



Jayhawk Chapter MOAA Newsletter



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May Program:

Our guest speaker will be Former Governor Mike Hayden.
His topic will be "The Changing Face of Kansas."

★★★★★ CHAPTER
awarded for
2002 / 2003 / 2005

★★★★ CHAPTER
awarded for
2004 / 2006 / 2007

The President's Corner . . .

Dear Jayhawk Chapter Members and Friends:

It looks like spring has arrived. Things are greening up and we're starting to get some warm days! Along with spring comes commissioning and ROTC awards ceremonies. At the ceremonies, the Jayhawk Chapter will be presenting a General Clay Comfort Scholarship to an outstanding cadet/midshipman in each program. Thank you for your ongoing support.

If you missed it, our March meeting was one of the best in memory. National MOAA President, Vice Admiral Norbert (Norb) R. Ryan, Jr., USN (Ret), brought us up-to-date on the key issues impacting our fighting men and women and the role that MOAA is playing to make sure that they receive the support they deserve, both during and following their service. Over and above the update, Admiral Ryan said that his main purpose was to recognize the outstanding performance of both the members and the chapters in Kansas. Specifically, he recognized the Jayhawk Chapter for achieving First Place in Category V (fewer than 120 members) for 2008 in the association-wide "Give Me 10!" program and presented MOAA Leadership Awards to John Halladay and Bernie Kish for their efforts in helping the Chapter achieve this honor. He also presented John Halladay with a "Year of the Chapter" coin for exemplary performance with the Jayhawk Chapter, as well as Army Editor for the Kaw Valley Chapter newsletter (I think Shirley got a piece of that coin as well!).

During the dinner, we were joined by leaders of other MOAA Chapters and the MOAA Kansas Council of Chapters, including LTG Rich Keller, USA (Ret), as well as MG Tod Bunting, Adjutant General of the Kansas National Guard, and John Armbrust, Executive Director of the Governor's Military Council. Admiral Ryan had accolades and thanks for many, including the Santa Fe Trail Chapter and Generals Keller and Bunting.

Looking ahead, please reserve Wednesday, July 1, when our speaker will be 2nd District Congresswomen Lynn Jenkins.

And please join us at our next meeting on May 12, where we will be joined by the Kansas Secretary of Wildlife and Parks, and former Governor, Mike Hayden who will be speaking on "The Changing Face of Kansas."

See you soon!

Dave



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1 May 2009

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* Reservations should be sent
to Jim Cooper by
7 May



JAYHAWK CHAPTER NEWS

2009 DUES ARE NOW DUE. We still need to gather dues from almost one-third of our membership. Remember that your annual dues provide the "Operating Expenses" of the chapter, and they haven't been raised in over a decade – at \$20 per year, it is still a bargain! If you haven't paid up for 2009 as of yet, please do so soon! Thanks! Jim Cooper

The Directory will be prepared for distribution at the 12 May meeting . . . if your dues have not been paid or arrangements made, you will not be included in the Directory.

Governor Mike Hayden to Address Jayhawk Chapter:

Former Kansas Governor Mike Hayden, who is currently serving the State as our Secretary of the Department of Wildlife and Parks, is the guest speaker for our January meeting. Governor Hayden will make a presentation on "The Changing Face of Kansas."

Mike Hayden was raised in the rural town of Atwood in Northwestern Kansas. It was here that he developed a passion for the out-of-doors. He graduated from Kansas State

University with a Bachelor's degree in Wildlife Conservation and received a Master's degree in Biology from Fort Hays State University. He served as Kansas' 41st Governor from 1987-1991.

Governor Hayden is a military veteran, having served in Vietnam as an Infantry Company Commander from 1969-1970. He and his wife Patti reside here in Lawrence.

TAPS

Gladys Fredrick Burge, 86, widow of COL Frank Burge, passed away 28 February 2009, at Harbor House Memory Care Residence. Memorial services were held at Warren-McElwain Mortuary on 6 March, with inurnment at Pioneer Cemetery on the West Campus of Kansas University.

Mrs. Burge was born 4 September 1922, in Strawberry Point, IA, one of ten children, the fifth daughter of William and Emma Fredrick. She attended elementary and high school in Strawberry Point and began her college career at the University of Iowa, where she met Frank Burge. Their lives at the university were interrupted during World War II,

Tizby I. Hunt, 93, widow of Capt Melvin R. Hunt, passed away 21 March 2009, at Lawrence Memorial Hospital. No services were held and inurnment will be at the Ft. Sam Houston National Cemetery in San Antonio, TX.

