



Jayhawk Chapter MOAA Newsletter



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July Program:

Our guest speaker will be Congresswoman Lynn Jenkins.

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

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

The President's Corner . . .

Dear Jayhawk Chapter Members and Friends:

As you can tell, this newsletter is coming out much earlier than usual. That's because we've moved our meeting up three weeks to Wednesday, July 1st, so that we could get our speaker – 2nd District Congresswoman Lynn Jenkins – during the Independence Day recess. I'm sure that Congresswomen Jenkins will have a great deal to tell us, and I hope that you can attend the meeting.



At our last meeting, we were honored to have former Governor Mike Hayden, the current Kansas Secretary of Wildlife and Parks, speak to the chapter about "The Changing Face of Kansas." Governor Hayden's wide-ranging presentation covered population trends, the relative contributions of the different segments of the Kansas economy, dwindling water, gas, and oil resources, the potential for renewable resources like wind energy, and projections for the state's future. The presentation was very interesting and provided a lot of information.

On Saturday, August 22, our Chapter will host the MOAA Kansas Council of Chapters at the Dole Institute of Politics. The Council provides support for the individual chapters and serves as an important link both between the chapters and with the national organization. If you'd like to attend, please let me know and I will give you the details.

Closer to the present, on July 4th, we will honor the birth of our country as we commemorate the signing of the Declaration of Independence, which sets out the principles upon which this nation was founded. In a real way, those principles are what make our nation unique and are a reason to celebrate throughout the year.

I hope to see you on July 1st and have a great 4th of July!

Dave

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1 July 2009

Staff:

- President:
LTC Dave Darwin, USA (Ret)
- 1st Vice-President:
COL Charles Heller, USA (Ret)
- 2nd Vice-President:
COL Dwight Jackson, AUS (Ret)
- Secretary:
COL John Halladay, AUS (Ret)
- Treasurer:
CAPT James Cooper, USN (Ret)
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- Directors:
CAPT Tom Arnold, USN
Col John Mosher, USAFR (Ret)
RADM Mike Sullivan, USN (Ret)
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- Newsletter Editors:
COL John & Shirley Halladay
- Web Master:
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* Reservations should be sent
to Jim Cooper by
25 June



JAYHAWK CHAPTER NEWS

Jayhawk MOAA Supports Memorial Day Ceremony

The Jayhawk Chapter of MOAA had a significant presence at the 2009 Memorial Day Ceremony, sponsored by American Legion Post #14, at Oak Hill Cemetery. Chapter members Erv Hodges, Al and Barbara Ballard and Bernie Kish were part of the early morning crew that emplaced over 100 American Flags lining the streets of the cemetery.

The Ceremony began at 10 AM. Al Ballard was a member of the American Legion Color Guard, Barbara Ballard sang the National Anthem to open the solemn occasion and LTC John Basso, the KU Army ROTC Battalion Commander and Jayhawk MOAA Board Member, delivered the Memorial Day Address. LTC Basso's inspirational remarks recalled the service in the Air Force of his father (a bomber mechanic) and mother (a nurse) during the Korean Conflict. He also noted the loss of 49 men in his unit in Iraq, the 2nd Brigade Combat Team of the 4th Infantry Division.



The most tragic personal loss being the death of his best friend and fellow West Pointer, Major Bill Hecker.

Recent new members, **Gerald and Ruth Rutledge**, will be leaving us and moving to Arizona. Their house (2250 Lake Pointe Drive, No. 903) is on the market, and they say Lake View Villas is a lovely maintenance-free community with KU retired/active neighbors. If you know anyone who might be interested, the listing is with Judy Brynds at McGrew Realty.

New Chapter Members from the KU ROTC Cadre:

Beard, Steven W., CPT, USA
 4113 Wheat State Street, Lawrence, KS 66049
 785-218-8467 cptbeard2@ku.edu
 Spouse: Adrian

Culbertson, Ted L., MAJ, USA
 1004 Allen Court, Lawrence, KS 66049
 785-312-7244 tculbert@ku.edu
 Spouse: Jennifer

MOAA Award Recipient:



COL Kish
 Cadet Lawrence Ditton

MG Clay Comfort Scholarship Recipients:



LTC Darwin
 Cadet Cameron Davis



CAPT Cooper
 Midn. Jordan Duffield



LTC Darwin
 Cadet Michael McReynolds

Newly Commissioned Officers:





