetLife Inc. sell annuities that uses year-over-year data to determine any increases, he adds.

Protect Principal

If you are scared off by a variable annuity's complexity, but you also are scared to leave the money you would need in years three to five of retirement in the stock market, consider indexed certificates of deposit and "structured notes" with principal protection, which are basically derivatives packaged for individual investors, advisers say.

Indexed CDs are tied to the performance of stock markets, but offer principal protection backed by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corp. The one main risk: If you have to sell the investment before it matures, you may have to sell it at a discount.

Structured notes are similar but typically offer more upside because they also carry the credit risk of the issuer and return your principal at maturity, which ranges from note to note. They offer a return tied to the change in value in the underlying investment, such as a commodity or stock-market index.

Royal Bank of Scotland Group PLC, for example, is offering a structured note with a 4½-year maturity tied to the performance of the Dow Jones Industrial Average. If the Dow rises, you would get 100% of the change in the index's price; if it falls, you would still get your principal back.

The big downside, of course, is that the investment is backed by the issuer, not the federal government. Investors in structured notes backed by Lehman Brothers lost money when the investment bank collapsed in 2008.

"Stick with very straightforward, principal-protected structured notes, or ones that cap your losses," Mr. Cortazzo says.

Hedge Your Bets

Many pros say they are leaving their clients' long-term investments in place, for the most part.

But a few weeks before the debt-ceiling deadline, Mr. Jones and his colleagues in Coral Gables told their clients they planned to ride out a volatile period and buy more stock when things fell. They also asked if the clients wanted to buy a "blunt hedge" against a falling market by buying "put options" based on a 10% decline in the Standard & Poor's 500 index. Put options give the holder the right to sell an underlying security or index at a predetermined price.

A "handful" of clients bought puts that expire on Aug. 19—a move that turned out to be prescient. At the time, the puts ranged in cost from 0.25% to 0.45%, or $250 to $450 for $100,000 invested. Now, because of the market's increased volatility, it would cost about 2%, or $2,000.

Hedging may still make sense for individual investors who want to keep upside exposure to a rebound, "but it is much more costly," Mr. Jones says.

Kevin Fitzgerald, a 55-year-old marketing executive in Highland, Colo., says he regrets not hedging his 401(k) investments after watching his account lose $250,000—one-third of its value—last week. Now, he expects to work at least 11 more years.

Move the Date

If worries about retirement keep you up at night, and you can keep your job until you are ready to leave, you can always try to delay your departure a bit.

Christine Fahlund, a senior financial planner at T. Rowe Price Group Inc. in Baltimore, recommends a transitional phase of work for people in their 60s, in which they stay employed rather than retiring, but then sweeten the deal by spending the money they would have saved for retirement on the sorts of vacations or other "play" that they were looking forward to when they quit working.

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David Ziser, a 62-year-old professional photographer in Cincinnati, this week postponed his retirement, which he had planned for the end of this year. With more than $1 million invested in stocks, he had considered his retirement plan to be solid. That changed this week when his portfolio dropped $50,000 in value. Now, he plans to keep working for at least two more years and maintain his current investments.

He isn't taking a trip, though—he is considering buying another $70,000 in stocks.

"Look, things are on sale," he says. "If I have to stay on the hamster wheel, I might as well take advantage of the environment."

Employment-Related News

Government Employee Discounts. Government jobs come with many perks and perhaps one of the best perks is the amount of discounts that Government employees are entitled to. These discounts are offered by various companies and are meant to be sort of a thank you to all those who work for the Government. This includes military and non-military Government jobs and the savings that can be enjoyed can wind up being quite substantial.

There are many discounts that Government employees are entitled to. Some discounts are a specific percentage off and others are special offers that are far cheaper than the offers an average person would receive. Here is a small sampling of some of the welcomed discounts that are available to Government employees:

- **Geico:** Geico offers discounts on auto insurance for active or retired Government employees that are GS-7 and above. The offered discounts are available in most states and the District of Columbia. Learn more about this program by visiting http://www.geico.com/information/discounts/federal-employee-discounts/.
- **GovArm.com:** No matter what a Federal employee is looking for travel wise, they can likely find a discount on it at GovArm.com. This site specializes in finding special discounts for all military personnel and Federal employees in areas such as car rentals, condo rentals, vacation packages, hotel reservations, and more. Learn more about their services at http://www.govarm.com/.
- **FedRooms.com:** FedRooms.com offers special discounted hotel rooms for Government employees. While the main page of the website focuses primarily on official Government travel, there are sections of the website that also offer ways to save when you are traveling for leisure. Learn more at https://www.fedrooms.com/.

