



Jayhawk Chapter MOAA Newsletter



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November Program:

Our guest speaker will be Kathleen Brady, Vice President of Development for the National World War I Museum at Liberty Memorial in Kansas City.

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awarded for
2002 / 2003 / 2005 /
2008 / 2009

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Greetings from the President . . .

Michelle and I have recently returned from an elective that the US Army Command and General Staff College offers through the Auschwitz Institute for Peace and Reconciliation. The seminar took place at the Death Camp in Poland. It was sobering experience and one of our guides to Birkenau (Auschwitz II) said, "Once people visit here their lives are changed forever."



So too, I understand, was our last speaker, MOAA Jayhawk Chapter member COL(P) Victor Braden's recount of his experiences during his recent tour of duty in Afghanistan. He gave a somber assessment of our Nation's civil and military prospects in that area. COL (P) Braden who, it was announced on October 18th, has been nominated for Brigadier General, drew a very large crowd, close to the number we have not seen in attendance since Retired Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Dick Myers spoke to us. I am certain you will all join me in thanking him for his presentation and congratulating him on his nomination.

Our speaker on November 16th is Ms. Kathleen Brady, Vice President of Development for the National World War I Museum at Liberty Memorial in Kansas City. She is a Jayhawk and looks forward to paying Lawrence and the MOAA Jayhawk Chapter a visit to discuss the Museum and its various programs.

Charles

Volume XV, Issue 6

1 November 2010

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*** Reservations should be sent to Jim Cooper by 11 November**



JAYHAWK CHAPTER NEWS

From Erv Hodges:

*U. S. MARINE CORPS BIRTHDAY,
WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 10, 2010*

Marines, Veterans, and friends are invited to attend the 235th anniversary of the founding of the U. S. Marine Corps at 10:30 a.m. Wednesday, November 10 at the Dole Institute of Politics, 2350 Petefish Drive. The Lawrence High School Chorale will participate by singing the National Anthem and the Marine's Hymn.

Retired Navy **Captain John W. Newsom** will be the featured speaker. Captain Newsom, a U. S. Naval Academy graduate, served in World War II, Korea and Vietnam on surface ships and as a Naval Aviator. His wartime service included the Guadalcanal, Savo Island, and Tulagi campaigns as well as staff duty on the staff of the Chief of Naval Operations, Commander in Chief, Pacific Fleet and Fleet Air Wings Atlantic.

Jim and Kay Henry have just completed their final year on the Board of Health Care Access. They have been on the Board for six years.

Bob and Shari Johnson report they just got back from Florida. They spent a week at Disney World for Bob's 70th birthday. All of their six children, with spouses, 15 grandchildren, and their 3 great grandchildren were present. Thirty in all. It was a great family reunion.

Last Saturday **Dean Bevan** was inducted into the Jayhawk Army ROTC Battalion Wall of Fame. Brief description at: <http://www.news.ku.edu/2010/october/22/walloffame.shtml> For further details, contact Jayhawk Battalion Alumni Association President (LTC) David Pendleton at pkujayhawk@everestkc.net

From Ray Finch:

After returning from their tour in Afghanistan, Captains John and Realean Finch visited with family in Lawrence in October, 2010. They are assigned with the 82d Airborne Division at Fort Bragg. The photo in front of the KU Alumni Center, from left to right, Jean, Raelean, John, Tommy and Ray Finch.



From Vic Braden: I think I will be promoted on the 12th. My assignment is with the 35th ID as the ADCM.

From Jim Cooper: Now is a good time to contribute to the Comfort Fund – with the looming end of the calendar year, and the new tax season just over the horizon....



Army News LTC Victor Hamilton

Greetings Jayhawk Chapter!

The University of Kansas Army ROTC has been busy this semester. The more than 100 Cadets of the battalion have been working hard on improving physical fitness, small unit tactics, land navigation, and leadership since the school year began. Additionally, the Cadets have been working hard to maintain strong grade point averages, which is a critical component to the Army's branching process.

Under the tutelage of c/LTC Jonathan Kincaid, Jayhawk Battalion Cadet Commander, the battalion has improved its

physical fitness test score average by nearly 30 points battalion-wide since the beginning of the semester. The Cadets' hard work and motivation is evident every morning even before the sun comes up. c/LTC Kincaid and his staff also led the entire battalion on a three-day field training exercise at Fort Leavenworth. The grueling exercise pushed the Cadets to their limit with non-stop training. The Cadets completed two land navigation courses, an entire day of small

**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.**

unit tactics missions, as well as rappelling and rifle marksmanship.

