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Best Days to Retire in 2014-2015

Calendar Year	Leave Year: Beginning to Ending Date	Best Days to Retire: CSRS & CSRS Offset	Best Days to Retire: FERS & TransFERS
2014	1/12/2014 to 1/10/2015 (26 pay periods)	May 3, May 31, Jun 28, Nov 1, Nov 29, Dec 28	May 31, Jun 28, Nov 29, Dec 28
2015	1/11/2015 to 1/9/2016 (26 pay periods)	May 2, May 30, Jun 28, Oct 3, Oct 31, Nov 28	May 30, Jun 28, Oct 31, Nov 28

*Dates selected in this table are determined from the Office of Personnel Management's 2014 and 2015 leave year calendars.

Guidelines for Retirement Effective Date & First Annuity Check

CSRS/CSRS offset employees who retire on the 1st, 2nd, or 3rd of the month will have their retirement become effective on the next day and their first retirement check will be dated the first day of the next month.

FERS employees retirement becomes effective the first day of the following month regardless of the day they retire. The first retirement check will be dated the 1st of the month after that.

Remember...

CSRS/CSRS Offset should consider annual leave at the time of retirement.

FERS should consider unused sick leave at the time of retirement.

Retirement Considerations

Whether you are Civil Service or Active Duty, here are some things to think about!

Survivor Spouse Option

At time of retirement, you must select if you want your CSRS/FERS pension annuity to continue after your death at a reduced rate for your spouse. You pay for this with a reduction in your pension while living.

If your spouse pre-deceases you, you lose the premium you paid. If your spouse doesn't live long after you, this may not be a good investment either – you've paid in more than they will receive.

Another consideration is the catch 22 if both you and your spouse are Federal Employees.

FEGLI Option (Federal Employee Group Life Insurance)

Always keep your Basic Life Insurance!

Basic has three choices at retirement. Much depends on your personal health, but making the correct choice is important.

If you carry A, B, or C, you will want to understand what happens after retirement.

Most individuals continue to carry A and replace B and C with alternative options.

TSP Considerations (Thrift Savings Plan)

TSP has provided you a way to save for the day you want to retire and stop working.

TSP's purpose was to provide an income when needed.

Deciding whether to stay with TSP or complete a rollover can be a difficult decision if you don't know all the answers.

Find out more by contacting Federal Employee Benefits.

VERA/VSIP Eligibility Requirements

An employee who is covered either by the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS, including CSRS Offset employees) or the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS, including "Trans" FERS employees) may apply to retire on an immediate annuity if the employee satisfies all of the following conditions:

1. Meets the age and service requirements
2. Meets the minimum civilian service requirement
3. Separates from a position subject to CSRS or FERS coverage
4. Meets the "one-out-of-two" requirement (CSRS employees only)
5. Has served in a position covered by the OPM authorization for the minimum time specified by OPM (usually at least 30 days)
6. Separates by the close of the "early out" (VERA/VSIP) period

Employees will receive a notification from management if their organization is approved to apply. A document must be signed and submitted by the deadline. After applying, an employee will be notified if approved. Not everyone who applies will be approved.

Service Benefits Bedevil Survivors

by Thomas Gibbons-Neff (Intern at the Washington Post)

On Mother's Day 2010, Marine Sgt. Thomas Bagosy told his wife that he loved her and that he had completed his two purposes in life: He had served his country and helped bring their children into the world.

The next day, after a battle with post-traumatic stress that spanned nearly half a decade, he put a .22 caliber pistol to his head and shot himself.

His wife, Katie Bagosy, found out several hours later when a casualty notification officer from Camp Lejeune, N.C., pulled up to her door. In his hand: a gigantic three-ring binder with a fading American flag plastered from cover to binding and the "Widow's Survival Handbook" nestled within.

After more than 13 years of war that have killed 6,808 service members, thousands of spouses of the fallen have found themselves in the same position — forced to navigate a complex and often perplexing system of benefits. And although the nation has largely moved on from Iraq and Afghanistan, the federal benefits system has made it hard for some survivors to do the same.

The system rewards most generously those who don't remarry or find work and weans those who do from compensation and benefits. Starkly put, survivors say, it has put a price tag on the daunting process of moving on.

Bagosy, who has a part-time marketing job, recalls learning that if she were to earn an income over a certain amount, her deceased husband's Social Security payments would be reduced. The same rule applies to the widows and widowers of civilians, but it has hit survivors of the fallen — many of them young and lacking financial stability — particularly hard.

"The rules associated with these benefits can discourage us from getting a job, or

doing different things and making different decisions because we're afraid we're going to lose what benefits we do have," said Bagosy, a 31-year-old mother of two.