Mrs. Hunt was born 9 March 1916, in rural Bosque County, TX, the daughter of Oscar and Sarah Loper. She graduated from North Texas State Teachers College. She and

Mary Margaret Dittmar, 91, widow of Captain Russell W. Dittmar, passed away 11 April 2009, in Marysville, KS. Funeral services were held 16 April at Memorial Presbyterian Church in Marysville. Burial was in Oak Ridge Cemetery in Perry.

Mrs. Dittmar was born 24 September 1917, the daughter of John and Hallie Dunigan. She married Russell W. Dittmar Sr. They were married for 60 years. He died 3 March 2005.

when for four years Gladys worked as a recruiter for the Waves and Frank was stationed with the Army in Germany and Europe. After the war, they were married on 22 December 1947. They made their home in Iowa City where Frank was assistant director of the University of Iowa Memorial Union, and Gladys completed her degree in economics. In 1952, they moved to Lawrence, where Frank became Director of the Kansas Union until his retirement in 1983.

Mrs. Burge was survived by two brothers, two sisters, a sister-in-law and many nieces and nephews.

Capt. Hunt were married in 1944. Mrs. Hunt lived in Albuquerque, NM; Midwest City, OK; the St. Louis metro area; and San Antonio before moving to Lawrence in 1992. She was a homemaker, seamstress and a master gardener.

Survivors include a daughter, Tizby Hunt-Ward, Lawrence; a sister, Frances Homerstad, Clifton, TX, several grandchildren and many nieces and nephews.

She was a member of the First United Methodist Church in Lawrence. After moving to Marysville following the death of her husband, she was a member of the Memorial Presbyterian Church. She enjoyed spending time with her friends at the Helvering Center and at Hanover Hospital Long Term Care.

Survivors include a son, Russell W. Dittmar Jr.; two grandchildren; and three great-granddaughters.

**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.**



The **Sneegas Family** attended the Mobilization Ceremony of A Company, 323rd Military Intelligence Battalion at Fort Meade Maryland on April 13, 2009. This Reserve unit has been called to Active Duty and will serve in Iraq beginning next month. Pictured from Left to Right are Alan Sneegas (KU Senior), Barbara Sneegas, 1LT Andrew Sneegas, LTCOL Stanley Sneegas and Kevin Kline (one of Andrew's uncles).

From Jim Cooper: Ireland 2009



Sandy and I played hooky from the March meeting and made our second trip to Ireland since 2004 – a 6- night trip with some good friends from our Navy days. We met up in Chicago and flew Aer Lingus into Shannon, the major gateway city in western Ireland. We spent our first two nights in Limerick, a quaint, small city with cozy pubs and a great 12th century British castle. We took a day trip to the Rock of Cashel, the traditional seat of power for the Kings of Munster in ancient Ireland. Cashel is reputed to be the site where Saint Patrick supposedly converted the King of Munster in the 5th century A.D. Dark, ancient, brooding ruins on a rocky hill – good thick, Irish Catholic history. Interesting archeology and good views of the countryside. Of even more interest was the fact that in Limerick, after dinner that night, we met a young 20-something Irish couple who joined us in a pub for liquid libation and conversation. They were very friendly and we had a great time – nice of them to humor some senior American citizens!

We next drove up to Connemara peninsula, where the John Wayne movie “The Quiet Man” was filmed. We stayed in Ballynahinch Castle, more like a manor house, a great place on a trout fishing river. We stayed here on our last trip, and it is our favorite placed in Ireland. Cozy, warm, welcoming atmosphere, lots of fireplaces, a great pub. That

Saturday evening we had another great experience – the pub hosted a couple of old gents providing ‘traditional Irish music’ and soon the small crowd was taking turns singing ballads. The Irish ballads from the Irish Rebellion “Time of Troubles” are particularly poignant, and we heard several that evening. When you can share such times with local folks it makes for precious memories. Two nights at Ballynahinch was not nearly long enough, but we had to move on to our next stop, Cabra Castle, near Kingscourt, over toward the east.

Driving from Connemara to Kingscourt takes one across the middle of Ireland, and it is a long (for Ireland) drive of five (5) hours, but a pretty one. Cabra Castle is a traditional-looking “castle”, but once again it is warm and cozy, and of course, has a great pub. The rooms are huge, and the grounds are very attractive.

Our last full day we drove down to Dublin, and spent the afternoon visiting the Guinness brewery, Trinity College, and the busy pub section of town. More great food and camaraderie with the locals. The next day we flew out of Dublin, back to Chicago.

