



Jayhawk Chapter MOAA Newsletter



This newsletter is published bimonthly by the Jayhawk Chapter of Kansas, Military Officers Association of America, as a service to all members. The Jayhawk emblem is used with the permission of the registered trademark owner, the University of Kansas. The newsletter is only as good as the material available, so each member is requested to forward news and other items of interest to the editors.

July Program:

Our speaker will be Bruce Flanders, Director of the Lawrence Public Library, who will give a presentation on the five proposals for expansion of the Library, their cost, etc.

4-STAR CHAPTER - 2005
5-STAR CHAPTER - 2003/2004

WEBSITE AWARD - 2004
NEWSLETTER AWARD - 2003

President's Corner

by Erv Hodges



Greetings, Jayhawk Chapter:

John Halladay and I attended the State Council meeting in Wichita June 17. As a part of the meeting we had a briefing given by the Director of Staff of the 22d Air Refueling Wing. The comments he made were significant in that he identified the problems the Air Force and other services are facing in reorganizing and developing the structure needed for the world situation we now live in and the types of conflicts we may be facing in the future. Especially disturbing were the personnel problems facing the young officers. Many are being discharged or reassigned as their specialties are no longer required. The retirement system that the Armed Forces has had for years is being examined and will probably be significantly changed. Military service is the only occupation where vesting in your retirement plan is not possible at five (5) or so years. Deployments are ongoing and the time between deployments are shortened. All stateside billets are being looked at closely as those that can be filled by civilian employees or the local economy may be eliminated. An example might be the Post Chaplain and then close the Chapel with the chaplains serving the units overseas and the local economy serving those on post. .

What can our members do? We must provide support to those servicemen and women that we know or come in contact with. We must closely watch our Congress and provide input to our representatives on those matters that affect our Armed Forces. We must increase our effort to meet with and have young officers join our group. We must be an active growing chapter in support of those who now serve.

Erv Hodges

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1 July 2006

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*** Reservations should be sent to Jim Cooper by 15 July 2006.**



JAYHAWK CHAPTER NEWS



MG CLAY COMFORT SCHOLARSHIPS

Ardis Comfort presented one of our first \$250 Major General Clay Comfort Scholarships to Army Cadet Jessica E. Adkison at the ROTC Awards ceremonies on 11 May 2006.

Pictured with Mrs. Comfort and Cadet Adkison is LTC Jeff Maxcy.

Mrs. Comfort also presented scholarships to Navy Midshipman 4/C Darren Elder and Air Force Cadet Jared S. Anderson.



JAYHAWK MOAA SPRING GOLFERS

Shown above are Jim McMurray, Buck Newsom, John Halladay, Jim Stokes, John Mosher and Erv Hodges as they prepared to enjoy a golf outing at Alvamar on 25 May.

Not pictured in the Super Senior bracket (and back-nine participant) is Shirley Halladay, who also served as photographer.



Council President Bob Hadley reports that his "Storming the Hill" experience in Washington, D.C., was very productive and informative and that he will be attending our July meeting.

Stan Sneegas was invited to attend the Space Shuttle Launch by one of the astronauts, Col. Mike Fossum, USAFR. Stan has invited Col. Fossum to speak at K.U. and may be able to get him to speak to the Chapter on the same visit.



MG CLAY COMFORT SCHOLARSHIP FUND:

CAPT Jim Cooper advises that we now stand at about \$3,500 in the MG Comfort Scholarship Fund after having paid out \$250.00 each (\$750.00 total) to the three initial ROTC scholarship awardees this past May. It is, therefore, time for us to continue supporting this fund, so we can get it up over \$5,000 and establish it as a fully-endowed scholarship fund and thus satisfy the KU Endowment' Association's terms for such a fund. Please send in a contribution and support this, our own Chapter's very important scholarship program.



Army News

LTC Jeff Maxcy

Greetings, Jayhawk Chapter!

The spring semester has come to an end marked by KU Commencement and our Joint Services Commissioning Ceremony. KU Army ROTC graduated and commissioned 11 officers this spring. Everyone at the Jayhawk Battalion is excited for these new Second Lieutenants as they move out to their first assignments.

