



Jayhawk Chapter MOAA Newsletter



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May Program:

Our guest speaker will be member LTC Mike Devlin, who will give a talk about Africa.

★★★★★ CHAPTER
awarded for
2002 / 2003 / 2005 / 2008
2009 / 2010 / 2011 / 2012 / 2013

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

President's Comments. . .

It is hard to believe that a third of 2015 has already passed, and it has been busy.

More than 160 MOAA leadership members from across the country participated in "Storm The Hill" Day in Washington D.C. on April 15th and contacted almost every member of Congress to present the MOAA position on military pay and benefits, cuts in housing allowance and commissary savings, and increases for out-of-pocket payments for health care. These same messages were expanded upon by COL Barry Wright, USA (Ret), Director, MOAA Council and Chapter Affairs at the Kansas MOAA Council of Chapters meeting held in Topeka on April 18th. More information is available on these topics in the monthly "Military Officer" magazine, and in the periodic e-mails sent by MOAA and/or forwarded by Col. Halladay. I encourage all to read these communications, and state your support for them by communicating with your elected representatives.

With April and May we have the arrival of spring, Commencements, and the starting of new careers for large numbers of (primarily) young people. There are also the Awards Ceremonies for the three ROTC Units at KU. I hope you had the opportunity to attend one or more of them. There also will be that most important day of Commissioning the new 2nd Lieutenants and Ensigns. A Joint Commissioning Ceremony for the K.U. ROTC Graduates is scheduled for Monday, May 18th at 10:00 am at the Kansas Union Ballroom. Please consider attending if this fits into your calendar.

Speaking of awards, David Darwin, LTC, USA (Ret), President of the MOAA Kansas Council of Chapters, recently implemented a program to recognize deserving Chapter Members with a KCC Certificate of Merit. Congratulations to COL John Halladay, USA (Ret), for receiving this award at the April 18th KCC meeting.

I look forward to seeing you at our Dinner Meeting on Tuesday, May 19th.

Mike



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1 May 2015

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* Reservations should be sent
to Jim Cooper by
14 May



JAYHAWK CHAPTER NEWS

REMINDER: Chapter Dues (\$20.00) were due in January.

Please send your check to CAPT (Ret) Jim Cooper, 1115 Stone Meadows Drive, Lawrence, KS 66049-3961

DIRECTORY NOTE: Anyone who does not have a picture in the Directory (or who would like to have a different picture), please send us a picture by e-mail – (jwhalladay@sunflower.com)

THIS IS THE LAST CALL – THE DIRECTORY WILL BE DISTRIBUTED AT THE MAY MEETING.
IF YOU HAVE ANY CHANGES – ADDRESS, TELEPHONE, E-MAIL, ETC.,
YOU NEED TO GIVE US A CALL (843-6184) RIGHT AWAY!!!

* * * * *

Dean and Judy Bevan spent a pleasant February week in the relative warmth of the Gulf Coast, at Fort Morgan, Alabama (not a working fort, but the location of a former coastal artillery battery). We joined the locals in attending Mardi Gras parades, complete with plastic beads and Moon Pies.

Dean spent the month of April on stage at Theatre Lawrence in "Explorers Club," playing the Private Secretary to Queen Victoria.

From John Halladay: Talked to Erv Hodges on 24 April and he is feeling better. Things are finally healing. Keep him in your prayers!

I also talked to Gerry Rutledge. He is getting along pretty good with his new medicine, but we also need to keep him in our prayers. Plans are that they are moving to Indianapolis in May to be closer to their daughter for medical assistance.



In March, **Graham Kreicker**, Col. USMCR Ret., was in Selma, Alabama, for the 50th Anniversary observance of "Bloody Sunday" and the original civil rights march to Montgomery. He heard the President speak and joined 26,000 others in a symbolic crossing of the Edmund Pettus Bridge. He also completed a re-enactment of the 54-mile march from Selma to Montgomery, saying the exercise did him good at age 78.

From Charles Heller: I spoke at the Robert Dole Center for Politics on March 31st at the invitation of Barbara Ballard. My talk was on George L. Stearns, a wealthy Massachusetts lead pipe manufacturer and abolitionist who organized aid relief to Kansas Free Soilers, visited Lawrence, major financial backer of John Brown, active in Emancipation, recruiter of the 54th Massachusetts (film *Glory*), commissioned by Sec War Stanton as a Major and Assistant Adjutant General for the recruitment of colored troops, active in the push for the 13th, 14th and 15th amendments, friend of the Concord Literati and so on.

From Jim Cooper: Sandy and I flew to Saigon on March 25th/26th to fulfill a 50-year goal of mine: to return to the Pearl of the Orient. I served in Vietnam, but not in uniform: I was a government dependent. My Dad was assigned as the head of Civil Aviation Assistance group at the US Embassy in 1962, and we lived in Saigon until February 1965, when the US Government increased the war effort and evacuated all government-sponsored dependents. Veronica flew down from Japan to join us: we spent four nights in Saigon, four nights in Siem Reap, Cambodia, and four nights in Hanoi. Saigon was very familiar, but the city has grown so much since 1965 that it is almost a new city to me: the familiar landmarks that are still there from the early 1960s have been engulfed by skyscrapers and urban expansion. Saigon, the commercial center of Vietnam, is a very busy, exciting, and exotic city, but welcoming at the same time. Siem Reap is the site of Angkor Wat, the capital of the old Khmer – Angkor empire (800-1300 AD). Cambodia is very poor, and the country's main industry is Angkor Wat-centered tourism. The temple complexes, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, are vast and impressive, and even with three full days we barely scratched the surface. Hanoi is slower-paced than Saigon, it actually reminds me of 1963/1964 Saigon. We toured Hanoi and also spent a night cruising Ha Long Bay, another UNESCO World Heritage Site which is just northeast of Haiphong. Ha Long Bay is notable for its numerous limestone islets, some of which feature caves which were used as shelters during the War. The Vietnamese and Cambodians are very welcoming and friendly, going far out of their way to accommodate and assist visitors, and for most of them, the War is ancient history. There are a lot of tourists in SE Asia, and English comprehension is very widespread. Prices for services, food, and goods are all extremely low, making the area a great bargain destination. Sandy and I intend to return to explore central Vietnam.