Army News

LTC John Basso

MOAA Friends,

On behalf of the Jayhawk Battalion, I hope this note finds you enjoying all that summer has to offer. Our cadets certainly are; this summer finds us as busy as we ever have been. We have 23 cadets attending the month-long Leadership Development and Assessment Course at Fort Lewis. Among the key development and assessment gates that they will have to pass are six leadership evaluations as squad leaders and platoon leaders. The evaluations test them in fundamental Soldier competencies, but just as importantly, test their ability to adapt to the complex situations leaders find in Afghanistan and Iraq. We do this by putting them in similar circumstances by using role players in a well-duplicated "foreign" land. Four of our cadre will be among the over 1,000 cadre supporting this training event.

Additionally, we will send six new cadets to Fort Knox to undergo their initial leader training. Two of our cadre will

be supporting that important undertaking. We also have two cadets doing culture and language internships; one in Senegal and one in Slovakia. I am leading the Slovakia trip so I'll be able to report later this summer on the effectiveness of this new program in teaching our future leaders the skills they will need to employ in working in foreign countries.

Finally, we have a number of cadets doing Air Assault, Airborne and Helicopter Flight training, as well as serving as "third lieutenants" in various Army units as they develop their leadership skills. It looks to be a terrific summer. Again, our best to each and every one of you.

Rock Chalk!

LTC John Basso



Navy News

CAPT Thomas Arnold, USN



Greetings from the Jayhawk Navy!

I want to thank those of you who were able to join us for the Joint Commissioning ceremony on May 18th. We are very proud of this year's class of KU NROTC graduates and will miss them as they head off for their initial assignments in the Navy and Marine Corps.

For many of our remaining students, the summer will be busy with either summer classes or summer training. This year we have Navy midshipmen participating in training cruises spanning the globe from San Diego to Rio de Janeiro. Four of our Marine Corps students will be attending Officer Candidate School in Quantico, VA this summer as well. Our staff is also involved in summer training again this year: CAPT Jose Nicholas is in Camp LeJeune, NC; Ms. Monique Quinton is in Norfolk, VA, and LT Krista Mann is off to spend four weeks in Bahrain. Those of us remaining here in Lawrence will be preparing for our incoming class of freshmen, estimated to number about 30 this year.

We also will have a few key staff changes this summer - LT Juri Groenland will be leaving us in early August. Juri is off to Norfolk, VA via a six month temporary duty assignment to Djibouti in the Horn of Africa. The XO, CDR Sean Fox, will

also be departing in August. His new assignment will be as the Officer-in-Charge of the TACAMO Detachment at Offutt Air Force Base in Omaha. Both Sean and Juri will be sorely missed as their leadership has played a key role in preparing our future officers for commissioned service in the Navy or Marine Corps.

Finally, I will complete my three years in command in August and will be retiring after 30 years in the Navy. My relief, CAPT Carl Carpenter, arrives from his current assignment in Japan in late July. All of us who are departing want to thank the MOAA Jayhawk Chapter members for your generous support to the KU NROTC program. I hope many of you will be able to join us for the Change of Command and Retirement Ceremony on Saturday, August 22nd at 10:00AM in Woodruff Auditorium in the Kansas Union. I would be honored to have you there and look forward to continuing my association with the Lawrence Chapter of MOAA after my retirement.

I hope you all enjoy a safe summer with friends and family!

CAPT Tom Arnold

Air Force News

LtCol Gena Stuchbery, USAF



Gena is recovering from surgery and says she doesn't have much newsworthy stuff since last report – she will have more on their summer activities for our next issue. She sends best regards to all.

NEWLY COMMISSIONED OFFICER MEMBERS - 2009

AMERINE, Carl J., 2Lt, USAF
1174 N. Thaddeus Drive
Conway Springs, KS 67031
620-326-1075

CARRERA, Alejandro, 2Lt, USAF
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Allen, TX 75013
466-667-7819

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805 N. Stevenson
Olathe, KS 66061
913-708-0965

CRIBBS, Michael, ENS, USN
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Lawrence, KS 66044
785-393-7342
Spouse: Ingrid

EHRET, David, ENS, USN
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GLASS, Frances, 2LT, USA
1117 Lawrence Avenue
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IRVINE, John, 2LT, USA
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913-402-9150

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9602 W. 118th Street, #5
Overland Park, KS 66210
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Spouse: Matt