The summer is still proving to be a busy time for the Jayhawk Battalion. Attending exciting training opportunities, cadets cycle through the Military Science Building to finalize their orders, travel, and packing lists. This summer the Jayhawk Battalion has 21 cadets attending Leadership Development and Assessment Course at Fort Lewis, WA;

10 cadets joining ROTC through Leadership Training Course at Fort Knox, KY; three cadets attending Nurse Summer Training Program in Germany, Hawaii, and Texas; two cadets earning their Airborne wings at Fort Benning, GA; and one cadet fast-roping at Air Assault school.

Check out our website at www.ku.edu/~kuarotc/ for more details on these events.

JAYHAWKS LEAD THE WAY!

LTC Jeff Maxcy



Navy News

CDR Chris Orwoll, USN



No news from the Navy-Marine Corps this issue. Summertime is a busy time for everyone off training for their specialties. Will have more for the next issue as we gear up for the Fall Semester.

CDR Chris Orwoll, USN



Air Force News

LtCol Sandra Leiker, USAF

Happy Summer, MOAA!

Can it really be here? KU Campus is quiet and beautiful. The AFROTC Cadre members are almost literally "passing like ships in the night" on our way to support various summer programs, and (can you be reading this right? Oh yes!) on our way to take some much-deserved summer leave! The hectic school year really set our hearts ablaze to try exotic destinations like Oahu, Cancun, and Crested Butte. We all seem healthier and cheerier with a little bit of tan, now. That will, of course, be tempered, by two of us spending five weeks at Ellsworth AFB, in Rapid City, SD, manning a summer

Field Training Encampment. Probably won't have much time to lie out by the pool there. ha ha.

In fact, summer does stay very busy for AFROTC. Much of our recruiting work and scholarship competition/activation takes place in the summer. Additionally, we have time to focus on any curriculum changes for the year ahead and tailor our lesson plans to KU's calendar. Another neat opportunity for faculty is taking advantage of free instructional development courses offered by KU. I think these are intended to help us stay on top of technology for teaching. Since the

students are so adept at doing everything online, those of us who can't figure out how to work a "thumb-drive" are sadly behind the power curve. I've heard my students gasp occasionally at my lack of savvy, along the lines of "Good grief, LtCol Leiker, you didn't just remove that drive without safing the device first, did you?" Me - "Well, uh, yeah, I guess I did, whatever that means." They've promised not to let me touch anything electrical or mechanical from now on, without cadet supervision. With good behavior, my NCOs just might let me retain my copier privileges.

I guess I should, at this point, introduce our new staff member! Capt Corey Edmonds is a communications officer, previously assigned to Buckley AFB in Denver, CO. He joins us this summer as Commandant of Cadets, replacing Capt Keith Bland, who will be heading to the D.C. area as Deputy Commander of one of the premier AF bands. I'm sure his primary career field is happy to have him back, but he will be sorely missed here by staff and cadets. Talk about big shoes to fill! But Corey will be a great addition to the team – upbeat and enthusiastic – hopefully that great attitude will remain after we show him his "to-do" list.

I haven't mentioned it yet, but in all honesty, the most exciting part of the summer for us is seeing how well all of our "upperclassmen-to-be" perform at Field Training (FT) camp. FT is a very intense and demanding experience, both physically and emotionally. In some sense, the cadets spend their first two years in the program getting ready for this

leadership/officership "trial by fire". Last year we put a heavy emphasis on preparation – giving us high expectations for their performance this summer. We just learned yesterday that our first set of 10 cadets (out of 23 total) have completed their camps VERY successfully (i.e., high marks) and returned home; the remainder are camp-bound this week. Very exciting - we're so proud of them!

Well, as usual I've rambled on – must go do some "real" work – drumming up recruits or something. Hey – I have a favor to ask – please pass the word to families you know – whose sons/daughters may be thinking about AFROTC scholarships – that the time to apply (online at www.afrotc.com) is prior to or early in the high school senior year. I get numerous calls from parents whose children are starting school this fall asking how to apply for a scholarship now! Sadly, they've already missed the best opportunity available for winning one of the centrally awarded scholarships. By the way – our recipient of MOAA's generous Clay Comfort Scholarship is one of the cadets who just completed FT with flying colors! Thanks for your great support!!

Respectfully,

Lt Col Sandra S. Leiker

MOAA LEGISLATIVE UPDATES

MOAA LEGISLATIVE UPDATE for May 12, 2006:

Issue 1: House Passes Defense Authorization Bill.