**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.**



Army News

LTC Davis McElwain, USA

Greetings Jayhawk Chapter!

On April 18, 2015 the Jayhawk Detachment successfully facilitated and completed the 21st Annual Best Ranger Buddy Competition located at Sesquicentennial Point, Lawrence, KS. This year we had 188 two-person teams participate in the one day event. Schools came from as far east as Georgia and as far west as California. The day started before dawn at 0445 hrs. Cadets lined up to start the 15K Ruck March (which was the qualifying event) and were able to finish just in time for Kansas spring storms to make an appearance. Although training was halted for a couple of hours, the Jayhawk Detachment resumed the day's events once the all clear was given. 158 qualifying teams continued the next phase of the competition by competing in situational lanes that focused on technical and tactical skills that challenged cadets' problem-solving skills and mental agility under pressure. The event ended in a 2-3 mile Buddy Run.

Ultimately three teams in each category, Male/Male, Female/Female, and COED placed. First place Male Team went to the University of Kansas, CDT Nathan Edgar and CDT Parker Pezatti.

Second place Male team went to Iowa State. Third place Male team went to the University of Iowa. First place female team went to St. John's University (MN). Second place female team went to Wheaton College. Third place female team went to Minnesota State. (Mankato). Finally the first place COED team honors went to ST. John's University. Second place COED team went to Marquette. Third place COED team went to University of Central Missouri.

This elite event is for top-notch cadets to compete in and a way to encourage excellence and focus on those skills that will best prepare them for a career as a 2nd Lieutenant. Additionally this continues to be an excellent Spring event to keep the Ranger Challenge Team technically proficient and continue their high level of training.



Pictured Left to Right Cadets Pezatti and Edgar. First Place Male Ranger Buddy Competition Winners.

Rock Chalk Black Hawk!

Jayhawk Detachment cadets started their Annual Spring Combined Leadership Training Exercise with a unique training opportunity. KU Cadets caught a lift to Fort Riley on Thursday April 5, 2015 on a formation of UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters. Six of the helicopters flew in formation over campus at 11:30 a.m. and landed at Shenk Recreational Sports Complex, where

cadets — who marched to the fields from the Military Science Building on KU's main campus — boarded and flew to Fort Riley for training.

Huey helicopters landed next to Robinson Center for an exercise in the 1980s, but Thursday was the first time Black Hawk helicopters had landed on campus.

The exercise benefitted our cadets in two ways. It served as transportation to Fort Riley to start the weekend exercise and it also allowed cadets exposure to helicopter operations. Approximately half of our 100 participating cadets had never ridden in helicopters before, which added to the excitement of the weekend's planned activities.

One of the greatest benefits to the community was a rare opportunity for the public to catch a glimpse of cadets training and an opportunity for the Active Duty component to provide valuable training to our future leaders. Rock Chalk Black Hawk!

Spring 2015 Army ROTC Commissionees

At the end of Spring 2015 Semester, the Jayhawk Detachment will commission ten 2nd Lieutenants: CDT Jeffrey Ahle, from Lawrence KS, majored in global and International Studies. He will receive his active duty commission into the Signal Corps. CDT Selina Bocanegra, from Donna, TX majored in Kinesiology. She will receive her active duty commission as a Field Artillery Officer. CDT Ryan Cerutti, from ST. Louis, MO majored in Political Science. He will receive his active duty commission into the Ordnance Corps. CDT Alex Chartrand is from Overland Park, KS. He majored in Political Science and will receive his National Guard Commission as an Engineer Officer. CDT Nathan Edgar is from Greenleaf, KS. He studied Political Science and will receive his active duty commission as an Infantry Officer. CDT Kendall Gregg is from Sacramento, CA. She majored in Biology and will receive her Active Duty commission as a Field Artillery Officer. CDT Ian Griffith is from Short Hills, NJ. He majored in Secondary Education and will receive his Active Duty commission as a Field Artillery Officer. CDT Garret Hardon is from Hutchinson, KS and majored in Business Administration. He will receive his National Guard Commission as a Military Intelligence Officer. CDT Jacob McKnight is from Roeland Park, KS. He is majoring in Pharmacy and will receive his commission as a Medical Services Officer upon graduation. Finally, CDT Christopher Wilson is from Fredericktown, MO. He is majoring in Criminal Justice and will receive his Active Duty Commission as a Field Artillery Officer.

The Jayhawk Detachment will have a commissioning ceremony for our cadets May 18, 2015 at the base of the

Campanile. Congratulations to each of them and we wish them the best!

Check out our website at www.armyrotc.ku.edu for more details on these events, and take a look here

<http://armyrotc.ku.edu/2015-ranger-buddy-competition>.

Additionally, find us on Facebook

<http://www.facebook.com/KUArmyROTC> and follow us on

Twitter: http://twitter.com/KU_ArmyROTC

WE BUILD LEADERS!

ALL IN!

JAYHAWKS LEAD THE WAY!



LTC Davis McElwain



Navy News CDR Chris Higginbotham, USN



Greetings from the Jayhawk Navy!