RIDINGS, Shawn, 2Lt, USMC
3710 Crossgate Terrace
Lawrence, KS 66047
785-842-3952

SMIROS, Stephanie, ENS, USN
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Overland Park, KS 66221
913-634-9973

SMITH, Samuel, 2LT, USA
1204 E. Westerfield Place
Olathe, KS 66061
913-306-4654
Spouse: Amy

STEIBER, Christopher, 2LT, USA
1118 Creekside Court
O'Fallon, IL 62269
618-670-3425

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6233 W. 126th Street
Overland Park, KS 66209
913-445-0469

THOMAS, Shane, 2LT, USA
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913-651-8161

WADDELL, Jeffery B., 2Lt, USAF
4815 NW Fielding Place, #3
Topeka, KS 66618
785-286-2810
Spouse: Rachel

WEIR, Brett S., 2LT, USA
2815 SW Tutbury Town Court
Topeka, KS 66614
785-231-7479

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 April 24, 2009:

MOAA Storms Hill for Troops, Survivors, Retirees

MOAA Council and Chapter Presidents from the 50 states and Puerto Rico, accompanied by members of the national Board of Directors and headquarters staff, plus members of MOAA's active duty, Guard, Reserve, spouse and auxiliary advisory committees, swarmed Capitol Hill on April 22 to visit representatives' and senators' offices on key MOAA legislative initiatives.

This year, the "Hill-stormers" literally walked through the rain (link below) to get their legislators focused on three main issues:

- * Oppose disproportional TRICARE fee increases
- * Eliminate unfair compensation penalties imposed on thousands of disabled retirees and military survivors
- * Sustain much-needed military manpower increases to ease deployment burdens and upgrade the military pay raise to 3.4% (vs. the 2.9% budget proposal).

<http://echo4.bluehornet.com/ct/4530443:5351975067:m:3:23:0981068:2D615169AFB617C1291A7AF46EC4E9FF>

MOAA representatives carried a wealth of information supporting those goals, including an information brochure illustrating the fixes needed to eliminate survivor benefits and concurrent receipt inequities.

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MOAA Hill-stormers received very positive feedback from most legislators, and we've already seen a jump in the number of cosponsors for MOAA-supported bills on these topics. Check your representatives' and senators' cosponsorship status for the bills listed below:

- H.R. 303, H.R. 333, S. 546 - Eliminate remaining offsets of retired pay
- H.R. 775, S. 535 - Repeal the SBP-DIC offset
- H.R. 816 - Protect against disproportionate health fee increases
- H.R. 1592, H.R. 1864 - Continues progress toward eliminating the military pay gap

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You can enhance MOAA's Hill-storming results by entering your ZIP code in the applicable box for each bill to send your legislator a MOAA-suggested "please cosponsor" or "thank you for cosponsoring" letter, as applicable.

MOAA Federal Charter Bill Introduced

Congress has long recognized various military, veteran and patriotic organizations by enacting honorary Federal Charters. A Federal Charter simply signals that a particular group - in this case, MOAA, serves the public interest by providing member services and community support.

Although a charter does not confer any special rights, privileges or benefits, MOAA's North Carolina Council of Chapters was denied a representative on the state's veterans' council, because the state limited membership to congressionally chartered organizations. Subsequently, MOAA has learned that at least six additional states - including Alabama, Illinois, Maryland, Minnesota, Ohio and Pennsylvania - impose similar limitations.

Recognizing that it's inappropriate to exclude the largest military association and fourth-largest veterans association in this way, Sen. Bill Nelson (D-FL) and a group of 19 other bipartisan senators introduced S. 832 on April 20 to authorize a charter for MOAA. The House companion bill, H.R. 2017, was introduced on April 21 by Reps. Chris Van Hollen (D-MD) and Walter Jones (R-NC).

MOAA is grateful to all of these congressional leaders for their support.

You can help by sending a message urging your senators and representatives to co-sponsor S.832 and H.R. 2017.

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MOAA Honors Hill Champions

At a packed-house Capitol Hill ceremony on April 21, MOAA presented its top annual awards to eight individuals for their support of the military and veterans' community.