The House made short work of the FY2007 National Defense Authorization bill Thursday adding several personnel-related amendments. The measure passed by a 396-31 vote.

Issue 2: MOAA and NARFE Push for Health Care Premium Conversion

On May 9, MOAA Deputy Director of Government Relations, CDR Rene Campos, (USN-Ret) and representatives from the National Active and Retired Federal Employees Association (NARFE) met with Senator John Warner's (R-VA) staff to discuss strategies to enact his legislation (S. 484) that would authorize federal civilian and military retirees to pay health insurance premiums on a pretax basis and allow active duty and retired military personnel to deduct certain supplemental premiums or enrollment fees for TRICARE Prime and dental programs. The House companion bill, H.R. 994, is sponsored by Rep. Tom Davis, (R-VA).

Although S. 484 has 61 cosponsors and the House companion bill has 325 cosponsors, cost remains a significant roadblock. MOAA and NARFE are working with Senator

Warner's office to provide additional information as needed to the Joint Committee on Taxation, Senate Finance and the House Ways and Means Committees, as well as other members of Congress to address their concerns and offer implementation options.

Issue 3: House Passes Measures Allowing Tax Free Savings, Restricting Funeral Protests.

H.R. 1499 (Rep. Virginia Foxx, R-NC) would allow members collecting tax-free combat pay to make contributions to an IRA. Current rules governing contributions to IRAs limit those amounts to \$4,000 or a person's taxable income, whichever is less. The measure cleared by voice vote.

Servicemembers serving in Iraq and Afghanistan often have little or no taxable income because combat earnings are tax exempt. The benefit of tax free combat pay often effectively bars them from contributing to IRAs while deployed.

Rep. Foxx noted current IRS rules "wrongfully prohibit[s] many of our brave men and women serving in combat zones from taking advantage of retirement savings accounts."

This week's action by the House amends the Senate version of H.R. 1499 passed on Nov. 15, 2005. The bill now heads back to the Senate where it is expect to be cleared for President Bush's signature.

MOAA LEGISLATIVE UPDATE for May 19, 2006:Issue 1: Commission Debates Disability Insurance Review.

During its May 18-19 hearing in Arlington, VA, the Veterans' Disability Benefits Commission members and veterans' service organization representatives exchanged views on whether Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) awards should be considered in assessing VA and military compensation amounts for service-disabled veterans.

The commission, chartered by Congress to study the benefits that are provided to compensate and assist veterans and their survivors for disabilities and deaths attributable to military service, is now scheduled to provide their final report in October 2007.

Over the past two months, the commission had failed to reach an internal consensus on whether to collect SSDI data. This week's hearing gave military and veterans' organization representatives the opportunity to comment.

MOAA's input to the commission made the following points:

- 1) SSDI is an independent Social Security insurance program that all American workers pay for through payroll tax "premiums." As such, it serves a different purpose than compensation earned through service and sacrifice for the Nation.
- 2) MOAA is strongly opposed to offsetting VA disability compensation by SSDI, just as we believe it is inappropriate to offset retired pay for VA disability compensation or to offset Survivor Benefit Plan annuities for Dependency and Indemnity Compensation payments. In the case of SSDI, the statute has always prohibited any such offset to military retirement or veterans' disability benefits.
- 3) Congress established the commission at the same time it acted to eliminate the disability offset to retired pay for 100-percent disabled retirees - the only group that might qualify for SSDI. In that context, it would be the ultimate irony for the commission to investigate whether there should be a new offset to these members' disability compensation where none existed before.

After considering all of the organizations' inputs, the commission decided that it should get more information on SSDI. However, the commissioners took pains to emphasize that they do not intend to consider SSDI as a possible offset to VA disability compensation. Rather, the commission may consider possible options to improve coverage for disabled veterans, such as waiving the normal requirement to have paid 40 quarters of Social Security payroll taxes to be eligible for SSDI.

For more information on the Veterans' Disability Benefits Commission please visit

http://moaaonline.org/ct/21z_irK1lzWh/.

Issue 2: COLA Watch

In mid-May, the Bureau of Labor Statistics announced the April 2006 monthly Consumer Price Index (CPI), which is used to calculate the annual cost-of-living adjustments (COLA) for recipients of military and federal civilian retired pay, VA disability compensation, federal survivor annuities, and Social Security.