- **Apple:** If your Government job requires you to use an iPad, iPhone, or any other Apple product, you are entitled to a discount. Apple offers a special discount for all Government employees on even their most popular products and more information can be found at http://www.apple.com/r/store/government/.
- **Dell:** Dell is another large tech company that offers special discounts to Government employees. Save at least seven percent with Dell on such items as computers, printers and more if you are a Government employee. Learn more about this special discount at http://content.dell.com/us/en/fedgov/fed.aspx?s=fed&redirect=1.
- **Carbonite:** This online backup service protects your computer files by saving copies of them on a remote server. If you ever lose a file due to theft, accidental deletion, or anything else, just login and download the backed up versions. Learn more and receive a 10% Carbonite offer code at http://www.remoteonlinebackup.net/coupon/carbonite-offer-code/.
- **Verizon:** Verizon offers some Government employees a huge savings for all their cell phones, cell phone calling plans, and cell phone accessories. You can see if you are eligible to take advantage of Verizon's savings at https://www.verizonwireless.com/b2c/employee/emaildomainauthentication.jsp.
- **Microsoft:** Government employees can get discounts on some of the top Software that is offered by Microsoft thanks to their Home Use Program. Learn more about this special discount program at http://www.microsoft.com/industry/government/licensing/homeuseoptions.aspx.
- **American Auto Assurance:** American Auto Assurance offers discounts on fully insured vehicle protection plans if you are a Government employee or current or retired military. Their service allows you to have a vehicle that is protected from break down even if the vehicle in question is soon to be out of warranty. Learn more the discount and get a free quote at http://aaagovdiscount.com/.
- **Absolute Security of America:** Absolute Security of America is an authorized dealer of ADT and gives special packages to all Government employees seeking home security. These offers are not available to the general public and more can be learned at http://www.absolutesecurityofamerica.com/govexec/.
- **Avis:** If you are a Government employee or active military and looking to rent a car, then Avis has specials for you. Not only do they offer special discounted rates, but they also offer other specials like free upgrades and the like. Learn more about their specials for Government employees and military personnel at https://www.avis.com/car-rental/profile/go.ac?A555084.
- **Budget:** Another rental car company that Government employees can take advantage of is Budget. Budget offers free upgrades, discounts like $25.00 off a

week long rental, and even two free days of GPS use. Learn more about all the savings Budget has to offer at http://www.budgetcarrental.com/budget/fastbreak/index.html?V053905.

- **Alamo:** Alamo car rental service also gets in on the action and offers a wide variety of discounts and special services for all Government employees and military personnel seeking to rent a car. This includes unlimited miles, special leisure rates, free upgrades, and more. Learn more about these Alamo perks at https://www.alamo.com/index.do?action=/hotDealsTemplate&msg=AL_GOVRNR_Splash.
- **Pods:** Pods revolutionized self storage several years ago by making it portable. They bring a mobile container to your house and let you pack it at your convenience. Then they pick it up and store it for you or deliver it to your new home. Use a Pods promotional code and save 5% off local or one-way moves.

These are but a very small example of the many companies that offer discounts to Government employees. It should be noted that many companies will not openly advertise that they do have such specials so it always pays to ask if they do. While the savings may not be significant, any savings is good savings and if you are entitled to it as a Government employee, then you should get it.

Per Diem Rates to Increase 1 Oct 1 for Travel to Many Large Cities. Federal travelers will have more money for hotel bookings in many cities, under per diem rates set for fiscal 2012, which begins Oct. 1.

Chicago will see one of the biggest increases. In October and November 2011 and in September 2012, hotel per diem rates will increase by $17 to $190, a 10 percent increase.

Hotel per diems in the Washington area, generally the most frequent destination for federal travelers, will increase $15, or 7 percent, to $226 in October 2011 and September 2012. From April to June 2012, the nightly per diem will increase $13, or 6 percent, to $224.