The KU ROTC Ranger Challenge teams competed in the annual Ranger Challenge Competition at Camp Dodge, Iowa, on 16 October. Two teams of KU Rangers tested their skills and intestinal fortitude in a myriad of events, including a 10K ruck march, one-rope bridge, and obstacle course. Competing against teams from colleges and universities across the Midwest gave the KU Cadets a chance to see how well they stack-up against the best of the best. KU Rangers did not disappoint, finishing 13th and 16th respectively.

New Professor of Military Science, LTC Victor Hamilton, is excited about the future of KU ROTC. He sees unlimited potential in the Cadets and looks forward to seeing their continued development throughout the rest of semester.

ROCK CHALK!

CPT Aaron M. Cornett

Army ROTC Executive Officer



Navy News

CAPT Carl Carpenter, USN



Greetings from the Jayhawk Navy!

It is hard to believe we are half way through the fall semester. The Battalion has enjoyed a busy fall schedule. Highlights include an intensive day of leadership training at KU's Adams Campus Challenge Course near Clinton Lake, a Battalion drill competition, and the annual Barn Dance. We're also looking forward to the Tri-Service Ball hosted by the AFROTC this year, the annual Tri-Service Flag Football game with our KU Air Force and Army counterparts, and the Veteran's Day observances and campus vigil at the University of Kansas War memorials.

I am pleased to announce that the KU NROTC Battalion Commander, MIDN 1/c Christian Jensen of Paola, Kansas, received the US Navy's Legion of Valor Bronze Cross for Achievement. MIDN Jensen was among only eight other midshipmen throughout the entire United States to earn that award. The award is presented annually to recognize achievement of scholastic excellence in military/academic

subjects and development of outstanding leadership traits. The Legion of Valor was awarded to MIDN Jensen by retired Army COL Roger Donlon, who was the first American soldier to be awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor for heroism in Vietnam.

For the NROTC staff, one of the highlights of the semester has been the promotion of our current Assistant Marine Officer Instructor, Roy Matthews to the rank of Gunnery Sergeant.

In closing, I want to again thank the MOAA Jayhawk Chapter membership for your support to the KU NROTC Unit. Your interaction with the midshipmen/cadets contributes significantly in molding the characters of our nation's future officers. Thank you again for the effort you make to recognize all the ROTC programs at KU.

CAPT Carl Carpenter

Air Force News

LtCol Gena Stuchbery, USAF



Greetings MOAA!

The fall semester is now in full swing. We've completed midterms, our PFA (Physical Fitness Assessment) and FLX (Field Leadership Exercise).

Early in the semester, we celebrated "Heroes Day" at the 11 September Georgia Tech football game. Over half our

cadets took part in the day's activities from unfurling the giant flag covering the field, to doing push-ups after each Jayhawk score, and being publicly sworn into AFROTC on the field. The game began with a KC-135 fly-over by our Air National Guard friends from Forbes Field in Topeka. The

day was topped off by the football team's most impressive win to date.

Our fall PFA – the first major test of our freshman class – went well on 13 October (just in time for the Fall Break). Pre-assessment nerves were quickly replaced by high-fives and celebration as all completed the task. The stage was set among our elite fleet feet for the upcoming Warrior Challenge which will determine “best athlete” bragging rights. Good luck to all!

Cadets also got to experience the social scene, as four were invited (and graciously paid for by our hosts) to attend the AF Ball in September and enjoy fellowship and mentoring with the AF Element at the CGSC. The cadets really had a great experience and couldn't stop talking about it all the way home from Kansas City.

Last week, on 19 October, our cadets were treated to a field exercise out on West Campus, courtesy of the upper class cadets. Forty plus cadets were placed in two teams with the objective of rescuing a downed pilot, navigator, and recovering a missile. The primary training objectives were: Land Navigation, Self-Aid/Buddy Care (SABC), UXO Identification and Handling, and Command and Control. Though the downed navigator was not located, all were able

to practice leadership, land navigation, and small squad tactics – translating the classroom into a field environment. The weather was perfect and it was a great day to don face paint and mix it up a little!

Next up on our plate is Career Day on 2 November at the Kansas Union, where we expect nearly a dozen officers to talk with our cadets about life in the Air Force. And, we'll be hosting the annual Joint Military Ball at the Holidome on 19 November.