MOAA's Arthur T. Marix Award for Congressional Leadership (named in honor of MOAA's founder) was presented to:

Sen. Jim Webb (D-VA) for spearheading last year's successful effort to enact major Post-9/11 GI Bill upgrades. Rep. John McHugh (R-NY) was honored for his long-standing leadership and activism as past Chairman and Ranking Member of the Military Personnel Subcommittee, and now as the Ranking Member of the full committee.

Rep. Susan Davis, Chair of the Personnel Subcommittee, has been a champion of much-needed manpower increases, wounded warrior protections, and family support programs to help those serving on the home front. She and her subcommittee led the charge to defeat proposals for unfair TRICARE fee increases.

MOAA's Distinguished Service Award was presented to:

Mr. Toby Keith (see award photo), a country music star and songwriter who has participated in six previous USO Tours, entertaining nearly 120,000 troops and making innumerable hospital visits and individual meetings with service men and women. Immediately after the MOAA ceremony, he departed his seventh USO tour, including sites in Afghanistan.

Union Pacific, for its service as a model Guard/Reserve employer. The company continues pay and benefits for the more than 530 employees deployed since 9/11, and has four full-time staff dedicated to recruiting military people.

Mr. Tom Day, who in 2000, after learning that many veterans were being provided only recordings of "Taps" at their funerals, started Bugles Across America to ensure that every veteran possible had a live bugler at his or her last service. Bugles Across America now has more than 5,000 bugler volunteers located in all 50 states, and Mr. Day has personally participated in 4,000 veterans' funerals.

MOAA's Colonel Paul W. Arcari Meritorious Service Award for congressional staff members (named for MOAA's former director of government relations, who retired in 2001) was presented to Ms. Jeanette James and Mr. Dave Kildee, minority and majority professional staff members, respectively, for the House Military Personnel Subcommittee. Their bipartisan work was essential to prevent adverse TRICARE fee increases, reduce Guard/Reserve TRICARE premiums, restore military medical manning, protect special-needs children, and much more.

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MOAA's LEGISLATIVE UPDATE for May 1, 2009:

Disability Board to Loosen Restrictions. Pentagon officials announced this week that the Physical Disability Board of Review (PDBR) will expand the criteria under which medical separatees can apply to have their records evaluated for upgrade to disability retirement status.

Wounded and Families: Care Isn't Seamless Yet.

The same issues were played out at a number of hearings this week in both chambers as the Armed Services and Veterans Affairs committees gathered information on just how effective wounded warrior policies and programs are between DoD and VA.

"Care continues to be a confusing maze of massive bureaucracies," said one wounded warrior.

"They [DoD/VA] don't tell you about the process, you just have to stumble on the information and care," said a wounded warrior spouse.

MOAA is encouraged by the much-improved collaboration and cooperation between the DoD and VA secretaries, but believes far more needs to be done. And the first requirement is permanent statutory authority for a joint DoD/VA transition office staffed by senior, full-time DoD, service and VA personnel with responsibility and authority to develop joint policies, programs, new initiatives and oversight of the entire transition process from start to finish.

Post-9/11 GI Bill Sign-Ups Begin

Currently serving men and women, military retirees and veterans who have qualifying active duty service after September 10, 2001 can enroll in the new Post-9/11 GI Bill beginning today, May 1.

The Department of Veterans Affairs announced this week that qualifying military personnel and veterans may enroll in the new Post-9/11 GI Bill program beginning today - May 1.

To qualify for the benefit, a servicemember, including members of the National Guard or Reserve, must have completed at least 90 days of active duty service after September 10, 2001 unless separated for medical reasons. Full benefits are awarded upon completion of an aggregate of 36 months of active duty service.

For those who have 36 months of qualifying active duty, the Post-9/11 GI Bill pays for:

- * Tuition and fees up to the highest-cost public college or university in the respective state
- * A monthly housing stipend payable at the E-5 with-dependents
- * Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH) rate for the ZIP code of the school. The housing stipend is available only to veterans -- not active duty servicemembers -- who attend a physical campus full-time
- * An annual book stipend of \$1,000

Servicemembers or veterans with Montgomery GI Bill (MGIB) entitlement may make an irrevocable election for the Post-9/11 GI Bill program. But the VA cautions MGIB participants to weigh all aspects of this option. MOAA recommends that currently serving members consult an education counselor before making the decision. Veterans and military retirees with the MGIB should contact the VA before giving up those benefits for the new program.

