

PRESS RELEASE

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TRICARE Access for Gray Area Retirees Possibly Postponed

WASHINGTON -- A Defense Authorization from Congress regarding health care coverage access for Reserve and Guard retirees may not be made available until next year according to statements made today to the Reserve Officers Association.

Department of Defense Health Affairs officials warned of a delay in providing access to TRICARE Reserve Select to retired Reserve Component members who have not yet reached age 60 and are therefore not eligible for the same TRICARE programs as drilling Reservists or active duty retirees. Their estimate for implementation is between 11 and 18 months before opening enrollment. The new law as written in the 2010 National Defense Authorization Act was supposed to start eligibility on Oct 1, 2009, with original estimates by professionals in the medical field suggesting a six to eight month delay.

“The [TRICARE Management Activity] must design complex operational procedures, negotiate significant modifications to existing contracts and introduce changes in the Code of Federal Regulations,” said Thomas E. Broyles, spokesman for the TRICARE Management Activity in an email to a number of veterans service organizations. “Factors beyond TMA's control that are basic to the way the Federal government has to process new benefits make effecting NDAA changes within a year moving at breakneck speed.”

Members of the Reserve Officers Association find this implementation timetable disappointing. “I suspect the Pentagon is slowing implementation to coincide with the next generation of a TRICARE contract to avoid change order costs,” said ROA legislative director Capt. Marshall Hanson (USNR Ret.).

ROA has already met with other associations, and letters will be sent to congressional leadership highlighting that the Pentagon is not meeting Congressional expectations for implementation. ROA leaders will also be talking with TRICARE contractors who would be administering the Gray Area retirees access to Tricare Reserve Select.

The Reserve Officers Association, with 68,000 members, is the professional association for all uniformed services of the United States. Chartered by Congress and in existence since 1922, ROA advises and educates the Congress, the President and the American people on issues of national security, with unique expertise on Reserve issues. ROA advocates for adequate funding of equipment and training requirements, recruiting and retention incentives, and employment rights for all members of the Reserve.

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