

# AFGE Local 1263 Newsletter (#8)

Sunday, 22 December 2024

Year-end Holiday Issue



In this issue:

Government Shutdown Averted (till 3/14/25): Time to prepare

## Good-to-Know:

- Social Security Fairness Act
- Voluntary Leave Transfer Program
- 2025 Federal Holidays

Commissary Privileges: not yet available here in Monterey

Monterey Event Calendars & First Night Monterey

Life After DLI: Farooq Babrakzai

## ATTACHMENT:

DCPAS (DoD) Reference Guide: Paid Parental Leave (PPL)

## Government Shutdown Averted

The Congress averted the shutdown of the federal government shortly after midnight, approving temporary funding until 14 March 2025.

<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/government-shutdown-congress-trump-elon-musk/>

<https://apnews.com/article/trump-government-shutdown-deadline-speaker-johnson-budget-da117337aa0c0adab34a5626bb5816af>

Many Federal Credit Unions will offer 0% loans to credit union members ("depositors") whose pay is being deposited into their credit union account - **prior to the shutdown.** Navy Federal Credit Union (NFCU) is one of these institutions.

If you are concerned about another possible Government shutdown on 15 March 2025, then you should check with your Credit Union, to see what benefits are offered. Below are the benefits that NFCU offers:

<https://www.navyfederal.org/about/government-shutdown.html>

**For information about becoming a member of NFCU:**

<https://digital-membership.navyfederal.org/#/step/eligibility-choices>

# Good-to-know

## The Social Security Fairness Act

It **does not appear** that the recently enacted Social Security Fairness Act will affect Federal Employees contributing to FERS-pensions.

Those federal employees who retired under the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) will benefit greatly. (The CSRS was replaced by the current FERS pension system in 1987.)

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## Voluntary Leave Transfer Program (VLTP)

To qualify to be placed in VLTP:

1. Both annual and sick leave must be exhausted and must be in an LWOP status for 24 work hours (three working days).
2. Be in a medical emergency status; *A medical emergency* is a medical condition of either the employee or the employee's *family member* that is likely to require the employee to be absent from duty for a prolonged period and to result in a substantial loss of income because of the employee's lack of available paid leave.
3. A doctor's letter that meets the following criteria: anticipated duration (the start and end date of the medical emergency period), reason(s) why transferred leave is needed, to include a brief description of the nature, severity (what duties is the employee incapable of performing?) and will it be a reoccurring one? Doctor's letter must have signature and doctors contact information for legitimacy.

4. Fill and digitally sign OPM630 (wet signature is appropriate if you can't digitally sign) and provide the application to your supervisor for approval, they will then email it to the VLTP

Coordinator, Jonathan Perez, [jonathan.a.perez28.civ@army.mil](mailto:jonathan.a.perez28.civ@army.mil), for review and approval.

Please make all contact with your supervisor for questions, concerns and assistance.

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# Federal Holidays

Overview	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	Historical Data
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## 2025

### 2025 Holiday Schedule

Date	Holiday
Wednesday, January 01	New Year's Day
Monday, January 20	Birthday of Martin Luther King, Jr.
Monday, January 20 *	Inauguration Day
Monday, February 17 **	Washington's Birthday
Monday, May 26	Memorial Day
Thursday, June 19	Juneteenth National Independence Day
Friday, July 04	Independence Day
Monday, September 01	Labor Day
Monday, October 13	Columbus Day
Tuesday, November 11	Veterans Day
Thursday, November 27	Thanksgiving Day
Thursday, December 25	Christmas Day

An official website of the United States government Here's how you know

# DOD to pilot expansion of commissary benefit to military civilian employees

By Defense Commissary Agency December 3, 2024



[<https://api.army.mil/e2/c/images/2024/12/03/31905c41/original.jpg>]

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1 / 2

FORT GREGG-ADAMS, Va. – The Fort Gregg-Adams Commissary was selected to be part of a four-month pilot program to allow Department of Defense employees to shop at the store.

The DOD will begin testing an expansion of commissary shopping privileges for DOD civilian employees at select [Defense Commissary Agency](https://commissaries.com) [https://commissaries.com] stores in the continental U.S., for 120 days starting Dec. 5.

“We welcome the opportunity to participate in DOD’s pilot to expand commissary shopping privileges to DOD civilian employees at 16 of our stores,” said John E. Hall, DeCA director and chief executive officer.

All civilian employees (appropriated and non-appropriated) with DOD identification will be authorized to shop at one of the 16 commissaries participating in the piloted program.