The CPI rose another full percentage point in March, for a total of 2.3% growth so far this fiscal year. Again, energy cost increases of 4.2% from March to April were the dominant reason for the increase.

Issue 3: Combat Troops' IRA Rights To Be Restored

A week after House passage, the Senate acted on May 18 to approve legislation (H.R. 1499) that will ensure combat troops won't lose the right to contribute to individual retirement accounts (IRAs). The bill will now go to the president for signature.

MOAA LEGISLATIVE UPDATE for May 26, 2006:Issue 1: VA Takes Heat Over Theft of Veterans' Personal Data

It's been all over the papers and TV this week, so you're likely already aware of the theft of a computer containing 26 million veterans' personal data (including Social Security numbers) from the home of a mid-level VA employee.

Our first reaction was, "What will the government do to protect the people whose data was stolen"? The second was, "What kind of security system could possibly allow any VA employee to take that kind and volume of data home"?

Secretary Nicholson expressed his own anger about the situation and vowed to take "decisive action" after a full investigation by the VA Inspector General George Opfer.

Opfer told the Washington Post that the employee in question had been taking the data home since 2003.

"We still hope this was a common theft and that no use of this data will be made," Nicholson said. In the meantime, the VA has placed a variety of notices on its Web site at http://moaaonline.org/ct/a7z_irK1uXW1/ including a letter of apology from Secretary Nicholson, information about what actions veterans can take, and a list of answers to frequently asked questions. The VA also has a toll-free hot line at 1-800-FED-INFO (1-800-333-4636).

In the meantime, MOAA has endorsed the Veterans Identity Protection Act of 2006, introduced in the Senate as S. 2970 (Kerry, D-MA) and in the House as H.R. 5455 (Salazar, D-CO). This legislation would provide one year of free credit monitoring to veterans whose personal information was stolen in the recent theft, with one free credit report each year for the following two years. To urge your legislators to support these bills, visit http://moaaonline.org/ct/a1z_irK1uXOV/ and scroll down to "Veterans and Other Issues" to click on S. 2970 and H.R. 5455.

In the interest of leaving no stone unturned, MOAA President VADM Norb Ryan, Jr. (USN-Ret) has directed a renewed review of MOAA's internal practices to ensure our membership data is protected from disclosure or intrusion.

Issue 2: MOAA Presses Key Funding Issues

Testifying before the Senate Defense Appropriations Subcommittee on May 24 on behalf of The Military Coalition, MOAA Government Relations Director COL Steve Strobidge (USAF-Ret) emphasized the urgent need for the subcommittee to correct a whopping \$735 million shortfall in the defense health budget.

"Both the House and Senate Armed Services Committees have categorically rejected Pentagon plans to double or triple military retiree health fees for FY2007," he said. "However, the President's budget already reduced defense health funding by \$735M for the coming year in the expectation that these fees would be imposed and would dramatically reduce demand. That's not going to happen this year, and the \$735M needs to be restored, or military medicine will run out of money next summer."

He further noted that the counterpart House subcommittee already completed its work on the defense health budget and didn't restore the money. So now the Senate must act to avoid a significant funding shortfall for this vital program.

Strobridge's testimony also highlighted the need to fully fund initiatives already approved by the Senate Armed Services Committee, including increased military manpower levels and upgraded pay raises.

He urged funding levels to ensure that housing, school, child care and other family support requirements are met for the thousands of military families who will be relocating as a result of base reduction and closure actions or other global rebasing plans. Support programs for Guard and Reserve families who don't have access to military installation services must be a continuing priority.

(Note: The Defense Appropriations Subcommittee's purview is limited to so-called "discretionary" funding issues. "Mandatory" spending initiatives such as concurrent receipt and survivor benefits aren't normally addressed in appropriations bills.)

MOAA LEGISLATIVE UPDATE for June 2, 2006:

Issue 1: Report Pans VA on "Unemployables"

A May 30 Government Accountability Office (GAO) released report criticizes the VA's award and management of Individual Unemployability (IU) benefits

(http://moaaonline.org/ct/W7z_irK1mzl8/).

The report, which continues the GAO's long-standing reviews of VA and other federal disability programs, says the VA needs to improve criteria, guidance, and procedures concerning award and verification of IU determinations.

