

# World and Nation

## Pentagon opposes testing of fees for medical service

OMB says military dependents should pay

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Office of Management and Budget, over strong Pentagon opposition, has forced the Defense Department test a plan next year to charge fees for outpatient medical care delivered to military dependents and retirees.

Although the description of the planned test in the fiscal 1988 budget calls only for "nominal" fees, Pentagon officials are viewing the matter with trepidation.

They worry the test could lead to a permanent system of outpatient fees, reducing a key military benefit and in the process undermining morale and damaging recruiting and retention efforts.

The size and location of the experiment have yet to be decided.

Pentagon officials are determined, however, to keep it small and to have proceeds from fees plowed back to military personnel as contributions to the morale and recreation fund or improvements to medical facilities.

Internationally, 7 million retirees and military dependents are eligible to use military hospitals and clinics without charge if space is available. Active-duty personnel are guaranteed free medical care at all times, and the new test would not affect them.

Military medical facilities handle some 50 million outpatient visits every year.

"This is rather obscurely buried in the budget," said one top Pentagon official who requested anonymity. "The word is only now starting to seep out."

"But it's already sending people up the walls. The general public

*"We're good soldiers and we'll do it if we're told to."*

— Chapman Cox, Pentagon official

might view this as reasonable. But it's an incredibly emotional thing to the military. Rational people get unrational on this."

Another Pentagon source acknowledged "that from the standpoint of health care policy, it's probably sound."

"You can understand the genesis of it. But the military has certain obligations to its people."

"For example, the sailor goes off to sea, leaving behind a teen-age wife and new baby. The wife doesn't know how to take the baby's temperature so she brings him to a clinic. It

happens. So how are you going to charge her for that?"

Chapman Cox, the Pentagon official for personnel issues, said, "We're very concerned about her."

"It was absolutely not suggested by the Defense Department. We're good soldiers and we'll do it if we're told to. It will do the best we can to protect the interests of our people."

The plan to test outpatients is outlined in a single paragraph supporting documentation of Congress with the 1988 budget refers to two projects "to test conditions for servicemen, women and their families as a way to reduce costs."

One project will involve an experiment to determine if private care can do a more efficient job of running military commissaries.

The other "is a plan to test a test basis, nominal fees for outpatient medical care provided to active-duty patients to determine whether such fees can reduce and improve the quality of military medical facilities," the report states.

Ed Dale, a spokesman for the Pentagon, acknowledged "there was a back-and-forth" internally between his agency and the Pentagon over the idea.

## Computer field losing student enrollment, industry prominence

BOSTON (AP) — Enrollment in computer science programs is dropping as students become disillusioned by the computer industry slump and discover the field is more demanding than they thought, university officials say.

"Five years ago, computers looked like they were the land of good money and easy opportunity," Paul Kalaghan, dean of the College of Computer Science at Northeastern University, said in a telephone interview Monday.

"I think today people understand it's a scientific discipline," he said. "Students found it was more difficult, that the mathematical rigor was large. It's not an easy business, really, when you couple that to the negative press the computer industry is getting."

John Rice, chairman of Purdue University's Department of Computer Science, added, "They found that they had to take calculus, they had to take physics. It's not a video games major."

Northeastern's 5-year-old computer science program saw its freshman class drop 40 percent, to 120 students last fall, Kalaghan said.

"When we started, we had upwards of 300 freshmen come in," he said.

Annapia Niedzielski, a 22-year-old Northeastern University student, said she transferred from the computer science program to the business college after two years be-

cause computer science was not what she expected, not because she couldn't do well.

"I had taken a BASIC (computer language) course in high school and I liked that," Niedzielski said.

But once in the Northeastern program, "I didn't like the fact that it seemed very narrow-minded. It's very technical, and that's all that you did," she said.

A survey of 552 colleges by the University of California at Los Angeles found that about 1.6 percent of students who started college last fall wanted to major in computer science. That compares with 2.1 percent in 1985 and 4 percent in 1982.