The pilot will test the feasibility of expanding commissary access to DOD civilians at all stateside commissaries. For now, the 16 stores selected include:

- Alaska: Eielson Air Force Base
- California: Naval Air Weapons Station China Lake and Fort Irwin
- Georgia: Marine Corps Logistical Base Albany and Robins Air Force Base
- Maryland: Naval Air Station Patuxent River
- Oklahoma: Altus Air Force Base
- Texas: Laughlin Air Force Base
- Virginia: Naval Surface Warfare Center Dahlgren, Joint Base Langley-Eustis (Fort Eustis and Langley Air Force Base commissaries), Fort Gregg-Adams, Joint Expeditionary Base Little Creek-Fort Story (Little Creek Commissary), Naval Base Norfolk, Naval Air Station Oceana and Norfolk Naval Shipyard (Portsmouth)

Participating commissaries were based on the following criteria to gather research data:

- Store Size: A variety of stores were selected ranging from small to large
- Demographics: An adequate military departmental employee mix while evaluating DeCA’s ability to accommodate the additional patrons



- Geography: Geographic locations were selected based on their ability to manage the increase in patronage. Certain locations will provide insight to infrastructure requirements based on the levels of DOD civilian population.

DeCA has been tasked by the DOD to closely monitor any effects of the increased patronage on the pilot stores' operations and report those findings to DOD. The findings will then assist the Defense Department in determining the feasibility of expanding the benefit to all DOD civilians.

This authorization does not include benefit access for family members of DOD civilian employees and former or retired DOD civilian employees, the purchase of tobacco or alcohol products and Commissary Click2Go online shopping privileges.

*About DeCA: The Defense Commissary Agency operates a worldwide chain of commissaries providing groceries to military personnel, retirees, disabled veterans and other authorized patrons and their families in a safe and secure shopping environment. Commissaries provide a military benefit, saving authorized patrons thousands of dollars annually on their purchases compared to similar products at commercial retailers. The discounted prices include a 5-percent surcharge, which supports the costs of building, modernizing and sustaining commissary facilities. A core military family support element and valued part of military pay and benefits, commissaries contribute to family readiness, enhance the quality of life for America's military services and their families, and help recruit and retain the best and brightest men and women to serve their country*

## Local Peninsula Event Calendars (continually updated):

<https://www.seemonterey.com/events/>

<https://whatsupmonterey.com/events>

[https://calendar.montereycountynow.com/calendars/all-events?proxy\\_host=calendar.montereycountynow.com&proxy\\_slug=monterey-county-weekly](https://calendar.montereycountynow.com/calendars/all-events?proxy_host=calendar.montereycountynow.com&proxy_slug=monterey-county-weekly)



First Night Monterey: Parade, Drummers & Music - WhatsUpMonterey.com



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5



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**For more information:**

<https://www.firstnightmonterey.org/>



# FIRST NIGHT MONTEREY



Tuesday, December 31, 2024 at 3:00 PM  
to 12:00 AM

Historic Downtown Monterey  
Monterey, CA 93940

 Add To Trip

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## EVENT INFO

Don't miss a fantastic New Year's Eve celebration in beautiful Downtown Monterey. Enjoy an impressive array of top entertainment to choose from during First Night Monterey!

Save the Date and Ring in the New Year with an unforgettable celebration in Monterey, CA that attracts people from around the world. The multi-award-winning annual First Night Monterey 2025 is a very special, family-friendly New Year's Eve celebration in historic downtown Monterey. Advance discounted buttons are available for purchase now. Monterey's First Night celebration will give families a great way to ring in the New Year.

Join us for the Twilight Procession as we enjoy the lights, the magic, and the joy of First Night into the New Year! It's a Mardi-Gras-style walking parade that begins at Portola Plaza and moves down Alvarado Street to Pearl Street, featuring bands, dance groups, large-scale movable sculptures, puppets, and costumed people. Successful elements include height, sound, lights and glow-in-the-dark materials. The Twilight Procession also serves as the finale for Kids' Night Out!

The Twilight Procession includes Art Cars, there are murals to take selfies by, and the Resolution Sculpture are just a few of the artful projects awaiting First Night'ers.

[Links with more information on First Night Monterey:](#)

**See Who's Performing:** <https://www.firstnightmonterey.org/FNM/PerfArt.php>

**2025 Locations Event Map** <https://www.firstnightmonterey.org/FNM/EventMap.php>

**Buy a Button** <https://www.firstnightmonterey.org/Buttons/>

## Life After DLI: Farooq Babrakzai



I said many times at DLI that I work from 7:45am till 4:45pm. That is *work*. When I drive out through Franklin Gate, *life* begins. Now that I am officially retired, I am fully engaged in Life. Let me start by saying that I am by nature more of an *actor / doer* type, and not a spectator. In 1994, in Honolulu, once my upstairs neighbor Kevin and his wife Donna took me to see the Monster Trucks Show at Aloha Stadium. Kevin's passion was vans with powerful, souped-up engines. At the show the monster trucks would climb on top of the empty shells of cars, crushing them, and then spin around with engines roaring, billowing sand in the air. Quite a thrill, you may say. I was watching quietly while Kevin was excited as if he was at the Super Bowl.