Specifically, the report takes issue with what it says are the VA's:

- * Inconsistent awarding of IU benefits on the basis of information the GAO considers not well supported;
- * Inefficient and ineffective process to ensure the continuing eligibility for IU status;
- * Outdated compensation programs that don't reflect the current state of science, technology, medicine, and the labor market;
- * Management practices that lag behind those of other disability programs such as those for Social Security Disability Insurance; and
- * Awards to older veterans - the GAO reported that 79 percent of new IU beneficiaries were awarded IU benefits at the age of 60 or older, and 19 percent were 75 or older.

Issue 2: President Signs Legislation Allowing Tax-Advantaged Savings for Troops

On May 29, the Heroes Earned Retirement Opportunities (HERO) Act, which ensures that no servicemember loses the opportunity to contribute to individual retirement accounts (IRA), was signed into law by President Bush.

The House and Senate acted rapidly on the measure, passing it within a week of each other in mid-May, after it was originally introduced as H.R. 1499 by Rep. Virginia Foxx (R-NC).

At the urging of MOAA and others, Congress passed H.R. 1499 to fix a situation in which many servicemembers assigned to combat zones effectively were barred from making contributions to IRAs under current law, since their basic pay is exempt from federal income taxes. With no taxable earned income, they didn't meet eligibility rules for IRA contributions.

Personnel serving in Iraq and Afghanistan will now have the same ability to contribute to their retirement savings that other Americans enjoy. The new law also is retroactive to cover tax years 2004 and 2005, so affected members who previously were

kept from contributing in those years may now make retroactive contributions and file amended tax returns.

Issue 3: MOAA Staff Transitions

Col. Lee Lange, USMC (Ret), deputy director of MOAA's Government Relations Department since 2001, is moving to MOAA's Council and Chapter Affairs department, where he will assume duties as director after the first of the year. As MOAA's principal lobbyist on survivor and tax issues, Lee played a key role in winning elimination of the age-62 Survivor Benefit Plan annuity reduction and elimination of capital gains tax penalties for military homeowners, among many other accomplishments. He's led current campaigns for additional SBP fixes and co-authored Social Security articles in Military Officer magazine. Now, MOAA will take even greater advantage of his leadership and planning skills in his important new position.

Cynthia Thompson, who has overseen the Government Relations portion of the MOAA Web site, is also moving to assume duties as the chapter affairs specialist in the Council and Chapter Affairs department. Cindy has filled several important roles in her more than six years with Government Relations, including preparation, distribution, and management of legislative mailings and MOAA's weekly legislative update.

Bret Shea, who has proven his mettle in handling most of the legislative inquiries for MOAA's Member Service Center over the last year, will join the Government Relations team next month to assume responsibility for oversight of legislation and benefits content for the MOAA website and other media.

MOAA LEGISLATIVE UPDATE for June 9, 2006:

Issue 1: MOAA Meets with House Leaders

MOAA's Col. Steve Strobridge (USAF-Ret) and COL Bob Norton (USA-Ret) joined representatives of several other associations at a June 8 meeting with House Majority Leader John Boehner (R-OH) and Veterans Affairs Committee Chairman Steve Buyer (R-IN).

This was Boehner's first meeting with military and veterans association leaders since his recent election as Majority Leader. Boehner promised to be up front and honest with the military and veterans community. "What you see with me is what you get," he said. "I believe in working together with all parties to get things done...I support improving benefits for those who served. But we can't do everything for everybody."

Issue 2: DACMC Publishes Military Retirement Recommendations

The Defense Department announced this week the release of the Defense Advisory Committee on Military Compensation (DACMC) final report, "Completing the Transition to an All-VolunteerForce" (http://moaaonline.org/ct/upz_irK1Uzll/).

The DACMC, chartered in March 2005, was tasked to review the current military pay and benefits structure and identify ways to better sustain recruitment and retention of a high-quality, cost-effective, and ready military force.

The DACMC report describes the existing military compensation system as "outdated and inflexible" and says its recommendations would "complete the transition to the volunteer era and could result in greater flexibility for force managers, providing a more effective and efficient force."

MOAA believes some of the DACMC recommendations make good sense, including consolidating and simplifying special and incentive pays and offering Guard and Reserve members

subsidies to help maintain civilian insurance coverage for their families when they're mobilized

But we have reservations about the potential consequences of implementing civilian-style changes to the military retirement system such as:

- * Providing earlier vesting for military retirement at 10 years of service;
- * Implementing a "401(k)-like" contributory plan; and
- * Delaying retirement annuity that begins at age 60.

