



# Jayhawk Chapter MOAA Newsletter



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## September Program:

Our speaker will be Walt Frederick, the Kansas Chair of the Employee Support of the Guard and Reserve, from Topeka, who will speak on the ESGR program in Kansas

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## President's Comments. . .

Greetings everyone.

All the kids are back in school and KU is back in session. That means traffic is back in Lawrence.



The Kansas Council of Chapters was briefed by the three KU ROTC departments on the status and health of their departments. Sounds like KU is going to have another excellent year.

I recently attended the American Legion National Convention in Reno. Was fortunate to hear the President speak to us, but more importantly, he was there to sign the Veterans Appeals Improvement and Modernization Act of 2017. This is in partnership with his recent signing of a law allowing the federal government to more easily get rid of bad employees in the Veterans Administration. Both of these actions should continue to give the VA the opportunity to improve their processes and more importantly their ability to continue to give Healthcare to our veterans.

We have a good program coming up the 19th of September. The current director of Kansas Employee Support to the Guard and Reserve committee, Walt Frederick, is going to talk to us about the ESGR program in Kansas. Look forward to seeing everyone there on Tuesday the 19th.

*George*

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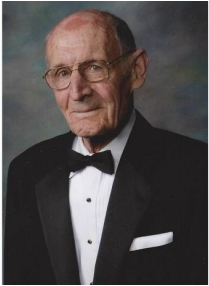
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\* Reservations should be sent  
to Jim Cooper by  
**13 September**



# JAYHAWK CHAPTER NEWS

## CONDOLENCES



LTC. (Ret) William P. Radtke (Bill) of Lawrence, Kansas died Wednesday, August 16th. Bill was preceded in death by his wife, Joyce, and his son, Richard. He is survived by four children, Paul Radtke of Leawood, KS, Terry LaCandia of Naperville, IL, John Radtke of San Francisco, CA and Ann Curry of Anchorage, AK. Bill also has 10 grandchildren and five (5) great grandchildren.

Bill was the youngest son of Roderick and Florence Morgan and was born on July 3rd, 1928 in Columbiana, OH. Both of his parents died when he was still a small child. However, his father's best friend, Paul Radtke and his wife, Lilian, adopted Bill when he was 6 years old. Bill grew up on Lake Milton, OH and married Joyce Williams in August of 1951. They were married for 64 years before her passing two years ago.

Bill attended Virginia Tech and later received his BA from the University of Nebraska at Omaha. He was a dedicated career military man who spent the bulk of his 30 plus years in U.S. Army Special Forces. Bill and Joyce traveled extensively during his military career to Panama, North Carolina, Georgia, California, Okinawa, Thailand, Illinois and Kansas. In addition to these stops, Bill served multiple tours in Vietnam and Cambodia.

A memorial service will be 2:00 pm Sunday, September 17th, at The Smith Center of Brandon Woods Community, 4730 Brandon Woods Terrace in Lawrence, Kansas.

In lieu of flowers please consider donating to Black Diamond Charities in Bill's memory. Black Diamond Charities is a non-profit organization that helps veterans successfully transition to civilian life.

\* \* \* \* \*

## PERSONAL NEWS

John Mosher has a new email address: [jmosher1933@gmail.com](mailto:jmosher1933@gmail.com)

Irene Wilson has moved to 1510 St. Andrews Drive, #127, Lawrence, KS 66047

**From Stan Sneegas:** We made it safely to Pennsylvania. However the Post Office forced us to change our address. Our new one is: PO Box 1051, Pocono Summit, PA 18346-1051  
*[after 10/01/17 (or whenever their new house is finished) their permanent address will be 1036 Freedom Street, Lititz, PA 17543]*

**From Ray Finch:** In early August, I traveled to Augusta, Georgia to give a presentation titled "Russian Information Operations" at the TechNet Augusta 2017 conference, sponsored by the Cyber Center of Excellence at Fort Gordon. While in Augusta, I was hosted by my son (LTC John Finch), my daughter-in-law (Raelean) and grandson (Solomon).

**From Tim Hornik:** The Hornik family proudly welcomes our new addition, Eleanor Rose. Cate delivered her on 17 August at LMH. We arrived home two days later. The delivery occurred without complications, and Eleanor is doing excellent at home. Abby loves having a little sister, and immediately starts to sing or plays the piano whenever Eleanor begins to cry.



As part of the "Civil War on the Western Frontier" programs the week of 13-20 August, **Herschel and Jacque Stroud** presented their portrayal of the John Speer family's experiences during Quantrill's Raid..