April has remained busy, despite a short time remaining in the semester for the NROTC Battalion. During the early part of the month a new Battalion staff was chosen out of a list of great candidates for next year. We also honored the Midshipmen's success during our annual awards ceremony.

The upcoming year's Battalion staff was chosen amongst a tough group of individuals. We would like to congratulate 2015-2016 Battalion Commanding Officer and Battalion Executive Officer, MIDN Marley Fisher and MIDN Stephen Walker. Both individuals are eager to begin in their new roles and we are excited to see the benchmark they set for success during their tenure. After a complete handover with this year's staff, they will begin planning for next year.

On April 15th, the Jayhawk Battalion held its annual awards ceremony in Woodruff Auditorium of the Kansas Union. We recognized the Midshipmen and Officer Candidates



who have stood out as exemplary leaders within the Battalion, and more importantly in the classroom. I would like to extend a

sincere thank you to all the organizations who continue to support our Midshipman in multiple ways but

particularly that night through a presentation of 28 awards. It was also great to see the families of Midshipmen in attendance, without their support we would not have such a successful set of future officers. At the conclusion of the ceremony, the nine seniors who will be commissioned in May were recognized ending four years of their hard work.

The date has been set and the Jayhawk Battalion will be hosting neighboring University of Nebraska NROTC on April the 25th for a drill-friendly competition. Four events have been scheduled which include shooting, the obstacle course, paintball, athletic competitions, and will conclude with a BBQ before they depart. Through this drill meet we hope to re-establish the competitions that used to take place between neighboring units. Utilizing this competition as a benchmark for next year, the Jayhawk Battalion has set its sights on hosting a Drill Meet in which multiple NROTC Units would attend.

Next month brings the excitement of graduation and commissioning for our seniors before they depart for the fleet.

As always thank you for your support for our battalion.

Rock Chalk and Go Navy!

CDR Chris Higginbotham



Air Force News

LtCol Brian Salmans, USAF

Greetings from Det 280, the Flying Jayhawk Wing,

We have had a great semester and as it comes to a close I would like to bring your attention to our graduating class. This May eight of our cadets will be commissioning into the world's finest Air Force.

1. Justin Berndt came to KU from Wichita Falls, TX. He is graduating with a degree in aerospace engineering. He will be going to Vance AFB, OK, for his pilot training. When asked about graduation he said, "I'm excited for the next adventure!" Traveling to Europe is next on his list of things to do.
2. Alexander Del Curto is from Oakdale, CA. He is graduating from Benedictine College with a degree in political science. He will be a logistics officer at Travis AFB, CA. He is very excited to be stationed only 90 miles from this family in California. Goals for the future include attending law school and serving as an Air Force JAG.
3. Blake Denniston came to KU from Walnut Creek, CA. He is graduating with a degree in business administration and will be well prepared for his first assignment as an acquisitions officer. He will be assigned to Los Angeles AFB, CA. Cadet Denniston is excited for the next adventure and plans to quickly begin pursuing a master's degree in business administration or finance.
4. Peter Gordon came to KU from Wichita, KS. He is graduating with a degree in electrical engineering. He has been designated a cyberspace operations officer and will be heading to Keesler AFB, MS, for his training. When asked about graduation and commissioning he quickly replied, "Excited to graduate and join the active duty Air Force!" Next on his list? "Get a master degree in Computer Sciences and live my life to the fullest."
5. Teddy Oteba came to KU from Jersey City, NJ. He is graduating with a degree in business administration. He will be a finance officer at Los Angeles AFB, CA, for his first assignment. When asked about commissioning he quickly replied, "Can't wait for what's in store for me!" Graduate school is next on his list of personal and professional goals.

6. Franklin Painter came to KU from Overland Park, KS. He is graduating with a degree in communications. He will be going to Vance AFB, OK, for his pilot training. When asked about graduation he said, "I can't believe it's finally here!" His next goals are to become an F-16 pilot and land an overseas assignment.
7. Cassandra Post came to KU from Manassas Park, VA. She is graduating with a degree in computer engineering. She has been designated a cyberspace operations officer and will be heading to the Air Force Institute of Technology at Wright-Patterson AFB, OH, to complete her master's degree in cyberspace operations. Goals she has for herself are running a half marathon and traveling to Egypt, Israel, Korea, Alaska and Australia.
8. John Toner came to KU as an Army brat but claims Kansas as home. He is graduating with a degree in aerospace engineering. He will be going to Vance AFB, OK, for his pilot training. When asked about commissioning he quickly replied, "I am ecstatic that commissioning is almost here, been waiting a long time! Next on his list of goals are, "Getting through UPT and picking up a fighter slot!"
9. Kyla Thrasher came to KU from Lansing, KS. She is graduating with a degree in linguistics. She will be a nuclear missile officer and will be heading to Vandenberg AFB, CA, for training. When asked what she thought about graduation and commissioning she enthusiastically stated, "Ready and Excited!" Graduate school is her next goal.

MOAA Jayhawk Chapter, thank you again for your support in our mission of educating and training our Air Force's future officers.

Very Respectfully,

Capt Dave Rogers

**Assistant Professor of Aerospace Studies
Air Force ROTC Det 280 University of Kansas**

KANSAS STATE LEGISLATURE

submitted by Timothy Hornik

With the current Kansas legislature in recess until April 29th, here is a brief look at military and Veteran related bills. This information comes from the Kansas Legislative Research Department and supplemental notes.