Los Angeles, San Diego, Las Vegas, Atlanta and Denver will see per diem increases ranging from $1 to $8. Hotel per diem rates in San Antonio and Albuquerque, N.M., will stay flat at $106 and $81, respectively. The St. Louis per diem rate will drop $1 to $104.

The increases — although small in some areas — suggest a slight turnaround from last year, when the General Services Administration dropped the lodging rate for 310 of the 378 nonstandard areas — the higher-cost areas where federal employees travel most frequently. The 2011 per diem rates were calculated partly using rates hotels offered in the heart of the recession, when the travel industry had cratered. Some travel industry representatives said those depressed rates were too low and didn't take into account the hotel industry's recovery.

But GSA said the lodging industry has not yet returned to its 2008 peak.

"While some [areas] are showing signs of recovery, others have remained flat or continued to decrease below FY 2011 levels," GSA said on its website.

GSA in April increased per diems in San Francisco; New York; San Bernardino County, Calif.; Harrisburg, Pa.; Hunt County, Texas; Lafayette County, Miss.; and Caroline County, Va., after a midyear review.

Meal and incidental expense rates in cities identified as the top 10 destinations last year will remain unchanged in 2012, ranging from $56 to $71.

The standard hotel rate will remain unchanged at $77, and the standard meal rate will also remain at $46.

Click here for the complete list of rates.

EEOC, OPM Signal Tougher Stance on Equal Pay Laws. EEOC and OPM have issued a joint memo saying that although progress has been made in closing the gender pay gap, the government must work harder to narrow it.

OPM estimates that women in the federal workforce make about 11 cents less on the dollar than men for equal work – or about 7 cents after taking into account differences in education and other factors.

In July 2010 a “national equal pay task force” of representatives from EEOC, OPM and the Departments of Labor and Justice recommended that OPM and EEOC work together to "implement a strategy to improve the federal government’s role as a model employer."

EEOC said that together with these agencies it is working with GAO to identify the reasons for this wage gap and ways to close it, but did not indicate any specific additional actions agencies should take at this time.

The Illuminator

9-2011

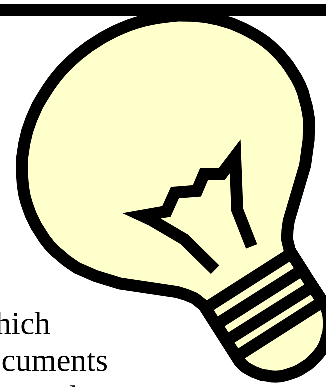
Military Spouse Employment Opportunity Briefings. Staff members of the Fort Benning Civilian Personnel Advisory Center (CPAC) host informational briefings for military spouses at 1000 on the third Wednesday of each month. The next briefing, 21 September will be held in building 35, Doughboy Room (2nd floor). The briefings provide information on Executive Order 13473 which became effective September 11, 2009 and is intended to provide military spouses an opportunity to obtain employment with the Federal government. In addition, the briefing will address spouse preference, how to apply, and highlight which documents should be submitted along with the resume. There will be a Q&A session as well. All spouses interested in attending, please contact Deb Quick at 545-3517.

Spouses wishing to submit their questions in advance or who have additional questions about the briefing itself may send those inquiries to spouseinfoquery@conus.army.mil .

USA Staffing Migration and Employee Information. The Department of Army is introducing the use of USA Staffing (USAS), successor to RESUMIX, which is intended to further streamline the application process. USAS is used by HR professionals to receive resumes and assessment answers from USAJOBS and Application Manager to assist in the identification of highly qualified candidates for announced job vacancies so that they may be appropriately referred to the selecting officials. Civilian Human Resources Agency (CHRA) activities have been transitioning throughout the year and the Fort Benning Civilian Personnel Advisory Center (CPAC) is scheduled to deploy in February 2012.

The deployment of USAS will bring about the following changes to the current process of applying for vacant positions:

- All Army announcements will be available on http://www.armycivilianservice.com and www.usajobs.gov.
- Applicants will apply for vacancies through USA Staffing, Application Manager module.
- USA Staffing uses assessments, cooperatively chosen between HR and the hiring official, to determine the best qualified candidates.
- Applicants must answer assessment questions each time they apply against a vacancy.
- Applicants must provide supporting documentation (i.e., DD 214, SF 50, etc.), at the time of application. Normally, these documents will be uploaded and stored in the system.
- Managers will access referral lists by logging in to a module called Selection Manager.



