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FAS-LERD Training

The Field Advisory Services – Labor and Employee Relations Division (FAS-LERD) has posted its training schedule at http://www.cpms.osd.mil/faslerd/fas_lerd_training.aspx.

Courses include the following: Basic Labor-Management Relations, Interest-Based Negotiations, and Supervisory Labor Relations.

To register, please send an e-mail to FAS_Labor_Training@cpms.osd.mil or call Shannon Schmidt at (703) 696-1211 (DSN prefix 426-).

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New Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) Account Numbers Are Coming in October

In October, TSP will enhance security by replacing Social Security numbers (SSNs) with account numbers as the main way to identify participants. Participants will use their account number, plus their TSP Web password or ThriftLine Personal Identification Number, to log into the Account Access section of the TSP Web site or the ThriftLine. Most TSP forms will also require the account number.



TSP will still use SSNs at times (e.g., when individuals talk with TSP Service Representatives, the agents might ask for an SSN to further verify identity). Additionally, TSP will continue using SSNs to accept contributions and loan payments from the agency or service and to report TSP disbursements to the Internal Revenue Service. As much as possible, however, TSP will not use SSNs.

The Federal Retirement Thrift Investment Board sent out a letter in August to inform TSP participants about this change. All participants should have received this letter. TSP uses the official address on file with the agency; thus, employees who did not receive the letter should check to see if their address is current with their agencies, not with TSP. In the Department of Defense (DoD), employees can update their mailing address by using the Defense Finance and Accounting Service *myPay* system or contacting their installation customer service representative.

In September, participants will receive a unique account number. Look for the blue TSP mailer. In October, the Web site and ThriftLine will be changed to accept account numbers only, not SSNs. –Benefits and Entitlements



Student Loan Repayment Program Soars

The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) reports annually to Congress on agency use of the student loan repayment program. This report contains a wealth of information, including:

- Number of employees selected to receive this benefit;
- Recipients' job classification; and
- The cost to the Government of the loan repayments.

The latest report was recently posted (www.opm.gov/oca/pay/studentloan/html/FY2006StudentLoanRepaymentReport.pdf). Here are selected highlights.

The student loan repayment program was strengthened in fiscal year (FY) 2004 by laws that significantly increased its value as a recruitment and

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Student Loan Repayment Program Shows Rapid Growth in Recent Years

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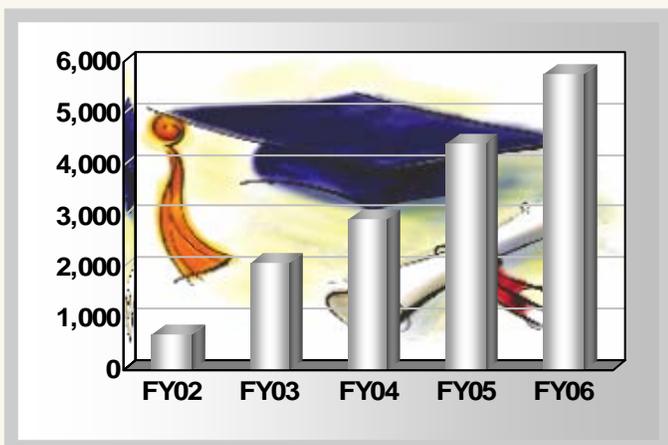
retention tool. Government supervisors may now offer highly qualified candidates or current employees up to \$10,000 in student loan repayments each calendar year, with an agency lifetime maximum of \$60,000 per employee. (For more program information, visit the CPMS Web site at www.cpms.osd.mil/fas/classification/pay_student_loan.aspx.)

The FY06 OPM report shows that the program grew rapidly over the last five FYs, with double the number of agencies and eight times as many recipients in FY06 vice FY02.