**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 Tracey Olson, USA*

### **Greetings Jayhawk Chapter!**

The Jayhawk Battalion had a successful summer training cycle and is looking forward to our fall events as we celebrate our 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary as a program.

This summer, the battalion graduated 23 cadets from Cadet Summer Training Advanced Camp at Fort Knox, Kentucky. The caliber of training included three weeks in the field with a 12-mile foot march at the end. Two cadets also participated in Basic Camp, also held at Fort Knox. The camp focused on developing sophomores in basic soldiering tasks in preparation for their junior year and evaluation next summer at Advanced Camp.

Training brought cadets to all corners of the world. Cadets studied Russian language in Kyrgyzstan and Estonia and participated in Cadet Troop Leader Training (CTLT) in Italy and South Korea. CTLT gives cadets the opportunity to shadow active duty platoon leaders for three weeks as they do day-to-day operations. Cadet Schroer is also our first cadet to successfully pass SAPPER school.



"I enjoyed my time in South Korea," said Cadet Tristan Hayes. "It's a great program that gives you the opportunity to experience the full role and responsibilities of a platoon leader."

Fall semester will be an exciting time for the Jayhawk Battalion. We are currently planning for our semester field training exercise in late September, which will focus on basic rifle marksmanship and tactical exercises. Our Ranger Challenge team looks forward to defending their title at the Third Brigade competition. For the first time, we will be sending a team of cadets to participate in the Army Ten Miler in Washington, D.C.

On October 7, the Jayhawk Battalion Alumni Association (JBAA) will induct prestigious alumni into the JBAA Hall of Fame. Alumni community members are invited to attend. More details to follow soon.

In November, the Jayhawk Battalion will host a German Sergeant Major to conduct the German Armed Forces Proficiency Badge competition to award to new cadets that successfully complete the required events. The competition includes marksmanship, physical fitness, swimming and a ruck march.

To stay informed about activities of the Jayhawk Battalion, like us on Facebook or follow us on Twitter. We hope to see you at the JBAA Hall of Fame Induction on October 7.

Rock Chalk! ALL IN!

***LTC Tracey Olson***  
***Professor of Military Science***



## ***Navy News*** ***CAPT Dave Meron, USN***



### **Greetings from the Jayhawk Navy!**

The summer has been a busy time for the Jayhawk Battalion! Our midshipmen returned from an eventful summer of cruises and training. We also welcomed 11 freshmen into the Battalion through New Student Orientation. This training allowed the freshmen to learn the basics of a career in the Profession of Arms and begin to develop camaraderie amongst themselves. This is a strong class of freshmen and we are excited to kick off another year at KU!

Many members of the Battalion had the opportunity to go out into the fleet and experience life in the Navy and Marine Corps. Our sophomores participated in four weeks of training during CORTRAMID, Career Orientation and Training for Midshipmen. MIDN 3/C Nick Heyroth attended CORTRAMID West located in San Diego, California, where he enjoyed the combat simulator at Camp Pendleton. This provided him with insight to what life is like as a Platoon Commander in the Marine Corps.



MIDN 2/C James Brown attended the Marine Corps' Mountain Warfare training. He hiked over 40 miles, up to an elevation of 11,000 feet. His favorite part of the training was "being in the squad bay cleaning and being able to talk with each other during the evolutions and grow close to my brothers." MIDN 2/C Kurt Wenske had the amazing opportunity to take his summer cruise aboard the USS Ronald Reagan (CVN-76) and visit Australia and Japan. MIDN Wenske said he had the time of his life watching Carrier Air Wing Five in action and getting to see many facets of the Navy at work on board the carrier. MIDN 1/C Briar Belcher completed a major milestone in his Marine Corps career by completing Officer Candidate School in Quantico, Virginia. MIDN Belcher is now well on his way to earning a commission as a Marine and will be training for The Basic School upon graduation and commissioning. Overall, Jayhawk Midshipmen traveled far and wide and accomplished a lot over the few months of summer break!



MIDN Brown at Mountain Warfare Training

On August 14<sup>th</sup>, members of the Jayhawk Battalion began the school year early, supporting New Student Orientation. The staff and student

facilitators prepared a great program challenging the incoming students to learn about themselves and the value of teamwork. The orientation gave the incoming freshman an introduction to both college and military lifestyles. Events included: physical fitness test, third class swim qualification, morning PT, weapons familiarization, and the Adams Challenge Course. At the end of the week, their hard work culminated in their swearing into the Jayhawk Battalion. We look forward to working with them this year.

After the school year starts, the battalion will assemble drill, color guard, pistol, and endurance teams to prepare for upcoming competitions.