The Kansas Legislature passed three items related to Service Members and Veterans. SB 127 honors 2nd Lieutenant Justin L Sisson, who was killed in action in June 2013 in Afghanistan, by memorializing the portion of US Highway 69 between 135th Street and continues to 167th

Street in Johnson County. Lieutenant Sisson died as the result of a suicide car bomber while with 1st Battalion, 506th Infantry Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division. A second roadway honorarium was granted through HB2103. Bridge number 14(030) in Clay county is designated the Vietnam Veterans Bridge in tribute to all our Vietnam Veterans, who after 50 years, we proudly welcome home. Finally, HB2006 provides free parking to all Veterans with a disabled Veteran license plate at any monitored public parking lot if parked in a disabled spot.

Ten other pieces of legislation either await further testimonies and hearings, have stalled, or still exist in name only. Two bills aid our peers in their continued service or while transitioning into civilian life. HB2228 is an instate tuition legislation MOAA testified in favor for, that places Kansas in compliance with the Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act of 2014. Similarly, HB2154 contains language similar to HB2228, but also allows private employers the right to create a Veterans hiring preference policy to stimulate Veteran employment. Additionally, this bill requires employers to reinstate National Guardsmen activated upon their return. The prior state statutes only referred to the Kansas military force called up for duty. With both of these bills not passing yet, their impact on the 2015-2016 school year will be limited, even if retroactive.

The next three bills could create Veteran benefits. HB2077 would exempt Veterans with a VA disability rating of 100% from paying property tax on up to two personally owned non-commercial vehicles. SB238 clarifies Kansas homestead tax policies that stipulates any VA disability compensation rated 15% or greater cannot be used in determining homestead taxes. For those who earned the Army of Occupation Medal or the Navy Occupation Service Medal, HB2252 would create the Armed Occupation Forces license plates.

HB2020 HB2243 targets family and dependents of Service Members. HB2020 would restrict Home and Community Based Services from the Department of Aging and Disability Services from serving the families of

Active Duty Service Members who are not making Kansas their principal place of residency. This further limits state resources for disabled children, this time focusing on Service Members who might not desire to remain in Kansas. Differently, HB2243 prevents any Kansas high school athletics program from barring students of Service Members from enrolling due to PCS'ing, allowing them to participate in part of a season.

For judicial matters, SB12 extends legal protections over Veterans and Service Members who committed a crime and the judge or prosecution believes that the cause for the crime stems from a behavioral health condition, like PTSD or depression; poly-trauma; or traumatic brain injury from combat. The Service Member or Veteran will receive an option to undergo therapeutic treatment, in stead of incarceration, similar to Veteran courts in other states. This coincides with advocacy efforts to establish a Veterans legal assistance office at the University of Kansas by the Graduate Military Programs and KU Veterans Alumni Chapter. Looking at the Kansas Code of Military Justice, SB290 lessens type of corrective actions Commanders may employ. The supplemental note did not indicate if any Veterans or military service organizations participated in the hearing or submitted any feedback, leading one to question the validity for these changes.

On a final note, the next proposed bill demonstrates a legislative tactic whereby a Congressman guts a bill and inserts the language of a completely unrelated bill. The bill retains the number and original name as introduced, confusing anyone looking just at the surface. H Sub 112 originally enabled Service Members and/or their Dependents with a professional licensure new guidelines to apply for reciprocity or other status to continue practicing. It was gutted and substituted with a bill impacting discretions against wildlife and parks. Please note that unlike the other bills discussed with the designation of HB or SB, this bill received the identifiers H Sub to indicate a substitution.

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 Legislative Update, 13 March 2015: Pay and Retirement

Recommendation 4: Increase efficiency within the Reserve Component by consolidating 30 Reserve Component duty statuses into 6 broader statuses

MOAA Position – MOAA supports the recommendation but believes the final number of statuses requires vetting with the reserve component to ensure service members are provided proper credit for their duty.

MOAA Legislative Update, 20 March 2015: SecDef Warns of Pay Cuts:

On Mar. 18, Secretary of Defense Ash Carter issued a dire warning to Congress if it fails to repeal sequestration: the military may start cutting pay.

The services have already begun to cap pay, providing nominal pay raises that fail to match private sector wage growth, but this is the first time the Department of Defense has talked of actually reducing base pay for servicemembers.

"Everything ... is on the table," said Carter. "We could be forced to consider pay cuts, not just cuts in the growth of compensation."

"No portion of our budget can remain inviolate."

Defense hawks on both sides of the aisle are seeking relief from sequestration budget cuts.

TRICARE has its Faults but can be Improved with Congressional Leadership

Problems in TRICARE like rising costs, barriers to access, and lack of customer service in certain areas, can be addressed in a systematic manner without resorting to its elimination. The elimination of TRICARE would be akin to "throwing out the baby with the bath water" and does not get to the root of the problems. The recent MHS Review produced a baseline starting point.

The time is ripe to institute change. The development of a new set of TRICARE contracts, set to start in 2017, is about to commence bidding. The Request for Proposal (RFP) seeks industry bidders and additional input has gone out. Now would be an opportune time to institute innovative ideas from industry.

One area where the commission proposal to use an FEHBP-like program could be productive is for Guard and Reserve members and their families. We have long sought to bridge the health care continuity gap between and during periods of activation. As Guard and Reserve family members are not usually subject to frequent relocations and typically prefer to keep their employer coverage, the FEHBP-like concept would be more fitting for this population, including providing these families an option for an allowance to cover their civilian employer coverage during periods of deployment.

By effective rationalization of the current military health care infrastructure, great savings can be gained with resulting better quality of care for beneficiaries. It simply does not make sense to keep open facilities with minimal inpatient occupancy.

For the continuous development of the future MHS and TRICARE, DoD would benefit from frequent dialog with leaders in

the health care industry. A regularly scheduled forum could be modeled after the existing Defense Health Board (DHB), focused on industry best-practices from all sectors. A forum like this could also leverage ideas from the commission and beneficiary engagement.