The weather was very good – although it was a bit chilly, we saw sun every day. But it rained almost every day as well, and that is the secret to Ireland’s perpetual green – the Emerald Isle. The food was great, and the Guinness never tastes as good anywhere as it does in Ireland. The folks are very used to, very comfortable with and friendly to, Americans, but Ireland has retained its native flavor, and is not at all “Americanized”. It is one of our favorite destinations.





Army News

LTC John Basso

Greetings from KU Army ROTC.

I write this note as the sun shines bright outside my window and Army ROTC cadets have all of their gear laid out for a pre-combat inspection prior to our spring 48-hour Field Training Exercise (FTX). As befits military training, the weather is perfect for the indoor layout but will be brutal – windy, cold, and rainy for the field exercise. Regardless of the generation serving, some things never change. Among the highlights of this, our major training event of the semester, the FTX includes a 75 cadet air assault with Chinooks into Camp Clark, Missouri.

This FTX follows a very successful KU Ranger Buddy Competition. Over 100 cadet teams showed true skill and perseverance in completing this demanding event - I was proud to call myself a Soldier watching this next generation of leaders. A special congratulations goes to Cadets Fran Glass and Alan Blair of KU, who were one of three overall winning teams. I would also like to recognize Cadet Glass,

along with Cadet John Irvine, Cadet Sam Smith, Cadet Chris Steiber and Cadet Shane Thomas, all of whom will commission this summer. They have been a world class cadet chain of command for us. They and my cadre are putting the final touches on preparing 23 juniors for the Leadership Development and Assessment Course at Fort Lewis this summer, as well as preparing cadets for Airborne and Air Assault schools, Helicopter Flight Training, cultural internships in Slovakia and Sudan, and a host of other excellent training events this summer. More about that in my next column. Until then...

Rock Chalk! Jayhawks Lead the Way!

LTC John Basso



Navy News

CAPT Thomas Arnold, USN



Spring Greetings from the Jayhawk Navy!

The spring semester is nearly over and for many of our students this means they will soon be commissioned as officers in the Navy or Marine Corps. On the 18th of May the KU Naval ROTC Unit will be commissioning ten new officers – eight as Navy Ensigns and two as USMC Second

Lieutenants. We are very proud of these young men and women and hope some of you will be able to join us for the Joint Service Commissioning Ceremony on May 18th at 10 AM in the Kansas Union. Our future officers are listed below:

MIDN Devon Cartwright – a future Navy Pilot
 Officer Candidate Michael Cribbs – a future Navy Submarine Officer
 MIDN David Ehret – a future Navy Pilot
 Officer Candidate Justin Goodwin – a future Navy Pilot
 Officer Candidate Craig Potthast – a future Navy Submarine Officer
 MIDN Julie Randolph – a future Navy Nurse
 Gunnery Sergeant Shawn Ridings – a future Marine Corps Second Lieutenant
 MIDN Stephanie Smiros – a future Navy Surface Warfare Officer
 MIDN Josh Thomas – a future Marine Corps Second Lieutenant

Upon commissioning these officers will depart for initial training or for their first permanent duty assignments. Our future naval aviators will report for flight training in Pensacola, Florida; the Marines will report to The Basic School (TBS) in Quantico, Virginia; the submariners will

report to Nuclear Propulsion Training in Charleston, South Carolina; the Navy Nurse reports to Balboa Naval Hospital in San Diego, California; and the Surface Warfare Officer will report to her first ship, a destroyer in Yokosuka, Japan.

While our seniors have been busy preparing for graduation and their transition to active duty, the rest of the Jayhawk Battalion has been very busy this semester. Our future Marines completed a demanding Warrior Weekend training program at Fort Leavenworth designed to prepare them for the challenges of Officer Candidate School. Three students traveled to South Bend, Indiana to participate in the Notre Dame Leadership Conference. Over twenty-five students spent a recent weekend in Boulder, Colorado participating in a grueling competition sponsored by the University of Colorado NROTC Unit that included drill, marksmanship and endurance sports events. Eleven students participated in the Aviation Club Field Trip to Pensacola, Florida. Finally, the students in the Junior and Senior Classes, as well as the active duty staff, attended a "Dining In" Mess Night Dinner. The last major event of semester prior to commissioning will be the Spring Awards Ceremony

to be held on April 29th at 3:30 PM in the Mallott Room of the Kansas Union. This ceremony will recognize many of our Midshipmen and Officer Candidates for their outstanding performance this year. I cordially invite you to attend if you are available and wish to thank the Jayhawk Chapter of MOAA for their support to the Unit in the form of awards and scholarships, which will be presented during this ceremony.