Finally, we'd like to invite the MOAA members to our annual KU Joint Service ROTC Veteran's Day Ceremony and 24-hour Vigil beginning 12 November. The event will consist of a formal flag retreat at 4 pm in front of Strong Hall on campus (Jayhawk Blvd) followed by a presentation in Budig Hall (Room 130). The community is welcome to attend; please RSVP your intention to join us by phone at 785-4676 or email at afrotc@ku.edu.

Thanks for all you do and have a great fall semester!

Maj Gary Marsteller
Commandant of Cadets

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 September 3, 2010: VASRD Revisions Coming - But Not Soon

The Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) Advisory Committee on Disability Compensation met late last month and announced the release of its July report to Congress.

The Advisory Committee is charged with advising Secretary Shinseki on the maintenance and periodic readjustment of the VA Schedule of Rating Disabilities (VASRD). The Committee's focus is in three areas of disability compensation:

1. Requirements and methodology for updating the VASRD
2. Adequacy and sequencing of compensation procedures for transitioning service members
3. Disability compensation for non-economic loss (referred to as "quality of life")

The Committee recommended last year the need for a systematic VASRD review and reiterated that recommendation in its most recent report. The VASRD, which has not been significantly updated since its development in 1945, has been labeled "out-of-date" and in need of major and immediate revisions by several past commissions and veterans' organizations.

Since the interim report, Secretary Shinseki has endorsed a comprehensive review and subsequently developed a four-phase project management plan to revise and update all 15 body systems in the VASRD.

During the two-day meeting, the Committee heard from several panel members on various body systems review groups.

Although the review of some VASRD components may be complete and published by late next year, the work is not scheduled to be completed until December 2016.

MOAA will continue to monitor progress on the revision of the disability rating system.

Apply Now for "Gray Area" TRICARE

Starting September 1, retired Guardsmen and Reservists who are not yet age 60 ("gray area" retirees) can purchase TRICARE coverage for themselves and their families.

Eligibles may enroll in the new TRICARE Retired Reserve (TRR) program now and health care coverage will start on October 1.

The program is open to all "gray area" retirees who are not also eligible for the Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB) program, as well as their spouses, dependent children, and survivors.

Unlike the TRICARE Reserve Select program for drilling reservists - in which premiums are subsidized by 72% - TRR premiums will be unsubsidized. For 2010 the member-only premium is \$388 a month and family coverage is \$976 a month. The rates increase to \$408 and \$1,020 respectively on January 1, 2011.

If you'd like to learn more about this new program or to enroll visit the TRICARE Retired Reserve webpage.

<http://echo4.bluehornet.com/ct/8715454:10725974410:m:3:230981068:34765F08CC21E17D4E9494D0E025590F>

MOAA's LEGISLATIVE UPDATE for September 9, 2010:

TRICARE Retiree Dental Program Needs Your Input.

The TRICARE Retiree Dental Program (TRDP) was created by Congress in 1997 to serve retired military beneficiaries. Today,

it provides dental coverage to more than 1.2 million eligible beneficiaries and is administered contractually through Delta Dental of California (www.trdp.org).

The current contract has been in place since 2008 and is effective through 2013. The 2008 contract included benefit enhancements such as: dental implant coverage, extension of eligibility to members overseas, and an increase in the orthodontic lifetime maximum to \$1,500.

TRICARE is now in the process of developing a follow-on contract for this program and would like to hear from beneficiaries on recommended enhancements to the plan.

MOAA's agenda already includes seeking a government subsidy for the plan and authorizing pre-tax payment of TRDP premiums, but it would take a law change to make those things happen.

What we're looking for on this survey is enrollee preferences on service changes, such as periodontal maintenance cleanings and diabetic dental preventive procedures, for example.

Please take a moment to fill out MOAA's survey on benefit enhancements in the TRICARE Retiree Dental Program.

<http://echo4.bluehornet.com/ct/8772076:10809915363:m:3:230981068:AE700FA9E0091D39952A51037F6531C3>

MOAA's LEGISLATIVE UPDATE for September 17, 2010:

Top Leaders Address Wounded Warrior Forum

Four key speakers set the tone at the forum in expressing government actions and intentions.

Senator Jim Webb (D-VA), who serves on both the Armed Services and Veterans Affairs Committees, kicked off the event with a powerful statement of the nation's obligation to those who have suffered the brunt of wartime sacrifice.

"Nine years of continuous deployments have stressed troops and families in ways that were never envisioned...The all-volunteer force is in uncharted territory, and we may not understand the consequences for decades...But one enduring precept of leadership is 'loyalty down.' We have a responsibility - a lifetime responsibility [to those who suffer the price of war]...[That's why] my three top priorities were dwell time between deployments, the Post-9/11 GI Bill, and the Wounded Warrior Act."