Figure 1: Participating Agencies

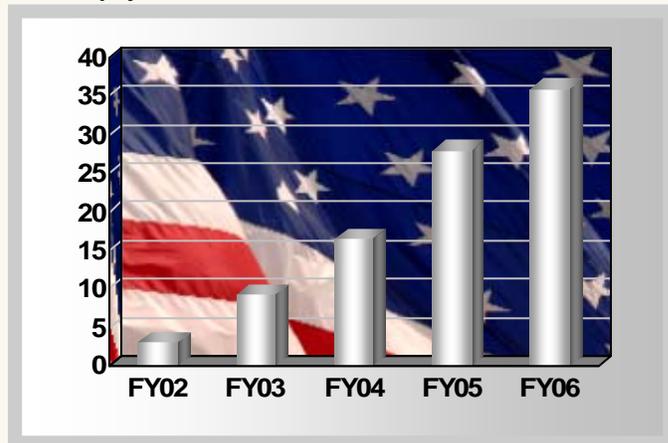


Figure 2: Employees Receiving Student Loan Repayment Benefits ("Recipients")



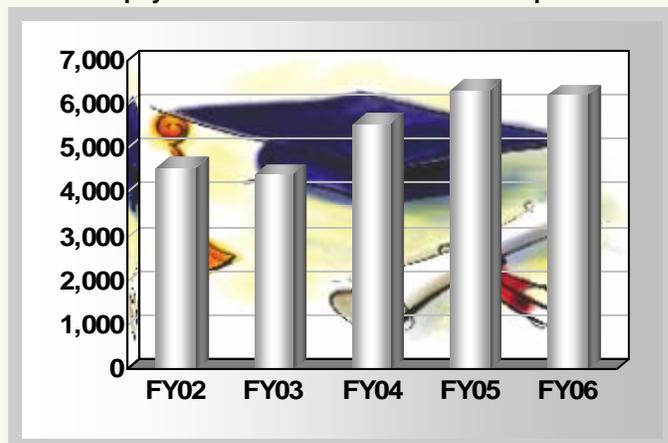
Agency funding for the program increased more than ten-fold from FY02 to FY06.

Figure 3: Amount (\$M) of Student Loan Repayment Benefits Provided Government-wide



Growth in the average amount per recipient was less dramatic, but still substantial.

Figure 4: Average Amount (\$) of Student Loan Repayment Benefits Provided Per Recipient



Five agencies – the Departments of Defense, Justice, and State; the Government Accountability Office (GAO); and the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) – were the biggest users of the program in FYs 03-05. They remained so in FY06.

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Agencies Share Best Practices for Student Loan Repayment Program

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Figure 5: Agencies' Use of Student Loan Repayments in FY06 – Number of Recipients

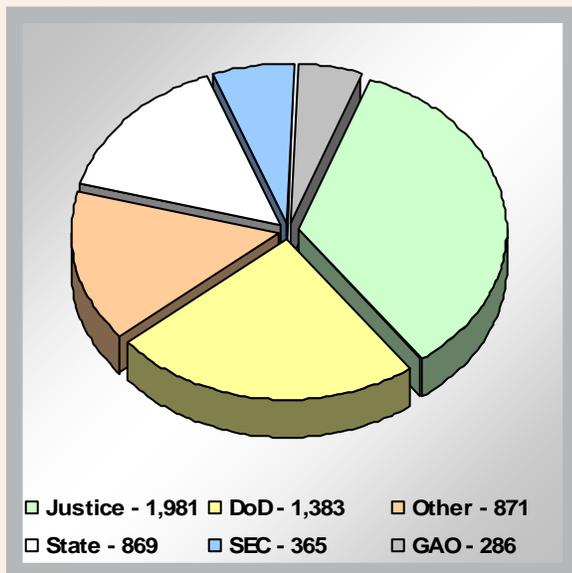
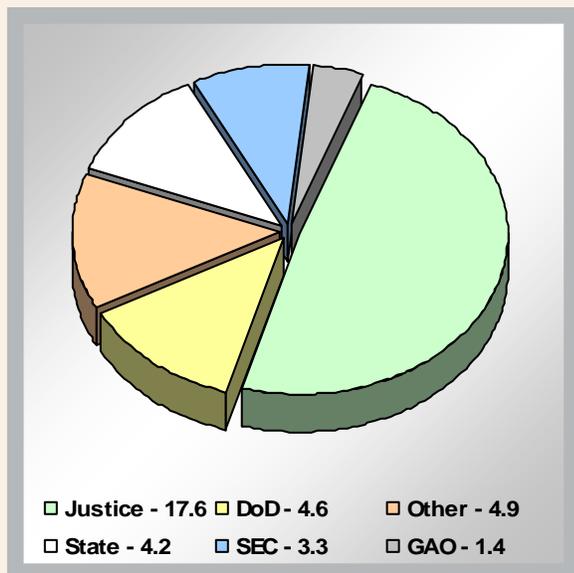