On a final note, the KU NROTC Unit lost one of our most valued members at the end of March with the transfer of First Sergeant Eric Sheppard to Camp Lejeune, North Carolina after three years with the staff. Please join me in wishing First Sergeant Sheppard and his family a fond Kansas farewell!

CAPT Tom Arnold

Air Force News

LtCol Gena Stuchbery, USAF



Aloha, MOAA!

It's been a whirlwind year at Det 280, as we now prepare to graduate our senior class. On 18 May, we'll commission seven new AF officers:

Carl Amerine (Acquisition)
 Alex Carrera (Intel)
 Chase McFarland (Public Affairs)
 Dan Parker (Security Forces)
 Brittany Ramos (Intel)
 Jeffrey Waddell (Staff Judge Advocate)
 Erin Wood (Nurse)

We're very proud of these young men and women and hope that some of you will be able to join us for the Joint Service Commissioning Ceremony on May 18th at 10 a.m. in the Kansas Union.

While our seniors have been anxiously preparing for graduation and their transition to active duty, the rest of the Flying Jayhawk Wing has also been very busy this semester. We conducted basic water survival skills training in March and will be engaging in a field exercise this weekend at Ft Riley with our sister AFROTC detachment from K-State. The cadets are quite eager for this, as it involves paintball! Also, we're prepping our sophomores for the rigors of Field Training and cadre are scheduling High School Scholarship award presentations for next year's freshman class (a really

cool part of this job!). To follow up on our last newsletter, our Law Day and Nursing Day recruiting events were well-received and informative for both students and KU staff.

Of note, we're hosting our second annual AFROTC Det 280 Alumni Weekend, 24-25 April. Events include a Combat Dining In, Cadet Wing Parade, 9 holes of golf and a BBQ/Social to close out the gathering. It promises to be a fun couple of days. If you're a Det 280 alum and are interested in attending, please contact SSgt Thai Nguyen, 785-864-4676, to reserve a space.

Finally, we're pleased to announce our Spring Awards Ceremony Tue, 5 May at 1600 at the Kansas Union, Woodruff Auditorium. This ceremony recognizes our "best of the best" Cadets for their outstanding performance this year. I cordially invite you to attend and want to express my appreciation to the Jayhawk Chapter of MOAA for their support in the form of the MOAA Award and the Clay Comfort scholarship, which will be presented during this ceremony.

Regards,

Lt Col Gena Stuchbery

MOAA LEGISLATIVE UPDATES

This is a summary of the many items MOAA produces each week on legislative activities. Those who have e-mail receive the full Legislative Updates each week.

MOAA's LEGISLATIVE UPDATE for February 27, 2009:

MOAA Testifies on Key Goals

Mrs. Maggie McCloud, widow of Lt Col Joseph McCloud, USMC (killed in a 2006 helicopter crash in Iraq) offered particularly compelling testimony on the unfairness of deducting VA survivor benefits from military Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) annuities.

"This issue has been before Congress for years," she said. "Congress has eliminated other offsets to retired pay and survivor benefits. Why does this offset remain? If our voice isn't loud, it's only because we have been silenced by our grief. So, let me say...in the memory of those who have fallen...and in the name of the families left behind: please right this wrong."

MOAA Champions Military Spouse Bill

On Wednesday, MOAA President VADM Norb Ryan (USN-Ret) spoke at a press conference in support of a bill (H.R. 1182) to guarantee state residency rights for military spouses.

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Championed by Rep. John Carter (R-TX), the bill would amend the Servicemembers' Civil Relief Act to allow military spouses the option to choose the same state of residence as their servicemember or retain residency in their previous state of domicile.

"It's about fairness and having families together as one," said Rep. Carter, calling it a "common sense bill."

"We have to 'walk the walk' by eliminating things that make you doubt the gratitude of our nation, and that make military spouses' lives more difficult," said VADM Ryan. MOAA was one of only two associations participating in the conference. Please use MOAA's Web site to urge your U.S. Representatives to cosponsor H.R. 1182 and its Senate companion bill, S. 475, introduced by Sens. Richard Burr (R-NC) and Dianne Feinstein (D-CA).

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MOAA's LEGISLATIVE UPDATE for March 6, 2009:

Reserve Leaders Support Benefit Upgrades

Active and Reserve component leaders and defense officials briefing Congress this week voiced cautious optimism on recruiting, but said the services are in "uncharted waters" and retention is a concern.

While the economic downturn has helped recruiting and retention rates, a lower interest in service and a declining pool of eligible youth are hurting the services' efforts.