In essence, anyone who is eligible for retirement on Aug. 1, 2009, or who has an approved retirement date after Aug. 1, 2009 and before July 1, 2010 will be able to transfer their benefits with no additional service requirement. There are also exceptions for servicemembers who will be mandatorily separated or retired due to service policy or statutory requirements.

Additional questions and answers on the Post-9/11 GI Bill are available on MOAA's website.

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Disability Board to Loosen Restrictions

Pentagon officials announce this week that the Physical Disability Board of Review (PDBR) will loosen current restrictions in two main areas in order to meet Congress' original intent of the board.

MOAA's LEGISLATIVE UPDATE for May 8, 2009:

Defense, VA Budget Details

The Administration released specifics of the FY2010 budget this week, with mostly good news for the military and veterans community.

Defense and VA officials had telegraphed the "big picture" contents of the FY2010 president's budget a couple of months ago, but the details weren't finalized until Thursday.

Thankfully, there were no unpleasant surprises. The defense budget formally lists taking care of military people as the topmost

priority - "a long-term commitment by the department to take care of our people." To that end, the budget includes:

Manpower plus-ups. It fully funds planned increases to the Army and Marine Corps and would halt planned reductions for the Air Force and Navy, according to Under Secretary of Defense (Comptroller) Robert Hale.

Full funding for the TRICARE program. The good news is that this is the first time in four years that the budget hasn't included formal proposals for big hikes in TRICARE fees for retirees under 65. The bad news is that Pentagon leaders still want to raise TRICARE fees. A key difference is that this year, they're going to ask Congress to do that rather than cutting the budget on the assumption that it will happen.

A 2.9% military pay raise. MOAA supports a modestly larger 3.4% raise to continue to shrink the military pay gap, and both the House and Senate Armed Services Committees have endorsed the higher figure.

Troop shifts from Iraq to Afghanistan. Under Secretary Hale said the budget assumes that the 130,000 troops in Iraq as of Oct. 1 will shrink to 50,000 a year later, offset in part by planned increases in troop levels in Afghanistan. For FY2010, the budget assumes the cost of operations in Afghanistan will exceed the cost for Iraq.

The FY2010 VA budget of \$113 billion is more than a 15% increase over current year spending, due in large measure to enactment of increased GI Bill benefits and increased numbers of disabled veterans qualifying for VA benefits. Specifics include:

- Gradual expansion of VA health care eligibility up to 500,000 "category 8" vets (nondisabled vets whose incomes are currently above regional ceilings) by 2013
- \$144 million to begin implementing a paperless claims processing system
- Adding staff, improving procedures and using technology to reduce claims backlogs and reduce claims processing to 150 days (vs. an estimated 168 for FY2009)
- Nearly \$6 billion to expand long-term care services
- \$4.6 billion to expand mental health programs

Reps. Buyer, Walz Seek Survivor Fix.

MOAA President VADM Norb Ryan participated in a press conference this week to announce introduction of a new bill that would increase benefits for survivors of veterans who died of service-connected causes.

The proposed legislation has two benefits for survivors. First, it would increase the amount of VA Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) payable to survivors of currently serving members or veterans who die of a service-connected cause. It would set the DIC rate at 55% of the disability compensation paid to a totally disabled veteran. As a practical matter, that would be \$1,470 monthly, vs. the current rate of \$1,154.

In addition, the bill would modify statutory language governing the DIC offset to Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) annuities to ensure that whatever court decision is rendered in a currently pending lawsuit by certain SBP-DIC survivors would apply equally to all SBP-DIC widows.

Various military and veterans service organizations, as well as several original cosponsors of the bill, attended the press conference to express their support for the new legislation. Please contact your U.S. representative and send a MOAA-suggested message to ask them to cosponsor this important bill.

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House Leaders Host Military Spouses.

Today, May 8, is Military Spouse Appreciation Day. In recognition of their key role, top House leaders met with a group of military spouses this week to talk about the results of a military life issues survey.

Legislators met with 15 military spouses, including MOAA's Sue Hoppin, to discuss the results of a recent life issues survey, which indicated that 94% of the participating military families felt "disconnected" from America. Legislators asked what could be done to remedy the situation.