Figure 6: Agencies' Use of Student Loan Repayments in FY06 – \$M of Benefits Provided



More criminal investigators received benefits under the program than any other occupation. The vast majority of

these were special agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI), which is part of the Department of Justice.

The Department of Defense was second only to the FBI in usage, with approximately \$4.6 million in student loan repayments to 1,383 DoD employees, nearly half of whom (682) were engineers. These engineering fields were most often incentivized: mechanical (198), nuclear (128), electronics (94), and electrical (59).

Other DoD recipients included contract specialists (87) and information technology specialists (60).

Agencies shared their best practices for implementing and administering the program. Here are some pointers from civilian agencies with extensive program experience:

- **JUSTICE.** Track retention rates of those who have fulfilled their service agreements. This is useful in targeting employees for the program.
- **STATE.** Define eligibility according to recruitment and retention needs. Review such needs annually, and adjust eligibility criteria as appropriate. Ensure that eligibility criteria are transparent. Get senior management buy-in for the criteria, as well as for funding levels.
- **SEC.** Require employees to provide loan-data print-outs from the Department of Education's National Student Loan Data System to verify data on employees' loans. Use the data to find out if the loans are eligible for repayment and to determine outstanding balances and servicing lender(s). This avoids having to request information by sending forms to individual lenders.

According to American Student Assistance, a Federally-funded nonprofit organization, average tuition for four-year colleges over the past 30 years has doubled. The average college student graduates with \$20,000 in student loan debt.

Two-thirds of those with outstanding student loans say the debt keeps them from making major purchases; 30 percent of those polled say their student loans are a major burden.

What do all these studies and statistics add up to? Simply this: The student loan repayment program is an effective Human Resources (HR) tool, now and in the foreseeable future. -Classification and Pay



CPMS Personnel-ity Profile: TJ Johnson of IRD Displays Versatility



Andrea and TJ Johnson are a husband-wife team...

Look out, Tyler Perry! That Hollywood maverick (“Madea’s Family Reunion”) and writer-director-producer-actor-composer may soon have a rival in Thaddius (“TJ”) Johnson. In their leisure time, TJ says, “My wife Andrea and I like writing plays for the stage.

“Our first, ‘The Judgment,’ was going to be a one-time-only performance in our church. It could seat about 500 people, and the place was filled! So, we repeated the performance and filled it again – SRO!

“After writing and producing a few more plays, we went professional,” with non-Equity but paid actors in local performance venues. Production values are high. Their shows use theatrical lighting and props, plus a contemporary or jazz combo of bass, keyboard, and drums.

“My wife writes music, so she’ll write a song,” TJ adds. “She even produced a CD of the music from one of our plays.

“‘The Promise,’ ‘The Place Where Angels Dance,’ ‘Diamonds in the Back-

yard,’ ‘Enough Is Enough’ – all our plays have been really well received. They usually run about two hours, including intermission.

“The play we’re writing now is titled, ‘A One-Way Ticket.’ I write the action and comedy sequences, and my wife does more of the drama.

“We try to get people laughing and crying, and touch every emotion – I mean, get the audience so involved in it, the play becomes real to them.”



...as playwrights and producers.

Reflecting on more than three decades in Government, TJ says, “I’ve lived most of my life in the Hampton Roads area of Virginia. I started working in 1972 at the Newport News Shipyard as part of a pipefitting crew.