Lastly, targeted investment should be made in technologies and people to support established joint processes and procedures that will generate real return on investment.

MOAA Position – Recommendation requires further analysis and study.

Recommendation: Improve support for service members' dependents with special needs by aligning services offered under the Extended Care Health Option (ECHO) to those of state Medicare waiver programs

We applaud the commission in addressing the unique challenges faced by military families with special needs. However, we believe it will be important to examine a transitional benefit for those who have depended on this program and will find themselves at the bottom of state Medicaid lists upon separation or retirement.

The critical benefit must be provided to members of all seven of the uniformed services. Additionally, MOAA is concerned that Guard and Reserve families may have a difficult time transitioning in and out of the ECHO program. Finally, we believe it is important to consider a transitional benefit (1-3 years) for vulnerable families as they leave active duty service.

MOAA Position – MOAA supports the recommendation.

Recommendation: Improve collaboration between DoD and VA by enforcing coordination on electronic medical records, a uniform formulary for transitioning service members, common services, and reimbursements

From our perspective, a single uniform formulary would be beneficial only if the formulary is larger to meet the needs of both beneficiary populations.

We believe the commission failed to adequately address access to National Guard medical records will be ensured, which are property of the respective states and difficult to obtain. Additionally, it is still unclear how DoD and VA interface with private providers to keep military records accurate and up-to-date if the Reserve Component is transitioned to TRICARE Choice.

MOAA Position – MOAA supports the recommendation.

VA Eases Health Care Rules:

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) continues their effort to ease the administrative requirements that saddle veterans attempting to receive VA benefits and services.

This week VA Secretary Robert McDonald announced the VA is changing the way it determines eligibility for health care.

The VA no longer requires veterans to disclose their net worth. Net worth is determined by combining a veteran's income and assets. Prior to this decision, a veteran's net worth was used to determine eligibility for health care and cost of copays.

In yesterday's announcement, the VA will now consider a veteran's gross household income and deductible expenses as factors for determining health care eligibility and cost responsibility.

The elimination of the net worth criteria means lower income, non-service connected veterans will pay less money out of pocket for care.

MOAA is encouraged by the announcement. "According to the VA, 190,000 more veterans will see their health care costs reduced over the next five years because of these rule changes," said MOAA Deputy Director for Government Relations, Cdr. René Campos, USN (Ret).

Last March, the VA eliminated annual requirements for veterans to report financial information. The VA will now verify veteran income automatically through Internal Revenue Service and Social Security Administration records.

This is good news for the VA as it works hard to rebuild trust with veterans—and great news for veterans because it is one less piece of information they have to remember to provide the VA.

TRICARE Drug Changes Announced:

By: CAPT. Kathy Beasley, USN (Ret.), FACHE, Deputy Director, Government Relations: Specializing in Healthcare Issues

Effective May 1, 2015 TRICARE's revised Compound Drug coverage begins. The TRICARE pharmacy contractor, Express Scripts, will conduct an electronic screen (typically taking less than 5 seconds) of all ingredients in the compound drug to ensure: TRICARE covers it, it's safe and effective and it doesn't exceed the cost standard.

Although the use of compound drugs has increased greatly in recent years, some compound drug ingredients have limited or no evidence that they are safe and effective. If your compound drug does not pass the electronic screen test, your pharmacist can remove or substitute the non-covered ingredient with a covered ingredient or contact your doctor to request a different drug to treat your condition. If neither of those options will work, your doctor can also request a Prior Authorization for the compound drug.

TRICARE beneficiaries taking a compound drug likely to be impacted by the change will receive a letter explaining the new process for screening compound drugs and what steps they should follow.

MOAA Legislative Update, 27 March 2015:

MOAA Testifies on Commission Proposals:

MOAA testified beside several other military advocacy groups concerning recent recommendations by the Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission (MCRMC).

Panelists split over proposals that would dramatically alter retirement benefits.

Speaking before the House Armed Services Committee, MOAA's Director of Government Relations, Col. Mike Hayden, USAF (Ret) questioned whether proposals to shift servicemembers into a 401k retirement system "will encourage more people to leave or stay."

"We are very concerned that the new system lacks the drawing power to sustain service members to 20 years of service," Hayden stated.

The success of the commission's proposal is completely dependent on the financial literacy of the force. Unfortunately, by the commission's admission, only 12 percent of servicemembers surveyed said that they received financial information from their command or installation.

The proposal also stops government contributions for those who serve more than 20 years of service. For troops who choose to stay on past the 20-year mark, the lifetime loss in retirement value could be dramatic.

HASC Personnel Subcommittee Chair, Joe Heck (R-Nev.), echoed MOAA's concerns. "As Colonel Hayden pointed out, when you retire at 20, the amount that you are going to get paid from year 20 until you've reached full retirement age is going to be less than you otherwise would get; in some cases, significantly less."

Further divisions over health care

Panelists also offered differing views on the MCRMC's health care proposals.

The MCRMC proposes privatizing TRICARE. Family members and retirees would be moved into a health care system similar to one used by federal civilians. Active duty personnel would continue to receive care on base and would receive a health care allowance to pay for family plans.

While some of the groups testifying were receptive to the idea of increased access and choice, the commission's proposal

envisions retirees and family members paying four times more in health care costs.

Moving beneficiaries into a civilian-style health plan is detrimental to military medical readiness. In separate testimony earlier in the day, Army Surgeon General Patricia Horoho said, "Any radical departure from our combat-tested system would degrade readiness in an environment where our next deployment could be tomorrow."