Army Chief of Staff General George Casey agreed, "Nine years of war have changed us - in some ways we know and some we don't...People always want to get back to the 'good old days', but we're never going back. The new normal is fundamentally different...The cumulative effects of war will be with us for a long time: 7,500 severely wounded; 9,500 troops in Warrior Transition Units; 100,000 diagnosed with traumatic brain injury since 2000 and 45,000 with PTSD - and we know those numbers are low."

"The most important element of sustaining the force is increased 'dwell time' at home between deployments," he said. "It takes 24 to 36 months to recover from a 12-month deployment, but it will be at least 2012 before we can get to 24 months."

Mrs. Sheila Casey joined her husband and observed, "Family members are the most brittle part of the force, but they've adapted remarkably well...I especially worry about young families that haven't had time to build strong bonds, and about the long-term effect on military children, including how multiple separations affect their emotional connection with the military parent...Unfortunately, the current problems we're seeing are only the leading indicators."

Asked what one change he'd like to change, General Casey said, "I'd fix the [disability] physical evaluation board system; it's too complicated, and we haven't made the strides we need to."

Mrs. Casey said, "The biggest family issue is access to health care, especially behavioral health care." Both agreed that's the number one issue families raise wherever they go.

Assistant VA Secretary Tammy Duckworth, a medically retired Army Guard helicopter pilot who lost both legs and partial use of one arm in Iraq, said it took her a while to realize "Life is going to be normal -- not 'the same as it was before,' but a new normal...Wounded warriors are still contributing; but need help...that's why we've won historic increases in VA budgets...[Despite some progress] we still have 107,000 homeless vets on the streets...We've established a homelessness help line to assist any vet who calls, and any Iraq or Afghanistan vet who comes to the VA...is being screened for PTSD and TBI."

Discussion Panels Provide Riveting Testimony

The forum's three discussion panels provided insights on the effects of visible and invisible wounds on troops, families and units, and actions needed to address them.

Panel 1: "Navigating Recovery: Are We Meeting Needs and Expectations?"

John R. Campbell, Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Wounded Warrior Care and Transition Policy, emphasized the expectation that most with unseen wounds will recover to productive employment, because the nation and employers need their talents. "The skill sets of today's vets are far above those of their predecessors, and if we expect to compete globally, America needs those resources [in the work force]."

Maj Gen Tod Bunting, ANG, Kansas Adjutant General, highlighted Kansas' resiliency centers that prepare families before deployments. He said remoteness from military facilities means Guard and Reserve members need particular assistance when they return. "There are still occasions when Guard and Reserve troops don't get the same treatment [as Regulars]."

Sgt Maj John Ploskonka, USMC, Sergeant Major of the HQ USMC Wounded Warrior Regiment Program, highlighted "four pillars of recovery" - body, mind, spirit, and family - in restoring the well-being of wounded Marines for the long term, including after retirement or separation. On eliminating stigma associated with seeking counseling, he said, "We're telling Marines, 'It's OK if you're not OK,' and they need to get treatment early."

Jean Langbein, OEF/OIF Program Manager for the Washington DC VA Medical Center, discussed VA initiatives to embed VA representatives with active duty units; coordinate military, VA, and community-based care; initiate outreach efforts to vets in local communities; and increase family support. She said deployment frequency deters some from seeking therapy. "Why should I since I'm going back soon? I'll deal with it when I come back."

SSG Charles Eggleston, USA-Ret, said officials assigned to help wounded warriors must show empathy, compassion, and common sense - which he often found lacking in his 3½-year stay at Walter Reed several years ago. He said the biggest problems are the physical/medical evaluation board process and persistent deterrents to coming forward to seek care. "If they do, we take their security clearance away...that's why some go home and self-medicate, or commit suicide."

Panel 2: "Confronting the Reintegration Process - Embracing the Experience"

Alex Quade, a reporter embedded with multiple combat units, said troops told her they checked the box on the form saying they wanted to see a counselor - and got a 30-minute session with no follow-up. "One [single soldier] called Military One Source - and they set him up appointments with a marriage counselor...another who called [to ask for urgent help] was told a counselor would call him back in a few days."

SFC Michael Schlitz, USA-Ret, severely wounded in Iraq, said "We need to get wounded members' troops to visit them for the first reintegration step, then the next step is from inpatient to outpatient-making appointments, being in public...resocialization."

