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COALITION TO ADVOCATE FOR PRESERVATION AND PATRONAGE OF COMMISSARIES AND EXCHANGES

Resale system provides savings and jobs to active and retired military

Washington, D.C. (March 7, 2012) – Military personnel and families have a new advocate in their corner to preserve and strengthen a 150-year-old cherished benefit that provides thousands of dollars in annual savings on household necessities, billions of dollars in added employment income for military families and underwrites other billions of dollars in vital on-base community programs and facilities.

A coalition of military families, advocacy groups and American industry called Save Our Benefit has formed to preserve the heavily valued shopping privileges on military bases.

Touting the significant household savings that commissaries and exchanges bring to military families, the Coalition aims to take a series of measures to insulate from budget reductions what is considered the most efficient and effective benefit provided to military people. For example, over the past five years, costs of commissary programs have remained constant, while the cost of most other Defense programs has doubled and tripled. In order to boost these savings even further, the Coalition aims to ensure that all eligible patrons know they can save 20 to 50 percent by using their benefit. As sales increase and a broader shopping base establishes, prices will be continually driven down, giving military patrons an even greater incentive to utilize their local commissaries and exchanges.

“The military resale system is an essential benefit for the millions of military personnel and their families worldwide – Americans who sacrifice more than any other – and we want to educate, engage, and excite our patrons on the merits of the system,” said Patrick B. Nixon, President of the Coalition to Save Our Military Shopping Benefit. “No merchant better understands and respects military families than the commissaries and exchanges.”

Nixon also noted that the Coalition is actively encouraging patron and advocacy groups to join and membership is free of charge.

“Not only does the military resale system offer the best value to military families, it also stabilizes and strengthens military households by being a major employer for spouses, retirees and dependents. It also provides support to other quality of life programs, such as on-base community and family support

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programs,” said Deborah Kalas, military spouse and member of the Coalition Board of Directors. “When a military member walks into one of these stores, they’re likely to find one of their friends and neighbors serving them and when they spend a dollar in one of these stores, they’re investing in their own quality of life.”

The military resale system also strengthens the American economy by promoting American products overseas and has generated more than \$20 billion in earnings over the past 20 years, which has been plowed back into funding programs and facilities for military families. These facilities are funded by the patrons and then given back to the taxpayer as they become part of the Government’s inventory.

The system is also an extremely powerful job engine, providing more than 30,000 well-paying jobs to veterans and military families. Not only are these jobs portable from base to base, but they also support First Lady Michelle Obama’s Joining Forces initiative. Just this past October, at a ceremony held at Langley Air Force Base, the President and Mrs. Obama announced that the industries supporting these programs would add another 25,000 jobs for veterans and their family members.

In a recent editorial published in the Washington Times, Representative Joe Wilson of South Carolina, Chairman of the Military Personnel Subcommittee of the House Armed Services Committee, and Congresswoman Susan Davis, the ranking Democrat, emphasized the importance of the resale benefits, calling commissaries and exchanges the “bedrock of combat readiness” and a great contributor to the “strength of the military community.”

“It’s said that you recruit the military, but you retain the family,” said Nixon. “This shopping benefit is a force multiplier, in that it helps keep quality men and women in our military, thereby reducing the cost associated with re-training new individuals when others elect to leave [the military].”

Nixon also explained that the several misguided proposals put forth during the budget debate have called for radical restructuring and diminishment of these benefits under the false notion of saving taxpayer dollars. The Coalition aims to ensure that nothing happens to destroy these benefits and to educate key policy makers about the consequences of moving forward with these proposals. He said that the Coalition would be working with commissaries and exchanges to “make sure patrons utilize the benefit and understand that it is under scrutiny.”

“We are embarking on a campaign to educate, engage and excite the military patron with a vibrant web site and social media presence. We aim for these platforms to provide information about sales, marketing and promotional activities taking place in the on-base stores that you won’t be able to find anywhere else,” stated Nixon. “We want to make the interaction easy to access and engage, in so that it feels completely natural and genuine. Because of this, we are heavily investing in social media to further reach and educate military consumers. The goal is to provide our patrons with these valuable deals so they don’t have to hunt for this information themselves.”

For more information, please visit www.SaveOurBenefit.org or [like us on Facebook](#).

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