Dr. Curt Gilroy, Director of DoD Accession Policy, asked Congress to be cautious in considering recruiting budget cuts. He said the services experienced serious recruiting problems after making "careless cuts" in the 1970s, and did the same things again in the 1980s and late '90s.

"If we don't pay attention to these lessons we will repeat our sins," he said. MOAA couldn't agree more.

Senate Leaders Meet with Associations

Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV) continued his practice of the last several years in convening a large group of Democratic senators to discuss legislative priorities with leaders of military and veterans service organizations, including MOAA.

Sen. Reid noted progress in reducing the offset of VA disability compensation from military retired pay - concurrent receipt - and thanked Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman Carl Levin (D-MI) and retired Senator John Warner (R-VA) for their work on the issue. This is a top MOAA goal, and we're pleased that the new

administration's budget calls for further progress in expanding concurrent receipt eligibility to all seriously disabled medical retirees.

Senator Debbie Stabenow (D-MI), the Chair of the Senate Democratic Steering Committee, invited specific groups to make remarks on their priorities during the one-hour session.

Legislative priorities voiced at the meeting included:

- * Oppose unjustified TRICARE fee hikes
- * Support a two-year funding mechanism for the VA health care system to ensure continuity of programs between fiscal years
- * Reduce the mountain of backlogged VA claims for disabilities
- * Eliminate the deduction of VA survivor benefits from SBP
- * Upgrade pre - and post-deployment health screenings for activated Guard and Reserve troops
- * Improve support and compensation for caregivers of wounded warriors with severe disabilities. (Senate Majority Whip Dick Durbin (D-IL) said he would champion this issue.)
- * Ensure effective implementation of the Post-9/11 GI Bill on August 1, 2009, including authority for survivors of the current conflicts to transfer the benefits to their children

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MOAA's LEGISLATIVE UPDATE for March 13, 2009:

MOAA Testifies On Veterans' Issues

Sen. Daniel Akaka (D-HI) and Rep. Bob Filner (D-CA), respective Chairmen of the Senate and House Veterans Affairs Committees, welcomed representatives from MOAA and other military and veterans' groups providing testimony at a March 12 joint hearing of the two committees.

MOAA's COL Bob Norton (USA-Ret) said MOAA's top priority for the VA health system is passage of advance appropriations for the VA health care system. In 19 of the last 22 years, Congress has failed to approve the VA health care funding bill before the start of the fiscal year - causing disruption in health services, construction plans and research, and longer wait-times for veterans seeking care.

Sen. Akaka, Sen. Burr (R-NC), the Senate panel's Ranking Member, and Chairman Filner are sponsoring bills (S.423 and H.R.1016, respectively) to authorize advance VA health funding. But there are indications that the administration is backing away from its earlier support for the idea, and Budget and Appropriations Committee members have expressed skepticism.

- * Upgrading VA compensation and educational benefits for survivors of veterans whose death was caused by military service
- * Strengthened reemployment and financial protection laws for activated National Guard and Reserve servicemembers

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2010 VA Budget Lacks Detail but Looks Promising

On March 10, just seven weeks after assuming the Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) position, Eric Shinseki testified before the Senate and House Committees on Veterans Affairs, offering a few more details on the VA's budget priorities for FY2010.

The budget outline released to the public so far is short on details for specific program areas. Final budget specifics won't be available until late April.

The VA stands to get a total budget of \$113 billion, up \$15 billion from 2009 levels. According to Shinseki, this is the largest one-year dollar and percentage increase for VA ever requested by any president.

The budget calls for dramatic increases in health care funding to treat a diverse group of veterans, including growing numbers of aging and women veterans and returnees from Iraq and Afghanistan. Funding is expected also to expand VA care eligibility to an additional 500,000 nondisabled, lower-middle income vets.

As mentioned in the previous article, MOAA believes in the advance funding initiative to ensure veterans have uninterrupted health care and continuity of funding between fiscal years. Please take a moment to send the MOAA-suggested message asking your legislators to cosponsor S. 423 and H.R. 1016.

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MOAA's LEGISLATIVE UPDATE for March 20, 2009:

Obama Heeds Vet Leaders

Stunned at veterans' negative backlash to a draft plan to have the VA bill vets' health insurance plans for the cost of treating their service-connected injuries and illnesses, President Obama asked for a personal meeting this week with the leaders of 11 military and veterans' association leaders who wrote him a letter urging him to drop the plan.

MOAA president VADM Norb Ryan (USN-Ret) was one of the signatories invited to the meeting, where the president explained that the intent was to help fund his multi-billion-dollar expansion of the VA budget by billing insurance companies that his staff saw as getting a "free ride" (collecting premiums from veterans but not paying for care).

