

Federal Health Plan Open Season Extended

Open Season for the Federal Employees Health Benefit Program (FEHB) has been extended, the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) announced Dec. 8. The extension was granted in response to widespread concern over benefit changes by Blue Cross Blue Shield that would have required subscribers to pay a new \$7,500 co-payment for out-of-network surgeries, the agency said.

Although OPM instructed agencies in the federal program to extend the enrollment period through Jan. 31, the USPS announced that “the new deadline to make employee self service FEHB elections using *PostalEASE* is **Dec. 28, 2008, at 5 p.m.** [Central Time].”

The USPS has indicated that its computer programmers have not been able to modify *PostalEASE* to accept Open Season changes beyond Dec. 28, but they are working on a solution. Postal officials have assured APWU Health Plan staff that no enrollment changes made as of Jan. 31 will be turned away.

“The extension of Open Season offers postal workers and other federal employees an opportunity to evaluate their health insurance coverage and to consider the benefits of the APWU plan,” said President William Burrus. “The APWU plan is outstanding, and I encourage union members to weigh its merits carefully.”

The extension of open enrollment and the request for changes were the result of a Dec. 3 hearing before the House Subcommittee on the Federal Workforce,

Postal Service and the District of Columbia. At the hearing, witnesses testified that the changes to Blue Cross Blue Shield’s benefits were not adequately publicized, and Subcommittee Chairman Danny K. Davis (D-IL) and others called on OPM to extend Open Season to give affected enrollees adequate time to change plans in response to the increased co-pay.

Following the hearing, OPM asked insurance carriers in the federal program to re-evaluate their benefits for non-emergency services and to propose any changes by Dec. 8, the day Open Season was initially scheduled to conclude. Changes to premiums or other benefits were not permitted.

Employees also will be able to make changes to their enrollment in Federal Employees Dental and Vision Insurance Program (FEDVIP) and the Federal Flexible Spending Account Program (FSAFEDS) “if FEHB benefit changes affect your enrollment decisions in these programs,” the OPM said.

Open Season Dates

Postal Employees

FEHB using <i>PostalEASE</i>	Dec. 28, 2008
FEDVIP	Jan. 31, 2009

Federal Employees and Retirees

FEHB	Jan. 31, 2009
FEDVIP	Jan. 31, 2009

For more information on the extension of Open Season, visit www.apwuhp.com.

Inauguration Update

As excitement builds for the inauguration of Barack Obama as the 44th president of the United States, the APWU is offering members commemorative buttons of the historic event for \$5 apiece, via the union’s Web site, www.apwu.org.

And APWU members who plan to visit the nation’s capital for Inauguration Day festivities on Jan. 20 are invited to enjoy the event with other union activists at

a hotel in downtown Washington.

For more information on taking part in the celebration in the nation’s capital, visit www.apwu.org.



Buttons are 3 inches by 2 inches.

SEASON'S GREETINGS