Servicemembers deployed across the world should not have to worry whether they have selected the appropriate health care coverage. They are not in a position to absorb the risk of a plan not working.

Instead of dismantling TRICARE, MOAA believes the appropriate way forward is to create a unified medical command. A unified medical command will save money without negatively affecting beneficiaries.

"Without a unified budget or oversight authority," Hayden said, "TRICARE will remain stove-piped and sub-optimized."

The commission and MOAA both seek the same objective: to provide the necessary pay and benefits needed to sustain the all-volunteer force more effectively and efficiently.

Changes this drastic, however, demand a measured approach to ensure the right strategy-based decisions are made for the right reasons, and MOAA appreciates the opportunity to provide analysis.

February COLA Released:

The March Consumer Price Index of 231.055 increased 0.7 percent compared to last month. It remains 1.4 percent below the FY 2014 COLA baseline.

The Consumer Price Index for April 2015 is scheduled to be released on May 22, 2015.

Note: Military retiree COLA is calculated based on the CPI for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Works (CPI-W), not the overall CPI. Monthly changes in the index may differ from national figures reported elsewhere.

Recommendation: Better prepare service members for transition to civilian life by expanding education and granting states more flexibility to administer the Jobs for Veterans State Grants Program

MOAA Position – MOAA supports the recommendation

Recommendation: Ensure Service members receive financial assistance to cover nutritional needs by providing them cost-effective supplemental benefits

MOAA Position – MOAA supports the recommendation.

Recommendation: Measure how the challenges of military life affect children's school work by implementing a national military dependent student identifier

Presently, there is no nationwide data on educational performance and attendance of military dependents. Implementing a way to track military dependent students is important when considering the unique needs of military families.

MOAA Position – MOAA supports the recommendation.

Note: Military retiree COLA is calculated based on the CPI for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Works (CPI-W), not the overall CPI. Monthly changes in the index may differ from national figures reported elsewhere.

Military's Top Medical Leaders Sound Off:

The Surgeons General of the Army, Navy, and Air Force issued the biggest rebuke yet on proposed changes to radically transform military health care benefits.

In testimony before the Senate Appropriations Committee, the military's top medical officials said that recommendations to privatize TRICARE would negatively affect military readiness.

"The unintended consequences could be severe," said MOAA's Deputy Director of Government Relations Capt. Kathy Beasley, USN (Ret).

VA Changes Affect Some TFL Users

A rule change will now allow twice as many veterans to become eligible for a new VA program.

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced on Mar. 25 that it is relaxing its determination of driving distance for eligibility in the Choice Program.

Congresswoman Stefanik Speaks to MOAA Spouses:

MOAA's 12th Military Spouse Symposium, "Keeping a Career on the Move®," took place on March 23, 2015 in Alexandria, Virginia. Congresswoman Elise Stefanik (R-N.Y.) joined the symposium, acting as the keynote speaker.

Congresswoman Stefanik brings a fresh perspective to Congress, and at age 30 years, she is the youngest woman ever elected to the House. She was also appointed to the House Committee on Armed Services in January 2015.

Stefanik prioritizes her focus on the military community, as Fort Drum is located within her district. She emphasized her understanding and appreciation of military spouses who "face burdens in maintaining [their] careers," stating that, "we must recognize the economic impact military spouses face" due to the unique requirements of military service.

The Congresswoman is one of many legislators who understand the destructive impact sequestration has on the military and Department of Defense.

During her freshman year, Stefanik has taken a strong stance on repealing sequestration. She acknowledges that the harmful effects of this legislation leave military families "under constant worry" and uncertainty.

MOAA Legislative Update, 03 April 2015:

White House Signals Support for Change:

The White House has given cautious support for proposed changes to military retirement and benefits proposed by the Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission (MCRMC).

In a March 30 letter sent to Congress, the administration said that the proposed changes to the current system offered by the Commission are an, "important step forward in protecting the long-term viability of the All-Volunteer Force, improving quality-of-life for service members and their families, and ensuring the fiscal sustainability of the military compensation and retirement systems." The administration is working with the commission to refine specific proposals and said it will report its findings to Congress by April 30.

Before supporting any of the sweeping changes to military retirement and benefits, MOAA encourages the administration to consider testimony given by MOAA before the House Armed Services Personnel Subcommittee on March 25.

Under the MCRMC's retirement proposal, servicemembers will receive a 20 percent reduction in military retired pay, in addition to matching government contributions in the federal Thrift Savings Plan.

When considering these sweeping changes, it is important to remember that modifications to military compensation and retirement programs have resulted in detrimental recruiting and retention rates in the past.

Carter Appeals to Next Generation of Recruits:

Secretary of Defense Ash Carter traveled the East Coast this week to unveil his "Force of the Future" initiative. The initiative suggests changing the way the DoD recruits, promotes, and retains personnel, but offers few specifics or clear proposals.

According to Carter, about 250,000 new people need to enter the service every year for the military to keep up with recruiting goals. Currently, two-thirds of Americans aged 17-21 are ineligible from joining the service due to entry exam scores, physical fitness requirements, or character issues. In order to appeal to the reduced talent pool, Carter thinks changes are needed within the current structure of the force.

"We're concerned with how some of these initiatives are going to impact the vast majority of those currently serving," said MOAA's Deputy Director of Government Relations, Col. Mike Barron, USA (Ret). "Some of the proposals sound good in theory, but would be very difficult in practice."

New Bill for Military Survivors:

Representative Joe Wilson (R-S.C.) recently introduced H.R. 1594, the Military Surviving Spouse Equity Act. The bill repeals a law known as the "widow's tax," an unfair penalty that forces thousands of military survivors to forfeit their earned benefits.