- Participants brought up several issues, including needs for:
- More time at home for servicemembers between deployments
 - Elimination of the SBP/DIC offset for survivors
 - More financial support for volunteers to offset the costs of childcare and professional training
 - Better access to mental health and medical care

<http://echo4.bluehornet.com/ct/4612556:5449005520:m:3:230981068:703F80EE1C8171901C64053CC440B1EC>

MOAA Hill-Stormers Get Results

MOAA Council and Chapter Presidents from the 50 states and Puerto Rico, accompanied by members of the national Board of Directors and headquarters staff, plus members of MOAA's active duty, Guard, Reserve, spouse and auxiliary advisory committees, swarmed Capitol Hill on April 22 to visit representatives' and senators' offices on key MOAA legislative initiatives.

The annual event ensures legislators and staffs are personally aware of our issues and solicits their cosponsorship of selected key bills. Cosponsorship increases in the wake of those visits are a clear indication that they had the desired effect:

- Eliminate remaining offsets of retired pay
 - H.R. 303 - 26 new cosponsors (75% increase)
 - H.R. 333 - 25 new cosponsors (50% increase)
 - S. 546 - 17 new cosponsors (106% increase)

Repeal the SBP-DIC offset

- H.R. 775 - 69 new cosponsors (47% increase)
- S. 535 - 26 new cosponsors (162% increase)

Protect against disproportionate health fee increases

- H.R. 816 - 46 new cosponsors (64% increase)

MOAA is extremely proud of the Hill-storming efforts of our Council and Chapter Presidents and national board and staff members to meet with their legislators. However, none of this would be possible without the grassroots efforts of our 370,000+ members across the country. It's because all of you are willing to write, call, and email your representatives that we have so much success on Capitol Hill.

A big MOAA "Thank you!" to all who took part in Storming the Hill and to everyone who contacted their legislators on these bills. <http://echo4.bluehornet.com/ct/4612571:5449005520:m:3:230981068:703F80EE1C8171901C64053CC440B1EC>

MOAA's LEGISLATIVE UPDATE for May 15, 2009:

Obama Concurrent Receipt Plan Details

More details surfaced this week on the Administration's proposal to expand concurrent receipt to service members who were medically retired, sometimes referred to as Chapter 61 retirees.

Under the Administration's Omnibus proposal, all Chapter 61 retirees will become eligible for Concurrent Retirement and Disability Pay (CRDP) over a five-year period starting in January 2010. The expansion will come in two phases.

The first three years of the five year phase-in opens CRDP eligibility to the more severely disabled Chapter 61 retirees with less than 20 years of service.

- On January 1, 2010, Chapter 61 retirees with less than 20 years of service and a VA rating of either 90% or 100% become eligible.
- On January 1, 2011, Chapter 61 retirees with less than 20 years of service and a VA rating of either 70% or 80% become eligible.
- On January 1, 2012, Chapter 61 retirees with less than 20 years of service and a VA rating of either 50% or 60% become eligible.

The remaining two years of this phase-in extends CRDP to Chapter 61 retirees, regardless of years of service, with a VA rating of less than 50%.

- On January 1, 2013, all Chapter 61 retirees with a VA rating of either 30% or 40% will become eligible.
- On January 1, 2014, all Chapter 61 retirees with any VA rating become eligible.

Once this plan is completed, the only disabled retirees ineligible for CRDP will be non-medical retirees with 40% or lower VA disability ratings. The 10-year cost of the expansion is estimated to be \$5.8 billion.

COLA Creep

The Bureau of Labor Statistics announced this morning that inflation rose 0.3% in April.

That wasn't enough to make much difference in the year-to-date number, which is still 3.5% in the hole for the first seven months of FY2009. So it's looking more and more with each passing month that retirees won't see any COLA for 2010. Check out the month-by-month COLA trend lines for the past three years and judge for yourself.

SecDef Defends "Reform" Budget

Secretary of Defense Robert Gates and Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman ADM Mike Mullen, USN, discussed the Pentagon's \$533.8 billion dollar defense budget submission before the House Armed Services Committee this week.

MOAA's LEGISLATIVE UPDATE for May 22, 2009:

MOAA Cites People Needs in Senate Hearing.

TRICARE: Strobridge expressed the Coalition's gratitude that the new defense budget didn't propose any TRICARE fee increases, and urged the panel to include language in this year's defense bill to acknowledge that career military people pay huge, in-kind and up-front premiums through decades of service and sacrifice. He also urged action to improve health care access for all beneficiaries, especially those with mental health needs.

Guard and Reserve: Priorities included authorizing reduced-retirement-age credit for all active service since 9/11/01 and extending premium-based TRICARE coverage to "gray area" reservists under age 60.