SSgt Cobas forms up the freshmen for inspection

To keep updated with the most current events, visit the Jayhawk Battalion's Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/KUNROTC/](http://www.facebook.com/KUNROTC/). Thank you for your continued support of the Jayhawk Battalion!

Rock Chalk and Go Navy!

**CAPT David J. Meron**



## Air Force News LtCol Bill Pastewait, USAF

### Hello from Detachment 280, the Flying Jayhawks!

We are excited to start the new academic year at KU with a new class of cadets. We have 53 new students which is our largest recruiting class in the last decade. We're happy to see all the hard work recruiting last year pay off.



We also added one new staff member to our team. Captain Garrett Carson, a Missile Operations Officer, joins us from Malmstrom Air Force Base in Montana. He is a graduate of Air Force ROTC at Brigham Young University and will be our Education Flight Commander for the Fall semester.

We had one staff member and one cadet participate in AFROTC Field Training this summer. Field Training is currently 19 days, split between Maxwell AFB, Alabama and Camp Shelby, Mississippi. At Camp Shelby, the intent is to

familiarize cadets with a deployed environment and the various leadership challenges that can arise. Major Andrew Robinson supported Air Expeditionary Force-1 as a Flight Training Officer. Cadet Connor Sipe supported Air Expeditionary Force-3 as a Cadet Training Assistant.

We also welcomed back eleven cadets that completed the rigorous Field Training program. Of the cadets, Cadet Garrison Freeman was awarded Distinguished Graduate for being the top cadet in his flight and Cadet Michael Coghlin and Cadet Velia Colunga were awarded Superior Performer for being in the Top-4 cadets in their flights. All eleven cadets now enter our Professional Officer Course program



and are one step closer to receiving their commission as a Second Lieutenant in the Air Force.

### **Detachment update:**

We held our new Student Orientation on 17 – 18 August. This two-day orientation allowed us to offer an introductory Air Force ROTC experience for incoming cadets. We had a great turnout, especially from our cross-town schools.

Finally, Cadet Connor Sipe was awarded the Order of Daedalians Scholarship Award from the

Wichita Kansas Chapter, Air Capital Flight No. 83. This \$1250 scholarship included \$750 from the chapter and \$500 matched nationally.

We have a big year ahead with many new events on the horizon. Thanks again to MOAA Jayhawk Chapter for all the great support with our cadets and the detachment.

Very Respectfully,

***LtCol Bill Pastewait***

Commander, Air Force ROTC Det 280

## **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, 21 July 2017:**

#### Coming Soon: Hearing Aids for Retirees' Dependents

A provision in last year's National Defense Authorization Act gave DoD permission to provide hearing aids, at government cost, to dependents of military retirees. This is great news for retired beneficiaries, who are already eligible for hearing aids through the Retiree At-Cost Hearing Aid Program, popularly known as RACHAP. Now retiree dependents are eligible to use this program too.

#### *Key features of the program:*

- \* Eligible beneficiaries directly purchase hearing aids, utilizing the government contract price through manufactures (at cost). Available at military treatment facilities (MTFs) only.
- \* Cost at the MTF is \$300-\$400 per hearing aid; the average savings to the beneficiary is \$1,600 to \$3,600 per hearing aid.
- \* This is a voluntary program for MTFs. This means individual MTFs are allowed to determine whether they will participate.
- \* Currently, there are 27 MTFs participating in the program, representing all three services and located only in the continental U.S. (CONUS).
- \* Capacity is limited at most MTFs. Active duty servicemembers and their family members have priority.
- \* The program is not a TRICARE benefit.

A hearing aid is considered a medical device, and getting one typically requires a series of three or four appointments with a qualified audiologist or technician for an evaluation, fitting, and follow-up. It's a bit more complicated than obtaining a new pair of eyeglasses. It's also more resource intensive, which is why many MTFs may have limited capacity.

Military Health System officials have approved the new policy and indicated they intend to do a supply-and-demand analysis to determine how and where to expand this popular program. If you are a retiree or retiree dependent interested in the RACHAP program, contact your closest MTF to determine whether they participate and find out how to get an appointment.

### **MOAA Legislative Update, 28 July 2017:**

#### MOAA Statement on Transgender Service Members

President Trump took to Twitter earlier this week to express a desired change to current policies on transgender members of the military.