The family members of Iraq and Afghanistan's dead are still struggling with a slew of taxes, lump sums, lifelong payments that dissuade an early remarriage and, above all, closure.

Bagosy now receives about \$1,500 a month and has used the benefits to keep herself afloat and her kids in school. She said that she is "grateful for everything" but also that she realizes the benefits might not last forever. In the early months after her husband's death, she realized that if she met a man she loved, marrying him would mean losing her benefits.

Under federal law, only surviving spouses who remarry after the age of 57 retain their annuities. "I saw it as unfair and a slap in the face," Bagosy said.

A death and a tax

With time, Bagosy said, she has come to terms with what remarriage would mean. But she and other survivors remain dogged by another rule, what they have come to call the "Widow's Tax."

The "[Widow's Tax](#)" is the offset created by two benefits that cancel each other out when they are paid simultaneously to a surviving spouse. One is a survivor benefit that works much like a pension and is overseen by the Department of Defense. The other is a payment provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs to survivors of troops who died during their time in service.

The law stipulates that for each dollar paid out for one benefit, the other benefit be reduced by a dollar — to avoid "double-dipping." But in the case of many survivors whose spouses joined the military after Sept. 11, 2001, the result is that payments are sharply reduced.

(Photo of Katie Bagosy, taken by Tami Chappell, for the Washington Post)

(excerpt from an online article from the Washington Post, posted 08/07/14)

Possible Help for Military Widows

by Jay Moyer (AVP Marketing, GPM Life)

First, our hearts go out Katie Bagosy and her family. This is a tragic chain of circumstances and events that led to her husband taking his own life.

In reading the article several times, it occurred to me the reporter is trying to illustrate the financial challenges this widow is facing due to the limitations of the Government benefits. In doing so, it seems some facts may be missing, or the article raises a few more questions. The intent is not to judge anyone's decisions, but to see it from a purely financial view.

- The \$1,500 per month she is receiving seems close for the DIC benefit, however with 2 young children she should also qualify for Social Security Survivor Benefits, estimated at \$2,300/mo based on her husband's pay grade.
- The Military Benefits also provide a Death Gratuity of \$100,000, plus any SGLI he may have been carrying up to \$400,000. If she has those benefits, that would certainly help.

Some Social Security and other Government benefits are designed to be offset by other sources of income. This should not discourage anyone from working or remarrying, as it is likely the income from employment, or a new spouse, plus the offset income, will be higher than the Government benefits alone.

About Us

We are an Independent Federal Employee Benefits Group who follows the Federal Employee News Digest. Our expertise in the civil service industry, as well as active military, has led us to a committed career with emphasis on coordinating government benefits and retirement planning.

Our organization has conducted civil service workshops at various locations including Randolph Air Force Base, Wilford Hall Hospital, Lackland Air Force Base, VA hospitals, Social Security Administration, Brooke Army Medical Center, Department of Labor, DCMA, DEA, FBI, FDA, FAA, USDA, IRS, GSA, SBA, HUD, Secret Service, CBP, TSA, Probation and the USPS.

We also conduct onsite and offsite briefings (TSP, CSRS/FERS Retirement and Disability) which are open to all employees, including military personnel from new hire to retirement eligible. There is no cost to have us provide these briefings to your staff.

We dedicate our efforts towards helping Civil Service and Military employees maximize their benefits amid the ever changing rules and regulations. This enables you to make better decisions about today's issues and tomorrow's retirement.

Our coordinators understand the importance of ensuring you have a complete understanding of your benefits and options associated with your financial situation. This allows you to choose the most appropriate decisions to achieve the greatest retirement benefits for you and your family.

Of all of our accomplishments and successes, we take greatest pride in our educational approach which allows employees to retire with dignity and, most importantly, peace of mind.



FEDERAL EMPLOYEE BENEFITS
Serving Civil Service and Military Members

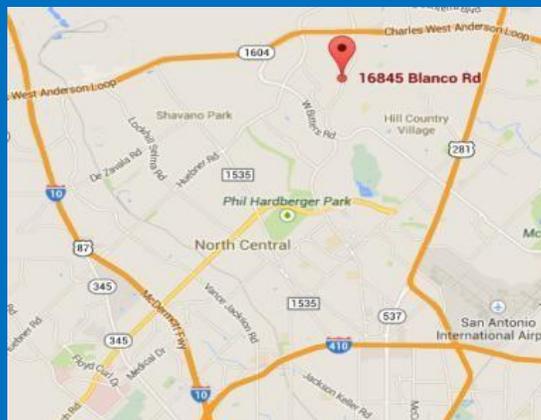
"Our educational approach...allows federal employees to retire with...financial security and, most importantly, peace of mind."

**Visit our website to request a personalized retirement packet or
to request a one-on-one with a benefit coordinator.**

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