Under current law, military survivors forfeit part of or their entire military Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) annuity when receiving Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) from the Department of Veterans Affairs.

The two programs serve very different purposes.

SBP is a program administered by the Department of Defense that allows uniformed service retirees to elect to provide continuing financial support for an eligible survivor.

DIC is paid to survivors of servicemembers who die while on active duty, or to survivors of retirees who die of service-connected illness.

MOAA thinks that when military service causes a member's death, indemnity compensation from the VA should be paid *in addition to* SBP coverage, not subtracted from it.

"We're thankful to Wilson for reintroducing this important legislation," said MOAA's Deputy Director of Government Relations, Col. Phil Odom, USAF (Ret). "As chair of the House Armed Services Personnel Subcommittee, his support carries considerable weight."

We continue to work with our contacts in the Senate to introduce similar legislation.

MOAA Legislative Update, 10 April 2015:

Senior Enlisted Advisors Weigh In:

Another group of military leaders spoke out against proposals to overhaul military pay and benefits.

In March, top military medical leaders spoke out against the Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission's (MCRMC) proposals to privatize TRICARE, citing concerns over military medical readiness.

Now, several recently retired senior enlisted advisors (SEA) have come together in a *Military Time's* op-ed voicing caution over retirement proposals advanced by the MCRMC. Citing their responsibility to serve as the voice for military members and their families, the SEAs warned the retirement recommendations could leave the servicemembers "shortchanged."

One of the primary concerns with the proposal to convert troops to a 401(k)-like retirement system is the inherent shift in retirement responsibility from DoD to the servicemember. According to the article, "[i]n order to achieve the projected benefit totals in the commission's report a service member would have to make exactly the right decision at several career decision gates."

MOAA has concerns that troops might not make the correct fund selection when planning for retirement. These choices could result in drastically lower returns than what the commission projected. Few of the funds available through the Thrift Savings Plan provide the necessary returns to match the commission's expectations.

Under the MCRMC proposal, a servicemember assumes all of the investment risk of his or her defined contribution (DC) portfolio. The value of the available benefit is dependent on the financial

market, which is a stark difference from the predictable and guaranteed defined benefit (DB) plan.

For nearly 15 years, troops have faced long deployments, often back-to-back. Requiring servicemembers to plan and worry about their retirement when they should be focused on the mission generates an unnecessary burden.

MOAA believes these proposals by the MCRMC require further study. Before changing the retirement system, Congress must fully consider the second- and third-order effects on the all-volunteer force.

Claims Backlog Improves:

The VA claims backlog fell to 194,000, a 68 percent reduction from two years ago. In 2013, the VA amassed over 611,000 disability claims. Quality of claims decisions has increased from 83 percent in 2011 to 91 percent today.

Commissaries Attacked Again:

Why are the commissaries under attack by the Department of Defense (DoD) yet again?

The FY 2016 defense budget proposal continues the plan to ultimately reduce the annual commissary subsidy by \$1 billion.

According to a recently released report by the RAND Corporation, "Past and recent proposals to eliminate the subsidy, have been made in the name of reducing the DoD budget."

The National Defense Budget Estimate for Fiscal Year 2016 is approximately \$585 billion. With the proposed commissary cuts only saving .05% of the budget, why does the DoD continue to look at this "important non-pay benefit" as a cost saving measure? These cuts hurt the very people DoD needs to re-enlist at a time when retention is becoming increasingly challenging and those that have already sacrificed and devoted their entire adult lives in service to our nation: retirees.

RAND's conclusion was not surprising: "If the appropriation is eliminated, prices at the commissaries will likely rise and/or stores may no longer be financially viable." The report went on to say that, "raising overall price levels will not be a successful strategy to cover the shortfalls in costs caused by the elimination of the annual Department of Defense appropriation."

MOAA Legislative Update, 17 April 2015:

MOAA Storms The Hill:

Stormers met with their legislators to discuss key military personnel issues that affect the stability of the all-volunteer force and well-being of military families.

MOAA stormers asked their elected officials to:

- * Sustain military pay and benefits;
- * Reject disproportional TRICARE fee increases that shift costs onto beneficiaries while reducing access;
- * Eliminate harmful sequestration cuts, which threaten national security; and
- * Address remaining inequities for disabled retirees, survivors, and recalled Guard and Reserve personnel.

Hill-stormers' personal efforts were bolstered by a full-page ad in *The Hill* newspaper on Wednesday sponsored by MOAA and our partner PenFed Credit Union.

We were gratified at members' response to the alert we sent last Friday asking you to support this effort by emailing your legislators. MOAA members sent nearly 18,000 messages to Capitol Hill, and many legislators and staffers referenced the messages during their meetings with the MOAA stormers.

Permanent End to Doc Fix Ordeal:

On April 16, President Obama signed legislation preventing a 21 percent cut to providers who treat Medicare patients. After returning from a two-week recess, Congress set aside partisan differences and passed a long-term solution to provide stability to doctors who accept Medicare.

Because TRICARE reimbursement rates are tied to Medicare's, this legislation affects TRICARE beneficiaries of all ages.

The legislation is part of an effort to move away from a fee-for-service model and shift towards a value-based payment system.

The fix changes the Sustainable Growth Rate (SGR) formula, a flawed legislative mechanism used to pay medical providers who see Medicare and TRICARE patients. The SGR was designed to incentivize providers to control medical spending by rewarding physicians when the rate of spending on physician services fell below the growth in gross domestic product (GDP). However, medical inflation consistently outpaced overall inflation, leading to scheduled cuts.

Throughout it all, MOAA members sent nearly 1 million messages to their elected officials urging a permanent resolution.