*"After consultation with my Generals and military experts, please be advised that the United States Government will not accept or allow transgender individuals to serve in any capacity in the U. S. Military. Our military must be focused on decisive and overwhelming victory and cannot be burdened with the tremendous medical costs and disruption that transgender in the military would entail. Thank you."*

#### Congress Poised to Expand Post-9/11 GI Bill Benefits

The Post 9/11 GI Bill might be getting some drastic improvements if the Senate approves a bill passed by the House earlier this week, and if the president signs it into law. The bill would make the following changes that MOAA supported as priorities:

- \* Guard and Reserve members placed on medical hold status now will see that time count toward their eligibility, retroactive to Sept. 11, 2001;
- \* Time spent by Guard and Reserve members on 12304(b) will count toward eligibility, beginning Aug. 1, 2018;
- \* Recipients of the Purple Heart will receive full eligibility, regardless of how much time they have spent on active duty;
- \* Fry Scholarship and Purple Heart recipients now will qualify for the Yellow Ribbon program; Benefits will be restored to veterans whose colleges closed before obtaining their degree; and
- \* If the dependent to whom the benefit was transferred dies, the benefit can be transferred to another dependent.

The bill also would make other changes, including:

- \* Eliminating the 15-year deadline to use the Post-9/11 GI Bill for those who became entitled to it after Jan. 1, 2013;
- \* Providing a monthly stipend on a pro-rated basis for reserve members attending school while also performing active duty service;
- \* Allowing the benefit to be used toward certain licensure and certification tests;

- \* Providing additional benefits for individuals pursuing a STEM (science, technology, engineering, or mathematics) degree;
- \* Creating a High Technology Pilot Program that will provide veterans with the opportunity to use the benefit in high-tech programs of education that do not lead to a degree;
- \* Authorizing use of the benefit toward independent-study programs (such as a technical school); and
- \* Providing for priority enrollment in courses by veterans.

### **MOAA Legislative Update, 04 August 2017:**

#### Will TRICARE changes affect my access to care?

When it comes to upcoming changes to the TRICARE system, one of the top concerns people have is whether it'll be harder to see a doctor when and where they want.

Be sure to check out Part 1 of our series on the new TRICARE changes, which covers who's affected. Part 2 addresses how the new TRICARE enrollment rules will work.

*What are some of the top things MOAA will be looking out for when it comes to these changes?*

Goldberg: I think the No. 1 thing will be families saying they have access to the care they need. If we hear from families that they're not able to see providers they're supposed to see in an adequate amount of time, that's going to be a priority.

*Will any of these TRICARE changes affect people's dental and vision plans?*

Beasley: There aren't going to be any changes to those programs for retirees or family members through this year.

*Have a question about the new TRICARE rules? Send it to [beninfo@moaa.org](mailto:beninfo@moaa.org) and we'll get our subject-matter experts to weigh in.*

#### White House Talks Employment Challenges with Military Spouses

MOAA was invited to the White House this week for a small-group listening session on military spouse employment challenges. The event brought together key administration officials and military spouse employment advocates as well as military spouses currently facing employment and licensure challenges.

The military spouses - representing all services and many different career fields - shared stories of challenges they've faced maintaining careers while married to the military, including multiple moves to new states and countries and acquiring and maintaining licenses in multiple states.

Brooke Goldberg, MOAA's director of military family policy and spouse programs, attended the session, and said she felt "reassured of this administration's commitment to not let military spouses fall into the background."

MOAA provided input on how the federal government can positively influence military spouse career issues. We look forward to working with the administration to alleviate challenges military spouses face as they try to both maintain their own careers and supporting their servicemembers. Here are four ways we believe this administration can help:

- \* Increase number of federal government positions open to use of the Military Spouse Noncompetitive Appointment Authority

In 2008, President George W. Bush issued Executive Order 13473, creating a noncompetitive hiring authority to expedite recruitment of military spouses into federal positions. However, we have found many hiring managers don't know about this authority or are reluctant to use it. We estimate less than 10 percent of federal job postings in the Washington, D.C., area indicate they allow use of the appointment authority for military spouses. The president has the authority to increase the use of this tool. This does not give military spouses a guarantee of employment or a preference like veterans have. It would, however, allow spouses increased opportunity to compete for jobs in the federal work space.

- \* Federal tax breaks for military spouse licensure costs due to PCS across state lines

Since 2010, legislators have been introducing bills that would offset the expenses incurred by military spouses who must apply for a new license due to a permanent change of station (PCS) to a new state. Consistently, these bills, which must be initiated in the House because they are a tax/spending measure, have not been picked up by the House Ways and Means Committee. President Donald Trump has made tax reform a high priority, and he can help military families by making sure a tax credit for these expenses is included in reforms.