"My facial scars got me treatment ahead of some with severe PTSD [who may have had a greater need]...We need to recognize that scars aren't just on the outside."

Mrs. Robbie Schlitz, Michael's mother, had to quit her job to become his full-time caregiver. She said caregivers who aren't spouses and have no ID cards are "outsiders, with no benefits. Michael has taken care of me in my three years of unemployment, but others aren't so lucky." She became a surrogate mom for the 18- and 19-year-old severely wounded soldiers in Michael's ward. "Many of their parents had younger children and couldn't leave to be caregivers like I did. These young wounded are still babies who need nurturing; without it they turn to drink and drugs. Their recovery goes much better once they get out of the hospital and into a family's care."

Mariette Kalinowski served two tours in Iraq with the Marine Corps Reserve. "I wasn't willing to admit I had a problem (PTSD and TBI), and was self-medicating until my mom staged an intervention," she said. "I waited until I was out of the military to pursue a disability claim...then they set me up with an unqualified therapist...the longer you wait, the less confidence you have to seek treatment."

Michael Dabbs, President of the Brain Injury Association of Michigan, opined, "It's been too long to be sitting here discussing; we need a sense of urgency...These injuries create lifetime needs, but the rules aren't set up to handle that...TBI care won't get better until we recognize DoD and the VA can't do it all. The private sector has far more assets -- Michigan alone has 10,000 workers in the brain injury field - and we need to use all of them."

CAPT Key Watkins, USN, commands the Navy Safe Harbor Program, which he said "provides a lifetime of individually tailored assistance to wounded Reserve sailors." He highlighted the importance of providing "near-peer" (similarly aged) mentors. One challenge he faces: "There's no Navy career path for our business. A three-year tour in Safe Harbor can be detrimental to a career. We need to find ways to attract and retain good people to do this important work."

Panel 3: "The New Normal - Hope for the Future"

Stephen Cochran, a wounded Marine veteran and PTSD sufferer who has become a country singer/songwriter, said, "Because of PTSD, I've lost more friends to suicide, violent crimes and destructive behavior than I did in the Middle East...We need to teach them -- and their families -- that if you've experienced these things, post-traumatic stress isn't a disorder, it's normal!"

COL David Sutherland, USA, Warrior and Family Programs Director for CJCS, said "We can't tolerate another generation of homeless vets." He highlighted three keys to long-term success -- education, employment and health care - and extensive efforts to partner with state and local agencies and employers to create a "Sea of Goodwill" to help reintegrate the wounded and their families to productive and successful lives.

Dr. Bruce Gans of the Kessler (NJ) Institute for Rehabilitation offered optimism concerning coming electronic techniques that can show visible effects of PTSD and mild TBI and make it clearer that these conditions are physical and neurological injuries that require treatment.

SSG Brian Beem, USA, wounded in Iraq and a below-knee amputee, has remained in the Army and returned to duty at Fort Wainwright, AK, in preparation for future combat operations. He enthusiastically endorsed Operation Proper Exit, which helps bring closure to soldiers wounded in Iraq by taking them back in-theater to share mutual experiences with soldiers at their previous base camps.

Gabe Downes received a disability separation after a tank training accident, and his wife Sue subsequently enlisted in the Army and was wounded in Iraq and retired for loss of both legs below the knee, TBI and PTSD. He described challenges as a disabled male

caregiver with two children and the benefits to the family since Sue received service dog Lila.

View photos and a short video synopsis of the forum at www.moaa.org/dfw.

Panel Clears Veterans' Bills

In the compressed pre-election legislative session, it remains to be seen whether six veterans' bills that cleared the House Veterans Affairs Committee this week can get enacted into law this year. Among the measures approved by the Committee:

H.R. 3787 (Rep. Walz, D-MN) would authorize veteran status for Guard and Reserve retirees who were never called up for federal active duty. Currently, these retirees don't qualify, despite having been called up extensively for Title 32 (state) duties guarding airports after 9/11, guarding America's borders or for national disasters like Hurricane Katrina and the Gulf oil spill. The legislation wouldn't authorize any new veterans' benefits. MOAA strongly supports the legislation.

H.R. 5593 (Rep. Halvorson, D-IL) responds to the recent dustup over management of Servicemembers' and Veterans' Group Life Insurance (SGLI and VGLI) payments to survivors. It would require the insurer to provide financial counseling and full disclosure of beneficiary options for receiving payouts.

