



What's New?

From the Benefits and Entitlements Service Team (BEST)

12 Dec 02

Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) Catch-Up Bill Signed Into Law. President Bush has signed the TSP "Catch-Up" bill into law (P.L. 107-304) allowing TSP participants age 50 and older to make "catch-up" contributions. These contributions will be in addition to the regular TSP contributions. We're now waiting for the Federal Retirement Thrift Investment Board to issue regulations on how the program will work (and to update their computer). We hope to receive instructions by the end of January 2003. As soon as we know the particulars, including if the new benefit will be offered with the next TSP Open Season beginning 15 April 2003, we'll let you know. Keep an eye on our "What's New?" column and the BEST Newsletter. If you haven't yet subscribed to receive our Newsletter, now is a good time to do so. It's easy -- go to the BEST Homepage and click on Newsletter Subscription Service.

5 Dec 02

Federal Long Term Care Insurance Program --

- **Open Season Ends 31 Dec 02.** There are three reasons to apply for Long Term Care (LTC) insurance before the open season ends: 1) Current employees and their spouses can apply using the abbreviated underwriting form. After open season, current employees and their spouses will be subject to full underwriting; 2) Premiums will be based on your age as of 1 Jul 02. After open season, premiums will be based on your age at the time LTC Partners receives your application; and 3) Employees who apply but do not qualify for standard insurance will be offered an alternative insurance plan. After open season, employees who do not qualify for standard insurance will be offered only a service plan. The alternative insurance plan will be available only to newly hired and newly eligible employees and their spouses. The last day you can request an abbreviated underwriting application or apply on-line is 31 Dec 02. LTC Partners will accept abbreviated applications sent by mail, fax, or overnight service that it receives by 31 Jan 03 (this is not a postmarked-by date). LTC Partners web site is www.ltcfeds.com.
- **Dec /Jan Effective Dates and Leave Usage on 29 Nov and 31 Dec.** Normally, employees must be "actively at work" in a pay and duty status for at least 50% of their scheduled tour of duty on their last regular work day before the scheduled effective date of their long term care coverage. OPM realized this was a problem because so many employees take leave during the holidays, especially on 29 Nov and 31 Dec 02. *For this year only*, employees approved for coverage effective 1 Dec 02 or 1

Jan 03, who will be in an approved leave status on 29 Nov 02 or 31 Dec 02, can still have their coverage effective on 1 Dec 02 or 1 Jan 03 as long as they return to a pay and duty status during the month their coverage becomes effective. This new policy applies only to the scheduled effective dates of 1 Dec 02 and 1 Jan 03. ("Approved leave status" applies to any approved leave, including annual, sick, leave without pay, and administrative leave.) The policy applies only to current employees applying via the abbreviated underwriting application. It does not affect spouses of current employees since they do not have an "actively at work" requirement, and does not affect annuitants because they use the full underwriting application.

4 Dec 02

Thrift Savings Plan Rates of Return Posted for November 2002. The monthly G, F, C, S, and I Fund returns represent the actual total rates of return used to allocate monthly earnings for November 2002 to participant accounts, after deduction for administrative costs, trading costs, and accrued investment management fees. Percentages in () are negative returns. For more information, go to the TSP Home page at www.tsp.gov and click on Rates of Returns.

	G Fund	F Fund	C Fund	S Fund	I Fund
November 2002	0.34%	(0.01%)	5.87%	6.76%	4.49%
<u>Last 12 Months</u> (12/1/2001 - 11/30/2002)	5.04%	7.36%	(16.48%)	(9.90%)	(12.68%)

2 Dec 02

- **Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB) Open Season Ends 9 Dec 02.** That's right, there's only one week left in the health insurance open season. Whether you are enrolling for the first time or changing health insurance plans or options, don't delay...complete your election sooner rather than later. Also remember, Air Force-serviced employees will make FEHB open season elections or changes through the Benefits and Entitlements Service Team (BEST) phone system or the Employee Benefits Information System (EBI S). EBI S is located on the web at http://www.afpc.randolph.af.mil/dpc/BEST_GRB/EBI_S.htm. The BEST phone system may be reached at 1-800-997-2378, or commercial 527-2378 within the San Antonio, Texas area. Overseas employees will dial a toll-free direct access number for the country they are in. Hearing impaired employees may conduct transactions via EBI S or contact a benefits counselor via our TDD line: 1-800-382-0893 or commercial 565-2276 with the San Antonio, TX area.
- **Thrift Savings Plan Open Season Ends 31 Dec 02.** The end of the TSP open season is 31 Dec 02 - a time of the year when many employees are busy with holiday plans and shopping and could possibly forget to make their election. Please don't let this happen

to you. Make your TSP election or change now! Air Force-serviced employees will conduct TSP transactions using the BEST phone or web systems, as described just above.