DACMC members emphasize that their retirement proposals would only apply to new service entrants, not to anyone currently serving or already retired. But less significant changes enacted two decades ago for post-1986 entrants had to be repealed in 1999 because they were hurting retention.

Pentagon officials emphasize that the Defense Department has taken no position on these proposals, and that they will be turned over to the 10th Quadrennial Review of Military Compensation (QRMC) for further study.

But we expect to hear lots more on the issue in the year ahead.

MOAA LEGISLATIVE UPDATE for June 16, 2006:

Issue 1: Where Are We on TRICARE Fee Hikes?

Thanks in part to quick action by 12,000 members who sent e-mails to their senators within 24 hours of MOAA's e-mail alert, the full Senate approved Sen. Frank Lautenberg's (D-NJ) TRICARE pharmacy amendment on Wednesday.

The Lautenberg amendment would bar the Defense Department from increasing retail pharmacy copays in fiscal year 2007.

With all the various proposals in the House or Senate versions of the defense bill and this new amendment, it's worth taking a step back to assess where we now stand on the various Pentagon-proposed TRICARE fee increases for the coming year.

Based on legislation approved so far by the House and Senate, it should be safe to say that:

- A. There won't be any increases in TRICARE Prime enrollment fees or the TRICARE Standard deductible for FY07, since both the House and Senate bills prohibit that.
- B. TRICARE mail-order pharmacy copays should be reduced to zero for most formulary drugs, since that's called for in both the House and Senate bills.

Other increases may still be in play because of differences in provisions in the House vs. the Senate defense bill including:

- * Possible increase in retail drug copays: Senate would freeze at \$3/\$9; House would raise to \$6/\$16;
- * Possible increase in TRICARE Reserve Select premiums for drilling Guard/Reserve members and families: Senate would raise the premium 2.2% next year; House would bar any 2007 increase;
- * TRICARE Standard enrollment fee: Senate would require a \$25 (\$40 family) enrollment fee; House would leave the current law in place, which doesn't allow any enrollment fee for Standard.

MOAA and The Military Coalition will be addressing all of these issues with the House and Senate conferees who will be working to resolve the differences in the final defense bill.

Issue 2: Send VA the Bill

In a further response to the theft of VA records with personal

information on 27 million veterans and active force members, Rep. Heather Wilson (R-NM) has introduced a bill (H.R. 5520) to establish a new VA office to adjudicate claims and compensate affected members who are harmed financially by the unauthorized use of their personal information.

If the bill were enacted, Veterans would have 2 years to file a claim, and the claim would have to be adjudicated and any proven claims paid within 180 days of submission.

Reimbursement amounts would be limited to actual financial damages; award of punitive damages would be prohibited. VA payments would be reduced by any other payments or settlements the veteran received from any other source relating to the matter. VA decisions would be subject to appeal and resolution by arbitration.

MOAA supports H.R. 5220, which has 106 cosponsors so far. Visit MOAA's website at

http://moaaonline.org/ct/-1z_irK1yROS/ to send a suggested message urging your representative to become a cosponsor.

Issue 4: Guarding the Joint Chiefs

Senators Christopher Bond (R-MO) and Patrick Leahy (D-VT) have introduced a bill (S. 2658) that would, among other provisions, establish the Chief of the National Guard Bureau as a 4-star general and a full member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

The measure is getting lots of attention on Capitol Hill (despite strong opposition from the Defense Department) because many legislators and state governors believe the Guard has been getting short shrift from the Pentagon on manpower and equipment budgets.

State officials are particularly concerned that sending so much of their manpower and equipment to Iraq and Afghanistan has left them short in responding to increased homeland defense requirements, border security needs, and hurricanes and other natural disasters.

The issue was brought to a political boil earlier this year when the Defense Department proposed a 17,000 reduction in National Guard manpower levels without consulting either the National Guard Bureau chief or the governors. When all 50 governors expressed strong objections, Congress acted to restore the manpower, and the Defense Department quickly backtracked.

MOAA strongly supported restoration of the 17,000 Guard manning, but has not taken a position on upgrading the Guard Bureau chief to a member of the Joint Chiefs.

