



Commissioned Officers Association of the U.S. Public Health Service

July 29, 2014

Ms. Carolyn Colvin, Acting Commissioner
Social Security Administration
Altmeyer Building
6401 Security Boulevard
Baltimore, MD 21235

Dear Commissioner Colvin:

A recent publication from AARP stated that additional Social Security credits are awarded to individuals who served on active duty in the U.S. military from 1957-2001. As you might imagine, this item has provoked considerable interest from officers in the Commissioned Corps of the U.S. Public Health Service. I have looked at the SSA website and have read what it says about such military credits. What I cannot find is anything that would tell me whether PHS officers are entitled to the credit, and after 45 minutes on hold on the telephone, I simply gave up. Hence this letter, to which I am hopeful I will receive a response.

I cannot locate the law which grants these benefits, so I do not know whether they are limited by law to members of the "military," or whether PHS officers might also be so entitled. If there is discretion on the part of the SSA, then I respectfully request that commissioned officers of the PHS be included in this modest benefit. These officers may have served in Iraq or Afghanistan, may have deployed in the wake of Katrina or Sandy, or may be returning from deployment to our Southwest border in support of our engagement with the refugee children there. These officers serve under the direction of the Surgeon General of the United States and wear a uniform that is indistinguishable from that worn by Navy personnel. He or she wears military rank, and receives military pay and benefits. They are members of one of the seven "uniformed" services, but they are not specifically part of the military. Does the Social Security Administration afford them equal treatment for their service?

I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Col. James T. Currie, USA (ret.)
Executive Director