Wounded warriors: Strobridge cited the need to provide three years of active-duty level TRICARE coverage for disability retirees and provide training and compensation for family-member caregivers.

Survivor benefits: When one panelist indicated that military survivor benefits were "very, very good...with the law as it is" (when considered with Social Security and lump sum insurance and death gratuity payments), Strobridge took issue and asserted the need to end deduction of VA benefits from Survivor Benefit Plan annuities. "94% of the affected widows got only [minimal lump sum payments] that have been long since spent, and many now get less than \$14,000 a year [from either DoD or VA]," he said. "You can add up how much that will eventually amount to over the rest of their lives and make it look like a big number, but it's still only \$14,000 a year."

MOAA Talks Women's Vet Issues

House Veterans Affairs Committee Chairman Bob Filner (D-CA) convened a special roundtable discussion this week to examine how the VA is addressing the needs of women veterans.

MOAA Government Relations Deputy Director CDR Rene Campos (USN-Ret) joined representatives from other organizations, DoD, and the VA to discuss women's experiences in seeking medical and mental health care from the VA.

The population of women veterans in the system is expected to double, due to the rapidly growing number of females on active duty in recent years, and the VA is struggling to accommodate their unique needs.

Women who have served in Iraq and Afghanistan are using the VA health care system at a higher rate. They are younger (often of child-bearing age) and generally have more physical and mental health issues than their male counterparts.

Problems the panelists highlighted include:

- Women receive lower disability ratings than males
- VA's reluctance to address issues of employment and family responsibilities, including child care, and family support
- Lack of neonatal care for infants after delivery

- Inexperience in working with women's medical and mental health issues, particularly the trauma and stigma associated with domestic violence and sexual assault
- Lack of information and outreach on available benefits and services for women

- The need for more research on the impact of combat on women servicemembers
- Recognition of women's role in combat, and changing DoD policy to provide equal benefits with male veterans

Campos expressed MOAA's support for Filner's H.R. 1016 (which would authorize two-year funding for VA health care programs to ensure continuity of care between fiscal years) and Rep. Stephanie Herseth Sandlin's (D-SD) H.R. 1211 (which would eliminate barriers that discourage women veterans from seeking VA care and provide other transition assistance).

Campos summarized by telling members, "It really comes down to asking the VA to give women veterans the same respect, recognition and benefits afforded their male comrades for their service—not just words, but words followed by action."

More States Sign Education Compact

More than 60% of military children are now covered by the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children. Earlier this week, Alabama and Maryland became the 19th and 20th states to join the compact when their Governors signed the legislation. Alaska, Texas and Washington joined the compact earlier in May.

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The Hill Cites MOAA

The Hill, the largest-circulation newspaper on Capitol Hill has published its list of "Top Lobbyists". MOAA is the sole military or veterans group included on this year's list. Here's what the article has to say.

"Members [of Congress] don't necessarily like to be lobbied. That is, they don't like it when someone lobbies against something they support. Which helps explain the prevalence of trade associations in Washington. [T]rade groups are often the most public voices in a lobbying campaign... Complicating the effort... is that not all of their members see eye to eye on things. One has to constantly preach the benefits of sticking together to companies that may be competitors on another playing field. Here are a few people who are good at finding consensus among their members and then communicating their message on Capitol Hill.

"Norb Ryan Jr., Military Officers Association of America. With so much attention given to military families and veterans, Ryan and retired Col. Steve Strobidge ensure that their critical issues stay at the forefront."

MOAA's LEGISLATIVE UPDATE for May 29, 2009:

Separation Recoupment Suspended

DFAS has announced a temporary suspension of recoupment of Voluntary Separation Incentive (VSI), Special Separation Benefit (SSB), and separation payments from military retired pay, effective June 1, pending a formal policy and legal review by DoD. VSI, SSB, and involuntary separation payments were "downsizing" tools used by the services during the 1990s to reduce manpower levels. Members who received those voluntary and involuntary separation payments and who subsequently qualified for Guard/Reserve or other military retirement are required by law to repay them out of their military retired pay.

Some affected retirees reached out to their legislators stating that the repayment formula is creating a financial hardship. The repayment formula is set by law, so the Pentagon can't alter repayment schedules.