Under current law, the VA bills private insurers only for care concerning conditions that were not caused by military service.

"Our voices were heard," said VADM Ryan after the announcement. "The President told us he wouldn't do this if it hurt veterans. After listening to our concerns, he kept his word. We're grateful that he invested his personal time to get the facts and do the right thing on this important matter of principle."

http://www.moa.org/lac/lac_goals/lac_goals_letters/default.htm

Pelosi Hears Association Priorities

On Wednesday, MOAA President Norb Ryan and Government Relations Director Steve Strobbridge joined other military and veterans' association leaders in meeting with Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) and more than two dozen House Democrats, including the chairmen of all of the key committees.

At the beginning of the meeting, Speaker Pelosi drew a standing ovation by announcing that the President had dropped the budget proposal to bill vets' health insurance for service-caused injuries.

Armed Services Committee Chairman Ike Skelton (D-MO) applauded the president's budget for including funds to extend concurrent receipt eligibility to severely disabled retirees forced into medical retirement before attaining 20 years of service. He said his committee will eagerly support that, but congressional rules on "mandatory spending" will require him to ask other committees to volunteer mandatory spending reductions to pay for it. He expressed concern that this would put the committee at a disadvantage - having to use up offsets that might be needed to reverse any TRICARE fee hikes that might be in the budget.

This comment perked up MOAA attendees' ears, since it's the first indication we've had that the president's budget might include some TRICARE fee increases. The initial budget outline sent to Congress a few weeks ago gave no specific indication of that. MOAA will work to check that out and generate grass-roots alerts as appropriate.

Later in the meeting, the Speaker asked attendees to outline their priorities for the year. Association leaders expressed a general consensus in support of advance funding for the VA, doing more for wounded warriors and especially their family caregivers, concurrent receipt, SBP-DIC, and homeless vets, among others. In addition, VADM Ryan stressed MOAA's strong support for sustaining end strength increases as the only way to ease deployment-related stresses on members and families, as well as the importance of

sustaining a commitment to restoring full pay comparability by authorizing a 3.4% military pay raise, rather than the 2.9% raise proposed in the initial defense budget submission.

MOAA's LEGISLATIVE UPDATE for March 27, 2009:

Guard/Reserve Chiefs Testify

Senate Armed Services Personnel Subcommittee Chairman Ben Nelson (D-NE) opened a March 25 hearing with service and DoD Guard/Reserve leaders by announcing that he is sponsoring a bill, S. 731 (text was unavailable at press time) to accomplish a long-standing MOAA goal: authorizing TRICARE coverage for "gray area" reservists - who have completed 20 or more years in the Guard or Reserve but are not age 60.

Ranking Republican Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-SC) expressed concern about career retention among mid-grade NCOs and officers. He's considering re-introducing legislation to incentivize longer careers by reducing the Reserve retirement age (normally 60) one year for each two years served beyond 20 years. MOAA has long supported this initiative as well.

Outgoing Assistant Secretary of Defense Reserve Affairs Thomas Hall made his final appearance before the Senate Committee. As the longest-serving appointee in the position, Hall oversaw transformation of reserve forces from a strategic to an "operational reserve." MOAA is grateful for his steadfast service during a period of enormous change in reserve forces' roles, missions and responsibilities.

Other issues of interest from the hearing include:

Stop loss: Beginning with the Army Reserve on Sept. 1, stop loss will end for reserve component troops

Reserve dwell time: Guard and Reserve call-up cycles have improved to about one year of out every four years. DoD's plan is to reach a one out of five year activation pace

Recruiting: The Guard and Reserve currently are exceeding their goals and quality metrics, but the Army Reserve remains short 10,000 captains and majors

Dental "unreadiness": For the first quarter of FY2009, 52% of the Guard and Reserve were non-deployable for dental reasons

Border security: Sen. Nelson said the Guard could be asked to provide border security in the near future because of drug-war violence in Mexico

Yellow Ribbon programs: Newly implemented requirements for specific post-deployment services have improved re-integration of returning Guard and Reserve troops and families

Honoring Women's Military Service and VA Needs

This National Women's History Month, it's worth noting that women comprise almost 15% of today's armed forces, up from 2% in the 1950s. The 1.8 million women veterans represent more than 7% of the 23.4 million veteran population.

That poses some new funding and program challenges for the VA, which is putting more money toward those requirements. For one thing, most women veterans are of child-bearing age -- a new reality for the VA. Maternity, pre- and post-natal care, mental health, and military sexual trauma are issues that require sensitivity, experience and new capacity to effectively address women's needs.