“We were involved in constructing two aircraft carriers, the *Nimitz* and *Eisenhower*.” Those two carriers were recently deployed in the Middle East. The world’s largest warships by tonnage, *Nimitz*-class, nuclear-powered carriers now constitute three-quarters of the

Navy’s aircraft carrier force. While he realized the significance of *Nimitz*-class carriers, as a young man TJ also sought experience in repair work.

“So, in 1974 I applied at Norfolk Naval Shipyard, where I started my Federal career. I was very excited to enter their nuclear program. I was one of only two black men in the shipyard’s pipefitter apprentice program at the time.”

Upon completing the program, he worked his way up as a nuclear instructor, nuclear mechanical-systems inspector, and supervisory nuclear pipefitter. Next, he returned to the Newport News Shipyard as an inspector.

Then one day, when a co-worker was going to equal employment opportunity (EEO) training, “I thought it would be good training to take. So, I traded places with him, and that’s when my career changed.”

TJ decided to become a collateral duty EEO counselor, and he processed a number of complaints. “Pretty soon, the Deputy Chief EEO Counselor wanted me to help out in the EEO Office.”

TJ accepted a few short-term details and then, when the Deputy left, the Commander asked him to fill in for several months longer.

“Ultimately, I was offered the position of EEO Manager for the Supervisor of Shipbuilding, Newport News. That was a satellite office; I was officially assigned to Yorktown. When Yorktown had a RIF, I was picked up by the Military Sealift Command.”

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FAS Has Been Asked How to Maintain Bulletin Boards in the Workplace

Q. What HR items should be posted on bulletin boards accessible to employees?

A. We in Field Advisory Services (FAS) researched this, to include checking the CPMS and OPM Web sites, as follows:

WAGE SURVEYS. Each Federal Wage System (FWS) local wage survey committee is responsible for posting hearing notices on employee bulletin boards. The purpose of the hearings is to receive local employee recommendations concerning the FWS survey process.

Posting requirements apply to both appropriated fund and nonappropriated fund (NAF) surveys.

For appropriated fund, refer to Title 5, Code of Federal Regulations, Part 532.233a(1) and the OPM Operating Manual, Federal Wage System – Appropriated Fund, Prevailing Rate Determination, S5-6 (<http://www.opm.gov/oca/wage/appfund/HTML/Subchpt5.asp>).

For NAF, the pertinent citation is the OPM Operating Manual, Federal Wage System – Nonappropriated Fund, Prevailing Rate Determinations, S5-6 (<http://www.opm.gov/oca/wage/nafnew/HTML/Subchpt5.asp>).

The two OPM Operating Manuals have almost identical posting requirements, so we quote from the NAF manual, S5-6c (2), “Each local activity posts notice of the hearings on its bulletin board for at least 10 days before the scheduled date of the hearing.” S5-12e further states:

Each local activity shall post notices on its bulletin boards for at least 10

days before the final date established for submitting recommendations and supporting evidence to the local wage survey committee or other local survey organization...[If this] can be combined with the local hearing process...it will be done as part of that process.

The Manuals do not specify work or calendar days. It might be prudent to allow the longer of these, 10 work days.

EMERGENCIES. The CPMS *Emergency Preparedness and Response Guide* (http://www.cpms.osd.mil/civ_prep/ManagementGuide.pdf) calls for posting the HR Office phone number, in case questions arise about leave, health or life insurance, or death and injury benefits.

Note that this posting is not required by law or regulation.

INJURIES AT WORK. The United States Department of Labor Form CA-10, *What a Federal Employee Should Do When Injured at Work*, is a poster that can be downloaded from the following site: <http://www.dol.gov/esa/regs/compliance/owcp/ca-10.pdf>.

Posting the CA-10 is not required by law or regulation. Still, it is always a good idea to do so when possible.

NO FEAR ACT. The Notification and Federal Employee Antidiscrimination and Retaliation (No FEAR) Act of 2002 (Public Law 107-174), May 15, 2002, requires OPM to inform employees of various rights and protections.

OTHER. Check for anything the Federal Labor Relations Authority might have

ordered to be posted, such as settlement agreements, and for any posting requirements that may be contained in a collective bargaining agreement, such as Weingarten rights.