H.R. 6131 (Rep. Filner, D-CA, HVAC chairman) an omnibus bill that creates a new veterans' job training program; excludes certain insurance or damage claim settlements from counting as income for the purpose of determining or stopping a VA pension; raises the monthly Medal of Honor stipend from \$1194 to \$2000 per month; and prohibits naming a veteran with a service-connected mental disorder from being included in government databases used for gun screening unless the veteran is under judicial review.

In related Hill action this week, the Economic Opportunity Subcommittee held another in a series of hearings on the Post-9/11 GI Bill. Rep. Walt Minnick (D-ID) was invited to address his bill, H.R. 5933, the Veterans Educational Assistance Improvements Act of 2010, a measure that addresses major MOAA and TMC priorities to improve and streamline the new GI Bill, including job training authority, benefits for Title 32 Guard members on state active duty and a streamlined payment system for public college attendees.

MOAA's LEGISLATIVE UPDATE for September 24, 2010:

TRICARE, Concurrent Receipt, SBP in Winter.

Unable to reach quick resolution on several controversial amendments, Senate leaders punted action on the FY2011 Defense Authorization Bill until after the November elections. That means more months of delay in resolving military pay, health care, disability and survivor benefits initiatives.

Finance Committee Likes Military Tax Fixes.

On September 22, witnesses from The Military Coalition (TMC) testified before the Senate Finance Committee concerning needed improvements in tax law affecting service personnel and their families and survivors.

This is first time the Coalition has been asked to address the Finance Committee. MOAA is encouraged by this and hope to make this an annual event. MOAA's Col. Phil Odom (USAF-Ret) co-chairs the TMC tax committee and prepared the TMC testimony.

Committee Chairman Max Baucus (D-MT) opened the hearing stating, "This committee will take a hard look at how we can improve tax and fiscal policy to make life better for our military and their families...we did much in 2008...but I know that there's more to do."

The Coalition proposed making permanent the temporary tax credit, enacted in 2008, for small businesses that pay a wage differential to reservists who are called to active service. Baucus called the proposal "a no-brainer", and also expressed

strong interest in the Coalition's proposal to exempt surviving military children's SBP annuities from AMT penalties.

MOAA's LEGISLATIVE UPDATE for October 1, 2010:

New Life for Concurrent Receipt

Senate Finance Committee Chairman Max Baucus (D-MT) has introduced S. 3793, the Job Creation and Tax Cuts Act, which breathes new life into concurrent receipt for this year.

The Act is fully paid-for legislation that includes the Administration's proposal to phase out the VA disability pay offset for all Chapter 61 (medical) retirees, regardless of years of service, whether the disability was combat-related or not.

The bill also would close tax loopholes for wealthy investment fund managers and large corporations and cut taxes for families paying college tuition, state and local taxes, and property taxes.

Congress elected to delay action on tax cut legislation until after the election. It's uncertain whether it will be addressed during the lame-duck session, but that's Sen. Baucus' plan.

Congress' Non-SBP Priority of the Week

Year after year, MOAA and The Military Coalition have pushed Congress to end the unfair deduction of VA survivor benefits from Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) annuities for survivors of servicemembers who died of service-caused conditions. Under current law, many of these widows are left with annuities of less than \$14,000 a year.

Legislation to correct the problem has gathered 347 bipartisan cosponsors in the House - almost 80% of all U.S. representatives.

So why isn't it getting fixed? Year after year, Hill leaders' answer is the same, "We agree the fix is needed, but just can't find a way to pay for it."

Oh yeah? Every year, Congress manages to pass a long list of bills that cost as much - or far more.

This week, by a vote of 268 to 160 (with far fewer supporters than the SBP fix supposedly has), the House passed H.R. 847, which would provide free monitoring and health care for people with medical conditions deemed related to the 9/11 World Trade Center attack. The cost of H.R. 847: \$7 billion, the same cost as the military widows' SBP fix.

How would Congress pay for it? By limiting the ability of foreign-based companies to use tax treaties to shift income outside the United States and avoid higher tax rates.

Don't get us wrong. MOAA certainly has no problem with taking care of first responders and others sickened by toxic chemicals at ground zero in New York.

But it certainly begs yet another question why Congress keeps stiff-arming the widows whose military sponsors actually died from service-caused conditions.

MOAA doesn't intend to let them off the hook.

Coalition Recognizes Key Legislators and Staffers

Check out the slide show of the TMC award ceremony.
<http://echo4.bluehornet.com/ct/8990220:11102948301:m:3:230981068:75FD8A576A75AABAC968445F82169170>

MOAA's LEGISLATIVE UPDATE for October 8, 2010:

Vet Benefits Bill to Become Law

Just hours before Congress adjourned for the pre-election campaign on 29 September, it passed a comprehensive veterans' benefits bill (H.R. 3219) to upgrade insurance, disability and survivor programs, family protections, housing and homelessness programs, burial benefits, and other VA programs.