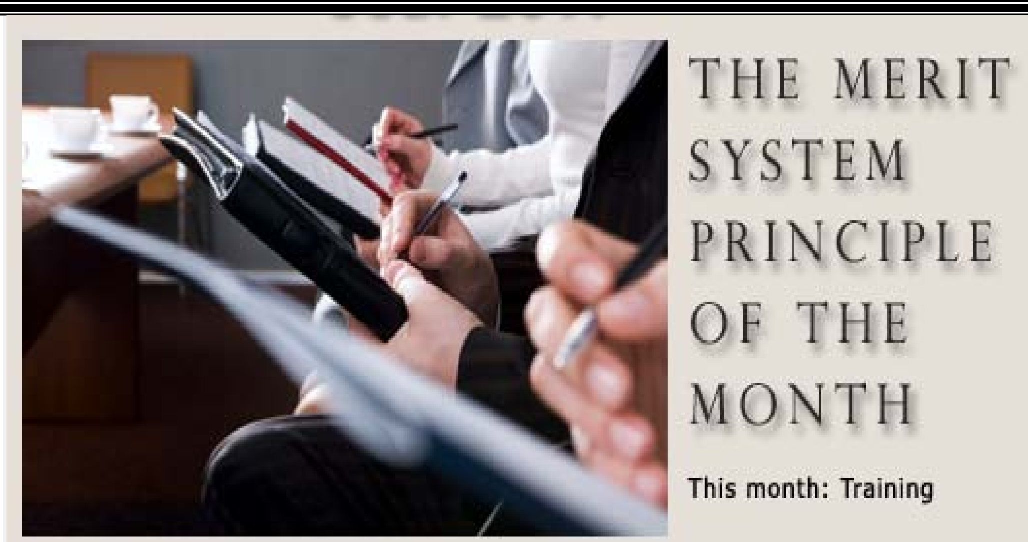
Application Manager is a component of USAS and it is the venue through which applicants can build and store up to five distinct resumes; upload required documents such as a transcript or veterans preference documentation (i.e. DD 214); create and save job searches to receive automatic notifications; apply for jobs or save them to review later; and check their application status.

Current employees are highly encouraged to begin refining and updating their resume to support this new process. You may either create an original resume using the USAJobs template which is user friendly and includes a variety of fields that will assist the human resources specialist in evaluating your resume, or you may copy and paste your current RESUMIX resume into the USAJobs template. You also have the option of uploading a personalized resume of your choice. To post a resume in USAJOBS Resume Builder and apply for jobs users must have a USAJOBS account.

For additional guidance, excellent tutorials are available at http://www.usajobs.gov/infocenter/

Stay tuned for informational e-mails as well as briefings and training sessions which will be conducted not less than 60 days prior to deployment.

Merit System Principle of the Month



MERIT SYSTEM PRINCIPLE OF THE MONTH

Training

"Employees should be provided effective education and training in cases in which such education and training would result in better organizational and individual performance."

What is the intent behind the seventh Merit System Principle?

The Civil Service Reform Act of 1978 (Reform Act) which codified the nine Merit System Principles, including this training imperative, was enacted to create "a civil service that is worthy of the public and its confidence: One in which hiring, promotion, and pay are truly based on merit and one in which those who cannot or will not perform their jobs well will not perform at all for the Federal Government." Remarks of Senator Abraham A. Ribicoff, II House Committee on Post Office and Civil Service, 95th Cong. 1st Sess., Legislative History of the Civil Service Reform Act of 1978 at 1606 (1979). In furtherance of the accountability inherent in this vision, this training imperative is designed to ensure that employees receive the training they need to perform their jobs; that training plans are integrated into organizations' overall strategic plans; and that funds are available to accomplish necessary training. As jobs evolve, agencies should invest in the training necessary to assure their employees possess the skills to adapt and excel—even, and perhaps especially, in hard budgetary times. By including training as a Merit System Principle, Congress sought to better assure that employees, who are to be held more strictly accountable for their performance than in the past, are properly trained to achieve successful performance.