Suddenly he elbowed me and said, '*Farooq, you seem to be quiet. Aren't you enjoying the show?*' I said, *the driver of the monster truck is having all the fun; I am just sitting here. Got that?*

If you want to be engaged in life, then real intelligent life is outside the iPhone screen. Does it sound old-fashioned by today's standards? Perhaps! But as some wise person said long time ago, '*you don't swim twice in the same river, because yesterday's water has flowed away many miles.*' Similarly, life today is different from yesterday's. The last time I had a TV in my apartment was July 2006, in Beijing, China, where I was working as Senior Fellow for the US State Dept. training English language teachers at Beijing Normal University.

Retirement posed two wonderful challenges: how to keep my mind and body healthy and functioning. For the mind, intellectual endeavors. I have been an avid reader since elementary school. I started work on my first book in 2019, completed in the fall of 2023, which went to a publisher in 2024 in Delhi, India, and will be out in early 2025. The topic is the events in the early history of Pakistan, 1947-52. A second book is in progress. This time there are six interrelated topics on the same people known by three different names: *Pashtun, Pathan, Afghan*, living in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Here the challenge is to convert oral traditions, myths, and legends of the past into history with logical explanation and evidence. In other words, create a measure of objective knowledge which would encourage future research. The book will hopefully be complete by summer 2025. What's next on the horizon? Comprehensive grammar & syntax of the Pashto language. Then a philosophical topic. After many years of reading, searching, and thinking, it occurred to me that Buddhism and Hinduism, which had a long history in the region before the advent of Islam, were the foundation of Islamic Sufism. Stay tuned!

I go to AISO Library at DLI from where most books have been removed and now looks like an empty hall with computers and a handful of students. The attraction for me is the large tables, Wi-Fi, and the latest issues of *the New Yorker* and *the Economist*.

For the body? Swim twice a week in Pattullo Swim Center in Seaside; and twice a week use the gym at NPS. Not muscle building but work on flexibility and speed. Imagine a person alone in the racquetball court with a racquet in each hand, hitting the ball and running after it, like an asymmetrical warrior! That's me. Past that, I have a passion for gardening – vegetables, roses, and growing fruit trees in extra- large pots buried in the sandy ground. Plus, crude masonry and carpentry in the backyard. With gardening comes the creative skill of cooking, ranging from the north Indian, to Persian to the east Mediterranean cuisine. Where there is good food, there is hospitality, the secret of sharing hunger with others and making friends. Every now and then invite friends for dinner which gives me a chance for kitchen creativity. My little Asian lady, from the Kimono culture, helps me like an elf on such occasions. She is also my partner in kitchen conversations on whatever, has interest in flowers and orchids, and is also a good cook, specially the north-eastern Asian cuisine.

Health? Years ago, I used to say that one should avoid police/prisons and doctors/hospitals. Eat good food for medicine so you don't have to eat medicine for food. In 2016, for the first time I got a primary care doctor. And the dentists have caught up with me. Teeth checkup and cleaning twice a year.

But all this sounds somewhat sedentary, confined to the Monterey area. Every second Sunday of the month, I go to Santa Cruz with my little companion: visit the flea market for antiques and collectibles, browse through Bookstore Santa Cruz for an hour, which gives me ideas on what is the latest in the world of knowledge and intellect, whether history, human relations, young writers, fiction and non-fiction, and cooking. This is followed by going to the coffee shop where I share one hot latte with my Kimono lady, and then go to the local Good Will store to explore the junk there.

Every few months, my wander lust kicks in, and I travel long distances. In fall 2023, I went to north-western India, walked through the crowded streets of Srinagar in Kashmir, Golden Temple in Amritsar, and in Chandni Chowk Bazaar in old Delhi. This was followed in 2024 by a short trip to Missouri in May, and in June, two weeks in northern Thailand, near the border with Myanmar. As if this was not enough. In October 2024 I was spotted browsing books in Peshawar, and wandering in crowded bazaars of Abbottabad, where Osama BL was dispatched, in Pakistan.

In the past, I would say that at academic conferences the presentations are not important, but meeting and speaking to other people is where the true value of a conference is. In the same vein, my work at DLI gave me fresh perspectives on a number of issues. I was always inspired by the young students diligently learning obscure foreign languages and cultures. They frequently reminded me of my own weaknesses. My interactions with fellow colleagues revealed to me how much I did not know and therefore had to learn anew. Finally, my work at DLI also changed my focus from the English language education to other languages and more important and strategic issues of the current period, such as area studies, with focus on Afghanistan and Pakistan. Well, add India to its right and Iran to its left, and the picture of the Area becomes somewhat complete.

Finally, what is the philosophical underpinning of life for me, you may ask. My response would be that you cannot logically define abstract topics like life, education, democracy, religion... Of course, neither can I. So I will try the anecdotal approach.

*The death angel came to a rich multi- millionaire and told him that he had a week of life left. That he better get ready to meet the Almighty. The rich man cried, shed tears, and humbly begged the angel for more time on earth, and that he would give anything for another few weeks of life. The angel agreed and said, ok, you may get only two more weeks to live, but you must donate all your wealth to charities. Guess what – the rich man happily agreed.*

Life is a precious gift. Live it to your fullest.

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# Happy Holidays

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***“Together we are  
stronger”***

**Next Issue: 5 January 2025**