Sen. Patty Murray (D-WA) and Rep. Stephanie Herseth Sandlin (D-SD) have introduced the "Women's Health Care Improvement Act" (S. 597 and H.R. 1211, respectively) to help eliminate barriers that have discouraged women vets from seeking VA care and help them in transitioning home to their lives as mothers, wives, and citizens.

MOAA thanks all women who are serving or have served, paving the way for coming generations. Please ask your elected officials to sign on as cosponsors of these important bills.

MOAA's LEGISLATIVE UPDATE for April 3, 2009:

Roth TSP/Survivor Allowance Bill Passes

On Tuesday, MOAA received a call from the House Armed Services Committee staff requesting our help in supporting legislation that House Armed Services Committee Chairman, Ike

Skelton (D-MO), hoped to bring to the House floor to improve payments to SBP-DIC widows and allow military and federal civilian personnel a Roth option on their Thrift Savings Plan.

Skelton managed to include this provision in an unrelated tobacco bill (H.R. 1804), outside of the normal Defense Authorization bill process. MOAA put out a special email alert generating 8,000 messages to the Hill in less than 24 hours, and the measure was approved in Wednesday's House vote.

The bill provides for increases in the special survivor indemnity allowance (SSIA) that began last October. The current payments start at \$50 a month, but ramp up to \$100 per month by 2013. The new legislation would increase those monthly amounts over time, to \$345 a month by 2013.

We've had some inquiries as to why we supported an increase in the current modest payment rather than holding out for full repeal of the SBP/DIC offset. The answer is that it's not an "either-or" proposition.

Nobody, especially MOAA, sees H.R. 1804 as the answer, by any means - only as one more step toward the answer. In essence, it's an opportunity out of the blue to at least raise the payment floor for the SBP/DIC widows.

More \$22 Drugs

In March DoD proposed moving some asthma inhalers to the third tier, or \$22 copay level.

The following inhaler medications will remain at the lower copays of either \$3 or \$9: Asmanex, Pulmicort Respules, Flovent HFA and Diskus, Serevent, Floradil, Brovana, Advair HFA and Diskus, and Symbicort.

The following drugs will be available at the \$22 copay: Alvesco, Pulmicort Flexhaler, QVAR, and Perforomist. Aerobid and Azmacort were also moved to the third tier but they are expected to be removed from the market because they contain chlorofluorocarbon (CFC) propellant.

DoD proposed adding the TRUEtest blood glucose monitoring test strip to the regular formulary. The test strip is used in TRUEresult and TRUE2go meters.

The new third-tier recommendations will be submitted to the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Health Affairs) for final decision. Information on alternative medications can be found via TRICARE's Formulary Search Tool at:

<http://www.tricareformularysearch.org/>.

A doctor who believes it is important for a patient to take the third-tier medication can provide "medical necessity" justification to TRICARE. If approved, the patient will continue receiving the medication at the lower copay.

MOAA's LEGISLATIVE UPDATE for April 10, 2009:

Pentagon Budget Cuts Revealed. Your local media probably covered some of the weapons cuts expected in the FY2010 defense budget due out at the end of April. MOAA focuses on what the Secretary of Defense said the budget will address on the people side.

President Announces DoD/VA Electronic Record Initiative. President Obama invited MOAA President VADM Norb Ryan (USN-Ret) and a group of other association leaders to a White House meeting where he announced his personal commitment to building a joint electronic medical record for military and VA systems.

Air Force Conference Focuses on People. This week, the Air Force held a "Caring for People Forum" to identify options to improve services and support for active duty, Guard, and Reserve families; single airmen; and special needs children.

MOAA's LEGISLATIVE UPDATE for April 17, 2009:

DFAS Briefs MOAA, Coalition

The Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS) retired pay chief met with MOAA and Military Coalition partners this week to provide an update on several ongoing programs.

DFAS supports over 2.6 million military retirees, annuitants, separation pay recipients, and former spouses - the oldest being a 109-year-old Navy retiree.

DFAS is particularly touting the electronic MyPay option that lets DFAS customers access and update their accounts by computer. As of February 2009, 41% of retirees have MyPay accounts.

Retirees can create a new account by clicking on the "New PIN" button on the MyPay home page to make changes to federal and state tax withholding, direct deposits, addresses, allotments, and savings bonds. MyPay customers also can view their Combat-Related Special Compensation (CRSC) and/or Retiree Account Statements (RAS).

MyPay access is a particular advantage right now, since many retirees and annuitants will want to make some withholding adjustments in the wake of DFAS' recent implementation of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (the recent economic stimulus law). Under the new law, DFAS was required to reduce federal tax withholding starting with the May retired pay check.