What is the Merit Systems Protection Board's (MSPB) adjudicatory role in training matters?

When adjudicating an employee's removal or demotion for performance deficiencies, the Board may be called upon to determine a claim that the action violated this Merit System Principle.

Are there decisions from the MSPB relating to the seventh Merit System Principle?

The Board set forth the analytical framework for determining whether an agency has violated the seventh Merit System Principle in *Wright v. FAA*, 40 MSPR 355, 360-62 (1989), a decision involving a developmental air traffic controller in an established "up or out" training course:

A literal reading of 5 USC 2301(b)(7) suggests that "effective training" is designed to advance two interests: the overall performance of the organization and the employee's *individual performance. While an agency's training program should ideally promote both interests to the maximum extent, it would be a rare case in which an employee could not show that additional or different training might have led to some improvement in her performance, even though at a prohibited cost to the agency, considering the benefit derived. To allow employees to determine the extent and nature of the training to which they are entitled would ignore the paramount interest of agencies in setting goals and priorities and in allocating funds accordingly. Yet this is essentially what the AJ did in this case, by reversing the appellant's removal based on his finding that the agency failed to provide her with training that "would have helped [her] to improve her performance." In doing so, he failed to consider whether providing appellant with such training would have also served the agency's interest in promoting better organizational performance.*

We hold that, in order to establish a 2301(b)(7) violation, an employee must show that she did not receive at least the minimum training reasonably calculated to give her the skills and knowledge required to do the job; that additional or different training would have provided those skills; and that such training could have been provided in a cost-effective manner in light of the agency's mission and its need to apportion limited resources among its numerous programs and objectives. Agencies must have the freedom to establish their priorities within the confines of budgetary restrictions, and the Board must give maximum deference to such managerial decisions. Thus the Board will find a violation of 2301(b)(7) only when an appellant can show that, with respect to her training, the agency's action amounted to an abuse of discretion.

Subsequent Board decisions have referenced *Wright* and this abuse of discretion standard, though *Wright* itself was reversed because of the Board's misapplication of the burdens of proof to the specific facts in that case. 900 F.2d 1541.

Has MSPB studied the issue of training?

Pursuant to 5 USC 1204(a)(3), MSPB conducts studies relating to the civil service and reports to the President and Congress as to whether the public interest in a civil service free of prohibited personnel practices is being adequately protected. Most recently, in February 2011, MSPB issued a report titled: Making the Right Connections: Targeting the Best Competencies for Training. The report discusses the Board's strategic view of training and its search to identify Government-wide patterns to inform agency decisions about training. By identifying the full range of highly trainable, moderately trainable, and less trainable competencies, the study seeks to encourage agencies to use their training resources in maximally efficient manners.

Has the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) issued any guidance to help agencies comply with the seventh Merit System Principle?

The OPM maintains a Training and Development Policy website replete with training information and resources. It contains guidance, fact sheets, and relevant regulations.

Management-Employee Relations

Federal Employees' Award Money for Resolving Formal EEO Complaints Rise in FY2010. Federal agencies in the 2010 fiscal year shelled out millions of more dollars for wrongful actions taken against employees. According to a new Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) report, average amounts awarded in resolution of formal Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) complaints rose by 12.4 percent to a net $46.9 million.

Highlighting why it pays for federal employees to take a stand against their employers' illegal discriminatory and retaliatory practices, the EEOC's 2010 Annual Report on the Federal Work Force shows that the per capita average monetary benefit awarded in resolution of formal EEO complaints rose by 5.1 percent to $12,335 in the 2010 fiscal year. According to the report, the per capita amount has jumped 37.4 percent since the 2006 fiscal year, when it averaged $8,978.

Driving this net monetary award increase was a 6.1 percent rise in closed complaints, which totaled 17,124 in the 2010 fiscal year. Of the closed cases, 3,623 (21.2 percent) ended in settlement, and 233 (3.3 percent) concluded with meritorious decisions finding discrimination.

For the fifth consecutive year, reprisal ranked as the top EEO complaint allegation in the 2010 fiscal year, accounting for 7,712 filed complaints, up 2.7 percent from the previous fiscal year. Age discrimination remained the second most common basis of EEO complaint allegations, accounting for 5,314 filed complaints.