Jay Nievergelt, chairman of the Department of Computer Science at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, said computer science for a long time was a "fairly specialized, technical field. Then five years ago, personal computers hit the home and everybody thought you had to be a student in computer science. It was a fad."

Enrollment in UNC's computer science program has dropped by half in the past few years, from a high of about 100 students a year, Nievergelt said.

Kalaghan said some students apparently confused computer science with computer programming, a less scientific endeavor by which people translate the work of the computer scientist into instructions for the computer.

## Winter storm wreaks havoc across Midwest

(AP) — A snowstorm for at least 30 deaths across the Midwest on Monday with more snow and ice, closing down several Indiana counties, stranding hundreds of travelers and closing schools across Plains states.

Winter storm warnings were up for parts of Missouri, Indiana, Ohio, New York and Pennsylvania, and a storm watch was extended for parts of Massachusetts.

In the storm's wake, Oklahoma dug out after one of its snowstorms in decades, and Mexico's National Guard used hauling supplies to rural areas snowbound by up to 18 inches of snow and 7-foot drifts.

Slippery roads and drifting snow in Indiana closed roads to all but emergency vehicles Monday.

Travelers had to wait at storm at truck stops, churches and restaurants in Oklahoma and northwestern Texas.

About 200 schools and colleges were closed in Oklahoma.

Schools also were closed in parts of Texas, Missouri and Indiana.

Rain, freezing rain and snow caused a rash of accidents in Ohio, and at least two highway accidents were closed by overturned jackknifed tractor-trailer rigs.



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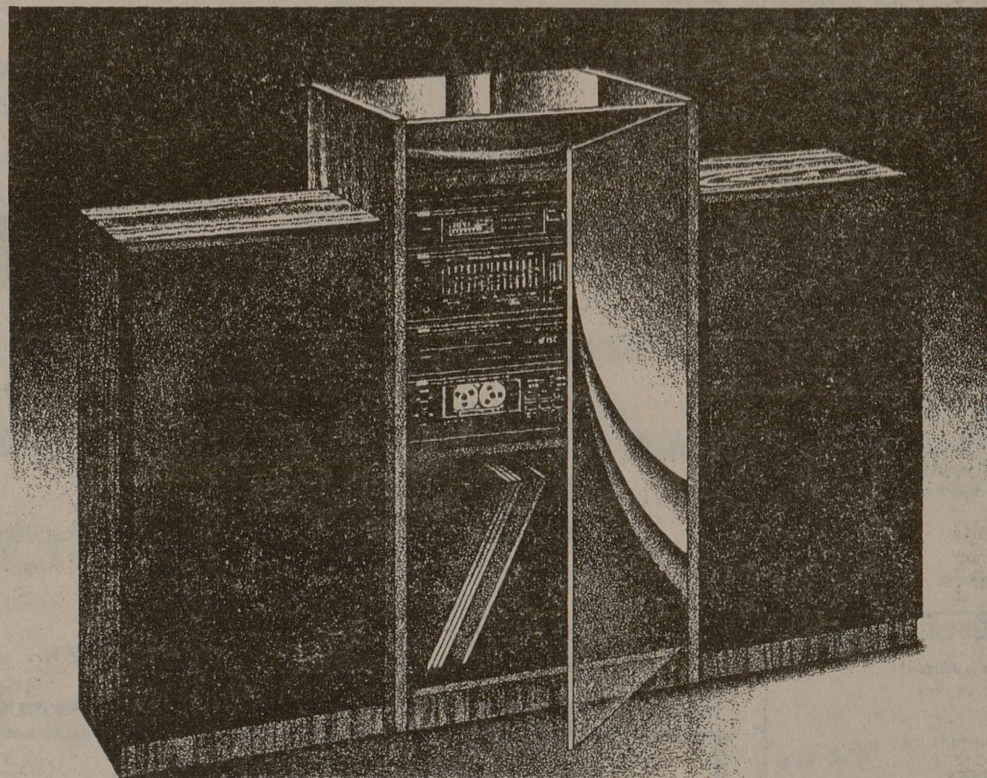
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