Give us your feedback on the issue by taking a short survey at http://moaaonline.org/ct/-7z_irK1yRO_/.

MOAA LEGISLATIVE UPDATE for June 23, 2006:

Issue 1: Congress Gets Serious on Military People Issues

In 2005, the Senate didn't finish action on the Defense Authorization Bill until November. They lopped five months of that timetable this year, passing the bill on June 22 by a 98-to-0 vote.

In the process, they debated amendments on everything from renaming military facilities to whether we should have a timetable for getting out of Iraq. (See Issue 2 below for a summary of key amendments on people programs.)

Now that both the House and Senate have passed their respective versions of the defense bill early in the year, the two chambers' leaders can start negotiating to resolve their differences to come up with a final, compromise defense authorization act.

Last year, when the Senate started so far behind the power curve, many issues got dropped in final negotiations -- at least in part because the legislators just ran out of time at the end of the year.

An early start on negotiations doesn't necessarily mean House and Senate leaders will reach a deal before the Oct. 1 start of the new fiscal year. In four of the last six years, the defense bill didn't get finished until December. In the other two years, it was Nov. 24 and Oct. 28.

So chances are we won't have final decisions on the issues for many months. But an earlier start this (election) year means that, just maybe, there's a shot at more timely action.

Issue 2: What's In All Those Defense Bill Amendments?

The Senate spent most of this week debating a few high-visibility amendments, such as whether the U.S. should have a timetable to get out of Iraq.

In contrast, they spent just a few seconds adopting several groups of amendments that Senate leaders had agreed, for various reasons, to approve without debate. Even avid C-SPAN watchers couldn't tell what was going on without inside knowledge of what was in those group amendments. But many involved huge issues for thousands of MOAA members.

Here are some selected highlights of the amendments adopted by the Senate this week:

- * Concurrent Receipt: Sen. Harry Reid's (D-NV) amendment would implement full concurrent receipt for "unemployable" disabled retirees, retroactive to Jan. 1, 2005.
- * Guard/Reserve Retirement Age: Sen. Saxby Chambliss's (R-GA) amendment would reduce the normal age-60 requirement by three months for each 90 days mobilized since 9/11.
- * Guard/Reserve GI Bill: Sen. Blanche Lincoln's (D-AR) amendment would allow Guard/Reserve members to use their mobilization GI Bill benefits for up to 10 years after leaving Selected Reserve status.
- * Abusive Lending Practices: Sen. James Talent's (R-MO) amendment would significantly tighten laws governing so-called "payday lenders," who now entice servicemembers into loan schemes involving 300-400 percent interest rates.
- * SSAN on ID Cards: Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison's (R-TX) amendment would require a Pentagon report on the feasibility of removing Social Security account numbers from military ID cards.
- * Family Assistance Program: Sen. Wayne Allard's (R-CO) amendment would authorize \$5 million for a new program to coordinate assistance for military families at selected sites around the country.
- * Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP): Sen. Mike DeWine's (R-OH) amendment would expand eligibility of certain survivors (whose sponsors died in active service after Oct. 1, 2001) to transfer SBP eligibility to children, if any.
- * Guard/Reserve Transition Assistance: Sen. Hillary Clinton's (D-NY) amendment would establish various requirements to assist Guard and Reserve members who served in Iraq or Afghanistan in successfully transitioning to civilian employment, with particular emphasis on those who suffered traumatic injuries.

Issue 3: Where We Stand on Concurrent Receipt, SBP, Guard-Reserve Fixes

This time of year is often confusing for members interested in MOAA's key issues. The House and Senate Armed Services Committees each approved their own bills. Then the full House passed its bill, and now the full Senate has done its thing, with various amendments along the way.