Depending on circumstances, that change could leave many retirees "under-withheld" and owing more taxes than expected next April.

Retirees in that situation have several options:

Option 1 - Refer to your December 2008 Retiree Account Statement for your "old" withholding amount and either:

- (a) Use MyPay to restore your "old" (higher) withholding amount, or
- (b) Fill out and mail a new W-4 to DFAS that restores the "old" (higher) withholding;

Option 2 - Submit estimated tax payments to the IRS right now in April, and then again on June 15, September 15, and January 15 (2010) with payments of \$100 or \$200 each time (to make up the \$400 (single) or \$800 (married) total withholding difference).

Option 3 - Do nothing. If you have routinely received federal tax refunds of \$1,000 or more, DFAS' new withholding reduction shouldn't leave you owing any additional federal taxes on your 2009 return. The refund will simply be \$400/\$800 lower than it usually has been (depending on marital status).

More information can be found on MOAA's financial blog. <http://echo4.bluehornet.com/ct/4494509:5306786119:m:3:230981068:71936CA7BD6E7877D41E13047842C3D2>

GAO: Temporary Disability System Has Issues

The Government Accountability Office (GAO) released a report this week that scrutinizes the military's Temporary Disability Retired List (TDRL) caseload, management, and impact on servicemembers.

The services use the TDRL when a servicemember is determined to have a disability that won't permit continued service but the condition is not yet stable. The disabled member may be put on the TDRL for as long as 5 years or until the condition stabilizes.

GAO found that TDRL caseloads grew by 43% between 2003 and 2007 - no surprise given the increased wartime deployments.

In particular, the GAO found that only 1% of people placed on the TDRL between 2000 and 2003 ever returned to duty. More than 80% of those placed on the TDRL were ultimately found to be permanently disabled. Of those, nearly 60% received a disability retirement, 25% received a disability severance, and 9% were separated without any benefits (because the condition existed prior to entering service or involved misconduct).

The GAO also found that the services had difficulty making required follow-up assessments, and said one answer might be shortening the maximum time on the TDRL to four years, since so few ended up returning to active duty anyway.

Of greatest concern to MOAA is the GAO finding that nearly 10% of those who ended up with a permanent disability retirement experienced a gap in benefits between being removed from the TDRL and permanently retired, some lasting more than 6 months.



JAYHAWK CHAPTER MOAA



A membership meeting will be held **Tuesday, 12 May 2009**, at the Lawrence Country Club. Dinner cost is **\$20.00/meal**.

The Program: Our guest speaker will be Former Governor Mike Hayden. His topic will be "The Changing Face of Kansas."

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 **Thursday, 7 May 2009**, to:
CAPT (Ret) Jim Cooper - 1115 Stone Meadows Drive, Lawrence, KS 66049-3961

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

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

cut here

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).

Chapter Dues (\$20.00) are now payable \$_____ for dues *

** We still need to gather dues from almost one-third of our membership. Remember that your annual dues provide the "Operating Expenses" of the chapter, and they haven't been raised in over a decade – at \$20 per year, it is still a bargain! If you haven't paid up for 2009 as of yet, please do so soon! Members with unpaid dues after 5/4/09 will not be included in the Directory.*

Clayton L. Comfort Award program contribution \$_____
(Separate check made out to "KU Endowment")

TOTAL: \$_____

Name

Telephone

**IF YOU NEED A RIDE TO MEETINGS, PLEASE LET US KNOW HERE _____
AND GIVE US YOUR TELEPHONE NUMBER _____**

**TEAR OFF AND RETURN THIS FORM WITH A CHECK PAYABLE TO:
JAYHAWK CHAPTER MOAA
CAPT (Ret) Jim Cooper, 1115 Stone Meadows Drive, Lawrence, KS 66049-3961**

MOAA WEBSITE: www.moaa.org

KANSAS COUNCIL WEBSITE: www.kansasmooa.org

JAYHAWK CHAPTER WEBSITE: www.jayhawkmoaa.org

We are still looking for members who can/will receive the Newsletter via e-mail.

Please let us know at jwhalladay@sunflower.com

2009 Jayhawk MOAA Calendar:

Tuesday 12 May MOAA meeting

Our guest speaker will be Former Governor Mike Hayden.
His topic will be "The Changing Face of Kansas."

Wednesday 1 July MOAA meeting

Tuesday 15 September MOAA meeting

Tuesday 17 November MOAA meeting



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

PLEASE NOTE

Our May meeting is 12 May
and the deadline for reservations
is 7 May.