

From Our Constituent Services Desk...

Just as with everything else in the military, preparation is the key to a smooth retirement. There are some really great resources and the number one piece of advice is to **start planning early!** Don't wait until your retirement month to begin preparing; start now even if you just enlisted. Here are some resources to help you get started.

1. Educate yourself on special tax benefits for service members and their families. According to the [Internal Revenue Service \(IRS\)](#) some benefits include combat pay exclusion; deadline extensions; and relief from joint return signatures.
2. This may sound premature, especially if you just enlisted, but plan for post-retirement. You can use the [Blended Retirement System's official military pay calculator](#) to give you an estimate on what your benefits will be at retirement. It automatically takes into account career progression, any bonuses and extra payments to TSP you may wish to make over the years. Then you can use the estimated monthly gross payments and deduct any health insurance premiums or taxes to calculate your monthly net amount.
3. Money issues are the number one contributor to marital strife. Don't be afraid to seek assistance in creating a budget, or with money management. [Military OneSource Financial Counselors](#) are available in-person, on the phone, or by video.
4. They can also educate you on the benefits you've earned, and what happens to your benefits once you retire. [MilitaryOneSource](#) lists the following examples:
 - Effective January 1, 2018, you must enroll yourself and eligible family members in TRICARE or risk losing your benefit.
 - You have one calendar year from your retirement date to use your last government-paid move anywhere within the U.S. or to your home of record outside the country.
 - Your Servicemembers Group Life Insurance plan continues uninterrupted for 120 days after separation.
 - You have up to 10 or 15 years after separation to use your GI Bill (depending on the program).
5. As you near your retirement date, contact the [Transition Assistance Program](#) at your base. They will provide tools, training, and information to ensure your step into civilian life more successful.

And finally, be sure to learn how receiving VA benefits can affect your retirement. According to the Department of Defense and Finance Accounting (DFAS), *"The law requires a military retiree waive a portion of their gross DoD retired pay, dollar for dollar, by the amount of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) disability compensation pay. This is known as the VA Waiver (or VA offset)."* The [DFAS](#) website will help you understand the [VA Waiver and Retired Pay/CRDP/CRSC Adjustments](#).

If you have questions, or a specific problem the military or with the Department of Finance and Accounting Service, please contact our office at caseworkga11@mail.house.gov or 770-429-1776. We look forward to serving you, should you need our assistance.