For Guard and Reserve families, the bill:

Permits a service person to sue over violations of the Servicemembers' Civil Relief Act (SCRA). This grew

from a case where a Guard soldier's home was foreclosed, his family evicted and the property sold while he was deployed to Iraq

Strengthens SCRA protections governing residential and motor vehicle leases, and terminated cell phone contracts

Strengthens Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA) coverage when a company changes structure or is bought out

Clarifies that USERRA prohibits wage discrimination against Armed Forces members

VA benefit upgrades would:

Let Veterans Group Life Insurance (VGLI) participants under age 60 increase their coverage by \$25,000 every five years

Authorize adaptive housing and automobile equipment for vets with severe burn injuries

Allow 2 years (vs 18 months) of SGLI coverage after separation for totally disabled vets separated on or after June 15, 2005

End a reduction in the accelerated death benefit for terminally ill veterans with SGLI or VGLI coverage

Cover loss of a dominant hand under Traumatic SGLI (TSGLI)

Provide retroactive TSGLI payments for certain injuries incurred after Sept. 11, 2001.

Increase VA mortgage loan guarantee to \$150,000 as of Oct. 1, 2011, and to \$200,000 as of Jan. 1, 2012

Allow an additional VA "aid and attendance" payment for veterans with severe traumatic brain injuries

Authorize DIC annuities for survivors of former POWs who died before Sept. 30, 1999

Target grants to providers who offer job training, counseling, placement and childcare services to female veterans and homeless veterans with children

Permit parents of certain deceased veterans with no spouse or child(ren) to be buried in a national cemetery alongside the veteran

The bill also would require a comprehensive study of best treatment practices for "chronic multi-symptom illness" in Gulf War I veterans and, separately, a study of medical issues of veterans of Post 9/11 conflicts.

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Funeral Assaults on the Constitution

On Oct. 6, the Supreme Court heard the case of Snyder v. Phelps, to determine whether a fringe religious group has a first amendment right to disrupt funerals of slain servicemembers and disperse the dead and their families.

The lawsuit was filed by Mr. Albert Snyder, father of fallen Marine Lance Cpl. Matthew Snyder. The protestors explicitly proclaimed their intention to hijack Cpl. Snyder's funeral. They stood at the church entrance, forcing the procession to be re-routed. They published a libelous "Epic" about the Snyder family.

They harassed the family and funeral-goers with signs saying, "You're going to Hell" and "Thank God for dead soldiers," and brandished depictions of homosexual activity.

Simply put, this case is about grievous injury and intentional harm inflicted on a family as the result of an unlawful protest at their son's funeral. Mr. Snyder contends that his grieving family deserves redress for the terrible emotional damage inflicted on them by extreme and outrageous conduct.

MOAA passionately concurs.

You Asked For It: MOAA Answers Your Questions

Did Congress recently pass legislation that allows a big increase in VA disability pay?

No. An e-mail making its rounds on the internet claims that new legislation will dramatically increase veterans' disability compensation - in some cases by more than 100 percent.

But it's a hoax. The bill it cites (H.R. 4667, the Veterans' Compensation Cost-of-Living Act of 2010) was recently passed by Congress, but it only authorizes the same COLA increase for VA beneficiaries that will be paid to Social Security annuitants this year (which almost certainly will be zero). Unfortunately, a prankster created a fake version of the bill, put it out on the internet and it quickly turned viral.

MOAA's LEGISLATIVE UPDATE for October 15, 2010:

Near-Record Recruiting Year.

The Pentagon announced this week that each of the active duty Services met or exceeded their recruiting goals, both in quantity and quality, for fiscal year 2010.

People Program Attacks from Left and Right.

This week 57 members of Congress wrote the National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility & Reform urging the commission to include substantial defense spending cuts in its December 1 recommendations.

The commission is looking at all aspects of government spending including Social Security, Medicare, defense spending, veteran programs and Congressional pet projects. The commission's recommendations require a consensus from 14 of the 18 members.

The letter from the legislators said, "Cutting the military budget must be a part of any viable proposal" as DoD "...currently takes up almost 56 percent of all discretionary federal spending."

A task force organized by many of the letter-signers previously published a report that outlined initiatives to save \$960 billion over 10 years, including \$100 billion from significant cutbacks in military personnel manpower, retirement and health programs.