So what's the bottom line on where we stand today, and what's the outlook for positive action? Let's take it issue by issue:

- * Concurrent receipt: The only issue still left on the table this year is the Senate provision recommending full payment, retroactive to Jan. 1, 2005 for disabled retirees designated by the VA as "unemployable." There's nothing on this in the House bill.
- * Paid-Up SBP: The Senate defense bill would implement 30-year paid-up SBP as of Oct. 1, 2006 (rather than waiting until 2008 under current law). There's nothing in the House bill on this.
- * SBP/DIC Offset: The Senate defense bill would end the deduction of the VA's Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) from SBP when the member's death was caused by service. Again, there's no such provision in the House bill.
- * Guard/Reserve TRICARE Coverage: The House bill would provide all members and families of the Selected Reserve the same option for TRICARE coverage, and get rid of the higher premium requirements for members who haven't been mobilized since 9/11. The Senate bill would make only a minor tweak to the current three-level premium system, which MOAA feels is too expensive for members who haven't been mobilized.
- * Guard/Reserve Retirement Age: The Senate plan would reduce the retirement age by 3 months for each 90 days mobilized since 9/11, but there's nothing on this in the House bill.
- * Guard/Reserve GI Bill: The Senate bill would authorize portability of educational benefits earned on active duty, but the House does not address the issue.

On the Guard/Reserve TRICARE issue, MOAA's goal is to convince the Senate to accept the House plan. For the other four, we want the House to accept the Senate's plan.

Congress will be consumed with other issues next week and then will recess for the week of July 4th. When they return, we'll have alerts up on the MOAA Web site and ask you to push your legislators for positive action on all of these issues.

Issue 4: COLA Watch.

In mid-June, the Bureau of Labor Statistics announced the May 2006 monthly Consumer Price Index (CPI), which is used to calculate the annual cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) for military retired pay, VA disability compensation, survivor annuities, and Social Security.

The CPI continued its upward trend, rising 0.5% in May -- for a total of 2.9% growth so far this fiscal year. A 2.5% increase in energy costs played a key roll in the jump.

Last year, the CPI had risen 2.7% through the month of May and ended the year at 4.1%. With inflation running only slightly ahead of last year's pace so far, it would seem likely that we'll end this year in the same 4% ballpark.

But there's plenty of CPI roller-coaster left to navigate in the next four months, and that outlook could change in a hurry.

For more information, please visit MOAA's website at http://moaaonline.org/ct/J1z_irK1nRO1/.



JAYHAWK CHAPTER MOAA



A membership meeting will be held **Tuesday, 18 July 2006**, at the Lawrence Country Club.
Dinner cost is **\$20.00** per meal.

The Program: Bruce Flanders, Director of the Lawrence Public Library, who will give a presentation on the five proposals for expansion of the Library, their cost, etc.

Social Hour: 1800 hours

Dinner: 1900 hours

The Menu: *Filet Mignon, baked potato, vegetable, rolls, salad, tea or coffee and ice cream*

Send your reservation and check payable to **Jayhawk Chapter MOAA** to arrive no later than 15 July 2006, to:
CAPT (Ret) Jim Cooper
1115 Stone Meadows Drive
Lawrence, KS 66049-3961

If you have any questions, you may contact Jim at 842-7037 or John Halladay at 843-6184.

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Yes, please make _____ reservations for me and my guests. (Spouse and other guests are welcome.)

The cost is \$20.00 per meal. I am enclosing a check for \$_____ for meal(s).

MG Clay Comfort Scholarship program contribution \$_____
(Checks made out to "KU Endowment")

TOTAL: \$_____

Name

Telephone

**Dinner reservations are confirmed on Monday before the Tuesday dinner.
Cancellations, if necessary, should be made prior to Monday noon;
otherwise, the Lawrence Country Club will charge us for those meals.**

**TEAR OFF AND RETURN THIS FORM WITH A CHECK PAYABLE TO:
JAYHAWK CHAPTER MOAA**

MOAA WEBSITE: www.moaa.org
JAYHAWK CHAPTER WEBSITE: www.jayhawkmoaa.org

We are still looking for members willing to receive the Newsletter by e-mail. Postage went up in January. If you received this issue by mail and would prefer e-mail, please let us know at jwhalladay@sunflower.com.

2006 Jayhawk MOAA Calendar:

Tuesday	18 July	MOAA meeting
Tuesday	19 September	MOAA meeting
Tuesday	21 November	MOAA meeting

***NOTE:** September's or November's schedule may change if General Myers is our speaker. Pay close attention to information in the next newsletters.*

***IF YOU NEED A RIDE TO MEETINGS,
PLEASE LET US KNOW
ON YOUR RESERVATION FORM***



*Newsletter Editor
Jayhawk Chapter, MOAA
2403 Manchester Road
Lawrence, KS 66049-1646*

*Have a safe
July 4th*