Given the prevalence of reprisal complaints, federal employees should know that Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, the Age Discrimination in Employment Act, the Equal Pay Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act prohibit employers from retaliating against them for participating in protected activities. Such activities include opposing unlawful discriminatory employment practices and filing or threatening to file a complaint or testifying, assisting or participating in investigations, proceedings or hearings covered by these laws. Employees who have been subjected to adverse actions, such as a denial of promotion, demotion, suspension or discharge, because of their participation in these protected activities have an actionable reprisal complaint.

Federal employees have 45 days after a discriminatory action occurred or after the effective date of a personnel action to contact an EEOC counselor who will provide them with the option of participating in EEOC counseling or an alternative dispute resolution program. If a resolution cannot be reached through one of these options, the employee can file a formal complaint against the agency, but this complaint must be filed within 15 days after the EEOC counselor provides a notice on how to undertake such action. Federal employees who have been subjected to unlawful discriminatory actions should contact a competent federal sector employment lawyer.

Training, Self-Development, and Personal Improvement

Last Human Resources (HR) for Supervisors Course Offerings. Effective 30 Sep 11, the HR for Supervisors Course will cease to exist. Its successor, the online Supervisory Development Course (SDC), a component of the Civilian Education System (CES), will become available for registration and completion beginning 1 Oct 11. In order to accommodate managers, supervisors, and commanders who wish to take the 5-day on-site classroom version of this training, several, additional iterations were scheduled and have been or will be conducted. The remaining course dates are highlighted below.

To obtain a space in this course, applicants must register thru the Civilian Human Resources Training Application System (CHRTAS) at https://www.atrrs.army.mil/channels/chrtas/default.asp. Both civilian and military supervisors are eligible for the course if they supervise at least three appropriated fund civilian employees; however, priority will be given to new (less than one year of supervisory experience) supervisors.

Class size is limited to 30. Registrants will be notified of acceptance/non-acceptance by e-mail message.

Final course offerings:

12 – 16 Sep
26 – 30 Sep

RPA and ART Workshop. The Fort Benning CPAC HR specialists are available to conduct RPA and ART desk-side walkthroughs and/or workshops to assist HR liaisons, managers/supervisors, and new DCPDS account holders with accessing and using DCPDS, ART, initiating RPAs, forwarding and tracking RPAs, generating reports and printing SF 50s. Training can be accomplished via individualized sessions or activity specific workshops upon request. If you desire training of this nature, please contact your servicing HR specialist to arrange for scheduling.

Job Aids Available on the Web. Lotus ScreenCams (how-to-movies) are available to assist DCPDS users with DCPDS, Army Regional Tools (ART), Oracle 11i and other automation tools. ScreenCam movies ART Logon, Ghostview, Gatekeeper, Inbox Default, Initiating an RPA, Logging On, Navigator, RPA Overview and RPA Routing are available on the web at: http://www.chra.army.mil/. Click on HR Toolkit and then click on the name of the movie to download or play it. Managers/supervisors and administrative personnel responsible for initiating RPAs are encouraged to review this site and check out these new tools. ART Users Guide has been updated and provides descriptions of and instructions for using tools available in ART, including such tools as Employee Data, Inbox Statistics (timeliness and status information about personnel actions), Organization Structure (information about positions in various organizational elements), and many more tools. It is intended for use by managers, resource management officials, administrative officers, and commanders as well as CPAC and CPOC staff members. There is both an on-line and downloadable Word version (suitable for printing).

In addition, to the ART Users Guide, there is a Defense Civilian Personnel Data System (DCPDS) Desk Guide which provides how-to information about tasks and functions that end users might need to perform in DCPDS, such as initiating a Request for Personnel Action (RPA) and creating a Gatekeeper Checklist. The ART Users Guide and the Desk Guide can be accessed from the CHRA web page at: http://www.chra.army.mil/, by clicking on HR Toolkit. In addition to these tools the Fort Benning CPAC staff is available to assist you in accessing DCPDS, ART, initiating RPAs, creating a Gatekeeper Checklist, forwarding and tracking RPAs, generating reports and printing a Notification of Personnel Action (i.e. SF 50). If you have any questions or need assistance, please contact your servicing HR specialist to arrange a time so we can come to your office to help you.

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