Earlier this month, Sen. Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH) and Rep. Carol Shea-Porter (D-NH) introduced the "Military Retired Pay Fairness Act of 2009" (S. 1008 and H.R. 2302 respectively) that would limit the recoupment formula to 25% of a member's retired pay.

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Spouse Residency Relief Act Progress

The Senate Veterans Affairs Committee last week approved the Military Spouse Residency Relief Act (S. 475, Sen Burr, R-NC), which would let a spouse choose the same state of residency as the servicemember. If passed, it would reduce some administrative and tax filing difficulties incurred by spouses as they relocate, and let them vote in the same state as their servicemember.

S. 475 has 37 Senate cosponsors (22 Republicans and 15 Democrats). The House version of the bill (H.R. 1182, Rep Carter, R-TX) has 97 cosponsors (81 Republicans and 16 Democrats).

Although the spouse domicile bill is gaining some momentum, it will need broader congressional support to assure passage. You can help military spouses by asking your legislators to cosponsor H.R. 1182 and S. 475.

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<http://echo4.bluehornet.com/ct/4729409:5582045023:m:3:230981068:1B3AA4969631EE330F3A67FD8A9F3B29>

VA Caregiver Bill Gets Nod

The Senate Veterans Affairs Committee approved a number of MOAA-backed measures just prior to the Memorial Day holiday weekend, including:

- S. 801, the Caregiver and Veterans Health Services Act of 2009, to establish a permanent VA program to train, support, and assist caregivers of severely disabled veterans, and improve services for rural veterans.
- S. 423, the Veterans Health Care Budget Reform and Transparency Act of 2009, to authorize a two-year appropriations process for VA health care to protect against funding shortfalls that occur when Congress fails to pass the annual appropriation by Oct. 1.
- S. 407, to authorize the same COLA adjustment as Social Security (which will probably be zero for 2010) for VA disability compensation and survivor annuities.
- S. 728, the Veterans Benefits Enhancement Act of 2009. Among other changes, it would make traumatic injury insurance (TSGLI) coverage retroactive to Oct. 7, 2001 for severe service-caused disabilities, regardless of where the injury occurred. That retroactive coverage now applies only to injuries incurred in a combat zone. Other injuries are covered only if they occurred on or after Dec. 1, 2006. The bill also increases funeral and burial allowances for veterans, and raises VA mortgage insurance limits.

MOAA's LEGISLATIVE UPDATE for June 5, 2009:

You Could be Bounced from TRICARE Prime

A new DoD policy aimed at "cleaning up" TRICARE Prime enrollment at military treatment facilities (MTF) could mean some significant changes for many Prime enrollees.

TRICARE has long had established travel access standards to help beneficiaries receive timely health care. The standards require that enrollees shouldn't be assigned a primary care manager (PCM) at a military hospital or clinic that's more than a 30-minute drive from the beneficiary's home address.

As a practical matter, DoD never really enforced that policy. But it will be enforced now.

Military Spouses Speak Out on Healthcare, Ops Temps, and Impacts on Children.

A group of military spouses testifying before the Senate Armed Services Personnel Subcommittee on June 3 pulled no punches in highlighting the stresses military families incur associated with ops tempo and deployment separations, health care access, and children's education, as well as a pressing need for better access to mental health counseling.



JAYHAWK CHAPTER MOAA



A membership meeting will be held **Wednesday, 1 July 2009**, at the Lawrence Country Club. Dinner cost is **\$20.00/meal**.

The Program: Our guest speaker will be Congresswoman Lynn Jenkins.

Social Hour: 1800 hours

Dinner: 1900 hours

The Menu: *Chicken, 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, 25 June 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.

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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).

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.kansasmoaa.org

JAYHAWK CHAPTER WEBSITE: www.jayhawkmoaa.org

*We are making progress,
but we are still asking for members
who can/will receive the Newsletter via e-mail.*

*Please let us know at
jwhalladay@sunflower.com*

2009 Jayhawk MOAA Calendar:

Wednesday 1 July MOAA meeting
Our guest speaker will be Congresswoman Lynn Jenkins.

Tuesday 15 September MOAA meeting

Tuesday 17 November MOAA meeting

2010 Jayhawk MOAA Calendar:

Wednesday 19 January MOAA meeting

Wednesday 16 March MOAA meeting

Wednesday 18 May MOAA meeting



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

PLEASE NOTE

Our July meeting is Wednesday, 1 July
and the deadline for reservations
is **25 June**.