Check within your Component; additional HR posting requirement(s) might have been established by Component headquarters or an intermediate echelon.

Finally, functions other than HR (e.g., occupational safety and EEO) may have established posting requirements. While HR practitioners may not be responsible for posting such items, we mention them for your situational awareness.

-Field Advisory Services



Modernizing Retirement

The Department and OPM are modernizing the retirement process. Retirement Systems Modernization (RSM) centers on a defined-benefits technology solution. Its goal is to provide a paperless, cradle-to-grave, benefits service-delivery model.

The HR Business, Information, and Technology Solutions (HR-BITS) Division is managing implementation in the Department. “HR-BITS has engaged the OPM RSM organization to begin planning,” says HR-BITS Director Rhonda Diaz.

“A DoD Component-supported workgroup has been established to ensure RSM’s successful integration within DoD. Several initial meetings have already been held,” she adds.

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RSM Tools Go Live in '09

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RSM will give employees tools that, for the first time, will let them model their future retirement benefits based on a complete set of their actual Federal employment information.



RSM modeling tools will include a Web-based application with personalized content and decision support. Employees will be able to access the application for self-service anytime by phone or a Web interface.

RSM tools will give employees a one-stop way to initiate changes to their retirement benefits. OPM says these capabilities will become available once an agency “goes live.” The tools will be implemented in phases, with the Department to start in 2009.

Ultimately, RSM will link to employees’ Social Security benefits and current TSP account balances. This complete picture of earned Government benefits will give a better view of their retirement financial forecast.

RSM will also make the full annuity payment at the very beginning of an employee’s retirement, since verified employee data will already be in place before the person applies to retire. -HR-BITS



CPMS Personnel-ity Profile

TJ Johnson Seeks to “Hold the Ladder” for Others

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In the late 1980s, TJ accepted a promotion to GS-12 at Portsmouth, where he remained until 2003, when he became a General Schedule (GS) -13 (now YA-2) with the Investigations and Resolutions Division (IRD) office in Atlanta, GA.

“After more than 15 years in EEO, I’d say 97 to 98 percent of the cases involve communication. Somebody miscommunicated or didn’t like what someone else said.

“If people could do more listening than talking, they’d be better able to come to a meeting of the minds. Now, as an IRD mediator and investigator, I always try to resolve the complaint.

“I tell the parties that, ‘Once it leaves me, somebody else will render a decision in this case. Why not choose instead to resolve the complaint at the investigative stage? You can try to have some say-so yourself that way.’ I’ve been able to resolve quite a few cases.”

Finally, TJ offers a few thoughts about career progression. “People can’t climb the ladder by themselves. I can say without a doubt that my accomplishments are due to somebody holding the ladder for me to climb up.

“For some people, it might have been a family member, or their third-grade teacher, or a college professor, but there’s always somebody.

“So, whenever I get a chance, let me do the same and hold the ladder for someone else coming up! *That’s* what I want to do.”

CAREER BRIEF

1974-1992: Apprentice, journey-level, inspector, and supervisory pipefitter positions at Navy installations in Virginia’s Tidewater region.

1992-3: EEO Counselor, GS-260-9, Naval Weapons Station (NWS), Yorktown, VA.

1993-5: Quality Assurance Specialist, GS-1910-11, NWS Yorktown.

1995-7: EEO Specialist/Manager, GS-260-11, NWS Yorktown.

1997-8: EEO Specialist, GS-260-11, Military Sealift Command, Washington Navy Yard, DC.

1998-9: EEO Specialist, GS-260-11, Human Resource Service Center (HRSC) East, Portsmouth, VA.

1999-2003: Mediator, GS-241-12, HRSC East, Portsmouth.

2003-Present: Human Resources Specialist (Investigator), GS-201-13 and NSPS YA-201-2, IRD, Atlanta.

CPMS Employment

CPMS vacancies are posted on USAJOBS. To access employment opportunities for status candidates, click [here](#).

For other CPMS vacancies, click [here](#).