On Thursday, three Washington think tanks - Heritage, the American Enterprise Institute and the Foreign Policy Initiative issued a counterproposal calling for defense budget increases, arguing that a smaller military has been charged with growing missions. They also claimed that rising personnel, facilities and equipment costs have led to underfunding procurement and research.

The common point of concern and continuing challenge for MOAA and our members is that both sides are short-sightedly supporting significant military personnel and benefit program cuts to fund their separate pet projects - either non-defense programs or weapons procurement.

TRICARE-26 Update

One big issue (among many others) hanging fire in Congress' delayed action on the FY2011 Defense Authorization Act is authority for military parents to continue TRICARE coverage for their adult children until age 26 if they don't have access to employer health coverage.

As currently written, the language in both the House and Senate versions of the defense bill would allow the Secretary of Defense to charge a premium equal to the full cost of providing the care.

Last week, defense officials announced that premium would be about \$2,400 per child per year - which is less than the \$988 per quarter now charged under TRICARE's Continuing Health Care Benefits Program, but \$2,400 more than non-military parents are paying for this new extra coverage.

Many large private insurance carriers already implemented this coverage as of June 1. Coverage under the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program for federal civilians and Congress will begin as of January 1, 2011. Neither will require a separate premium for the extra child coverage, as the civilian insurers spread the modest extra cost among all the insured.

Because a separate law governs TRICARE, Congress must pass a separate law change to include TRICARE. And defense officials say they have to charge a separate premium because they can't spread the cost among other beneficiaries as civilian insurers do.

If Defense leaders can't fix it, Congress can.

MOAA doesn't believe military parents should have to pay this kind of extraordinary extra premium when other Americans don't, and we're working with sympathetic sponsors on legislation to eliminate it.

When Congress returns in November, we'll be asking our members to urge their legislators to address that in the defense bill.

MOAA's LEGISLATIVE UPDATE for October 22, 2010:

Troops Can Still Vote

New procedures spawned by the Military and Overseas Voter Empowerment (MOVE) Act are making it easier for deployed service men and women to vote this year.

The MOVE Act was added to last year's defense authorization act (P.L. 111-184) to strengthen absentee voters' rights by making states comply with certain federal standards.

Key provisions of the MOVE Act require states to transmit a validly requested ballot to absentee voters at least 45 days before a federal election and mandate that blank absentee ballots be provided electronically in addition to mailed ballots.

Most States have done so. But some, including New York and Illinois, are being sued by the Justice Department for failure to comply with MOVE Act requirements. New York has extended its filing deadline nine days, until November 24.

Absentee military voters who haven't received paper ballots can still download, print and mail their write-in ballots by 1 November. The Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) website provides a federal write-in ballot for each State jurisdiction. DoD FVAP Director Bob Carey says, "[Absentee military voters] can go to FVAP.gov and download that ballot right now."

Defense Bill Delay Jeopardizes Pay Issues

The Senate failed to act on the FY2011 Defense Authorization Act (S. 3454) before adjourning for the November election. So what happens if Congress doesn't finalize the defense bill during the coming lame duck session?

First, currently serving troops would receive the administration-proposed 1.4% pay raise on January 1 rather than the 1.9% raise proposed in the House version of the defense bill. That would be the smallest pay raise since the creation of the all-volunteer force, and MOAA believes the small House plus-up is the least we can do to continue progress toward pay comparability while the country is at war.

<http://echo4.bluehornet.com/ct/9186284:11366214519:m:3:230981068:82E459E3C8A68CABF7CDDDD83FFA0C8FE>





JAYHAWK CHAPTER MOAA



A membership meeting will be held **Tuesday, 16 November 2010**, at the Lawrence Country Club.
Dinner cost is \$20.00/meal.

The Program: *Our guest speaker will be Kathleen Brady, Vice President of Development for the National World War I Museum at Liberty Memorial in Kansas City.*

Social Hour: 1800 hours **Dinner:** 1845 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, 11 November 2010**, 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.kansasmooa.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

2010 Jayhawk MOAA Calendar:

Tuesday 16 November MOAA meeting

2011 Jayhawk MOAA Calendar:

Tuesday 18 January MOAA meeting

Tuesday 15 March MOAA meeting

Tuesday 17 May MOAA meeting

Tuesday 19 July MOAA meeting

*WISHING YOU ALL A JOYOUS
THANKSGIVING,
AND
MERRY CHRISTMAS !!!*



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

IN GOD WE TRUST