A permanent deal helps sustain Medicare and TRICARE for Life benefits.

"MOAA members can be proud that they did their part to help millions of Americans keep their health providers. With over 1 million messages sent to Congress, one thing is certain: MOAA members represent a powerful voting bloc," said MOAA's Deputy Director for Government Relations, Capt. Kathy Beasley, USN (Ret).

MOAA thanks Congress for coming up with a bipartisan solution to the doc fix ordeal.

MOAA Legislative Update, 24 April 2015: House Committee Rejects DOD Budget Proposals

On April 15, MOAA chapter and council leaders from across the country visited nearly every congressional office to speak out against the DoD's proposed changes to TRICARE, pay and benefits. MOAA members strengthened this initiative by sending their elected officials nearly 44,000 communications reaffirming this message.

The House Armed Services Personnel Subcommittee (HASC-P) listened. On Thursday morning, the Subcommittee released their mark-up of H.R. 1735, the FY 2016 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). None of DoD's proposals to cut pay and benefits were included.

"The mark provides our warfighters, retirees and their families the care and support they need, deserve and earned," said panel chair Joe Heck (R-Nev.).

House Tackles MCRMC Recommendations

The House Armed Services Personnel Subcommittee (HASC-P) embraced controversial changes to military retirement in its version of the FY 2016 defense bill along with several other recommendations of the Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission (MCRMC).

The retirement overhaul combines the existing defined benefit, cliff-vesting retirement plan, with a transportable defined contribution plan. Servicemembers will contribute to a portable Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) account, with a government-matching and government-contribution program.

To pay for the increased costs of a transportable career device for more troops, the proposal slashes the existing military retirement annuity by 20 percent. Although MOAA supports providing a transportable career device for those serving less than 20 years of service, it should not come at the expense of those who stay.

The bill seeks to overhaul the military retirement system by October 2017. Current servicemembers will have the option to opt-in to the new system. Existing retirees will not be affected.

Of the MCRMC's 15 proposed recommendations, the subcommittee addressed 11 of them, including:

- * Modernizing the current military retirement system by blending the existing defined benefit with a defined contribution plan.
- * Requiring the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to establish a joint uniform formulary.
- * Consolidating the current number of Reserve Component status category authorities under which Reserve Component members may be called to duty from 30 to 6 starting in October 2017.

What was not included in the subcommittee mark were several other sweeping recommendations made by the MCRMC, including phasing-out the TRICARE health system in favor of subsidized commercial insurance plans, an additional expensive option for survivors benefits, and the merging of commissary and exchange services.

After speaking at MOAA's Council Presidents' dinner, HASC Chairman Rep. Mac Thornberry (R-Texas) said, "People are our most important thing. We want to get it right."

HASC-P Chair Rep. Joe Heck (R-Nev.) echoed Thornberry's thoughts. "We couldn't do [TRICARE] justice with only a three-month review."

The Dangers of Retirement Reform

Defined contribution plans are unpredictable and contingent on variables like fund choice, rates of return, member contributions, inflation, cost-of-living increases, and other economic factors. The success of the commission's proposal is completely dependent on the financial literacy of the force.

Unfortunately, the MCRMC found that only 12 percent of servicemembers surveyed said that they received financial information from their command or installation.

The subcommittee's embrace of the new retirement proposal came as a surprise to observers. The administration has yet to release its perspective on the MCRMC report, but is expected to respond by the end of April.

MOAA and 21 other associations expressed caution and concern about retirement changes since the MCRMC's report release in January. This kind of major reform requires further study and analysis because of the potential impact a blended system could have on the retention of the mid-grade officer and NCO corps.

"There is some silver lining to this news. The HASC-P rejected the MCRMC's recommendation to stop contributions after 20 years of service. Even so, we are very concerned that this proposal will not retain the skilled, mid-grade NCOs and officers our country needs in the long-run," said MOAA Director of Government Relations Col. Mike Hayden, USAF (Ret).

Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman John McCain (R-Ariz.) looks poised to accept the House's version of retirement reform. "We've been working closely" with the House, McCain said. "We're basing our plan on the recommendations of the commission and we feel comfortable with that."



JAYHAWK CHAPTER MOAA



A membership meeting will be held **Tuesday, 19 May 2015**, at the Lawrence Country Club.

Dinner cost is **\$24.00/meal**.

The Program: *Our guest speaker will be member LTC Mike Devlin, who will give a talk about Africa.*

Social Hour: 1800 hours Dinner: 1845 hours

The Menu: *Salad; Roast Pork Loin with Dijonaise sauce; market vegetables; whipped potatoes; rolls, tea or coffee and brownies*

*Send your reservation and check payable to Jayhawk Chapter MOAA to arrive no later than **Wednesday, 14 May 2015**, 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 Cooper 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 **\$24.00 per meal**. I am enclosing a check for \$ _____ for meal(s).

Chapter Dues (**\$20.00**) were due 01 January 2015 \$ _____

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

**Thank you for receiving
the newsletter via e-mail !!
It saves the Chapter for both
printing and postage.**

Tentative 2015 Meeting Schedule:

Tuesday 19 May 2015
Tuesday 21 July 2015

Tuesday 15 September 2015
Tuesday 17 November 2015

Memorial Day Flag Placement

This year we'll continue placing American flags on veterans' graves at Maple Grove and Pioneer cemeteries. We will meet at Maple Grove to place flags at 0800 on Saturday morning, May 23rd, and will retrieve them at 1730, Monday, May 25th. These tasks are very quick, less than half an hour for either. If you wish to participate, please contact Jim Cooper: (785) 979-7279.



One Association, One Voice. Yours.

*Newsletter Editor
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IN GOD WE TRUST