- \* Federal tax breaks for employers who hire military spouses

We know that despite the mobile nature of military life, military spouses are not risky hires. Their resilient and adaptable nature make them strong and dedicated employees - but many employers are still reluctant to take a chance. Providing a tax break to those who make this a priority could bring significant growth in private-sector employment, especially with smaller businesses that have hesitated to bring military spouses on board.

- \* Presidential-level support for state use of interstate compacts to support portability

While many states have passed legislation to accommodate licensure portability for military spouses, not all career fields are covered. Approximately half of all job-seeking military spouses want to work in fields requiring a license or certificate, as teachers, medical professionals and techs, or lawyers - all fields regulated by bodies falling outside legislation that's already been passed. One answer is for state-level bodies to join an interstate compact. This protects each state's authority to regulate independently but also allows for portability and increased visibility on professionals working in jurisdictions away from their permanent state of licensure or residence. A little encouragement to states, from a president supportive of states' rights, might go a long way.

### **MOAA Legislative Update, 11 August 2017:**

#### Competing Priorities on Capitol Hill

On the surface, little appears to be happening in Congress during the August recess, but there is a lot going on in Washington, D.C. In fact, enough turmoil has

occurred to justify an unprecedented one-week delay in the Senate's summer recess. Still at issue are unresolved attempts to overhaul the Affordable Care Act, efforts to build bipartisan support for tax reform, a sense of urgency to attend to myriad threats posed by North Korea, and continued military operations abroad.

Missing from the mainstream narrative, however, is the apparent lack of a plan or strategy to fund the government beyond the current fiscal year. Equally concerning, given the growing potential for conflict on multiple fronts, is the lack of focus on the National Defense Authorization Act for FY 2018. The House passed its version of a defense bill in July, well before the recess, and the Senate deferred any decision on its bill until at least September.

*On funding the government.* Lawmakers and defense leaders all have articulated the harmful effects of budget caps and fiscal uncertainties on our nation's security. Approaching the end of a fiscal year with no government funding solution in sight will force preparatory measures that are not conducive to effectiveness or readiness. Continuing resolutions, which have become the norm, only contribute to the uncertainty and pose additional risk to the preservation of a ready and able all-volunteer force. And with the ongoing and perhaps deepening political divide in Congress, another round of stop-gap funding seems more likely than a substantive, enduring solution.

*Priority No. 1:* End harmful defense cuts by eliminating sequestration. Although debt reduction is a national priority, a disproportional share of this burden must not be passed on to servicemembers and military family members, who already have served and sacrificed more than other segments of our society.

*On defense.* The annual defense bill informs DoD's direction. As noted, the House completed its proposed bill in July. Their bill supports the Employment Cost Index (ECI)-based pay raise of 2.4 percent, freezes any reduction to housing allowances, and prioritizes benefits parity for Guard and Reserve forces. The bill does not directly reference repeal of the Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP)/Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) offset, but House Armed Services Committee Chair Mac Thornberry (R-Texas) is committed to working on this during the conference committee.

The Senate's defense bill, which recently came out of markup in the Armed Services Committee, proposes a reduced pay raise of 2.1 percent and eliminates the with-dependent rate housing allowance for military couples stationed together with children. This version includes significant fee increases to TRICARE pharmacy copayments with the intent of using those funds to lock the Special Survivor Indemnity Allowance at a baseline of 310 dollars a month with annual COLA increases, thus removing any real chance of repealing the SBP/DIC offset. Beyond that, the Senate intends to repeal the grandfather provision passed in last year's defense bill regarding TRICARE fee increases, essentially making all of those increases effective for every beneficiary beginning Jan. 1, 2018.

The Senate's version is in stark contrast to the House's. MOAA is concerned about any effort that aims to generate savings by reducing benefits or charging servicemembers for either their own or their dependents' benefits. Servicemembers and their families deserve better.

As you read this, there are members of our uniformed services standing watch in South Korea, patrolling the seas near contested lands, refueling fighters over the Middle East, or serving any other number of roles and missions required of them.

### How will TRICARE's new enrollment rules work?

Starting in November, many TRICARE users will have about six weeks to select and enroll in the health care plan they want to use in 2018. This is a new process for TRICARE users and means that troops, retirees, and their families will need to be more proactive when electing their health care coverage.

MOAA is working with the Defense Health Agency to make sure TRICARE users are getting all the info they need about the changes, but many still have questions about how the enrollment period will work. In Part 2 of our series on the upcoming changes to TRICARE, Capt. Kathy Beasley, USN (Ret), director of MOAA's government relations health affairs, addresses questions about the new open-enrollment process.

Be sure to check out Part 1 of our series on the changes, which covers who's affected by the TRICARE changes. And stay tuned for Part 3 in this series, which will address members' concerns about accessing their health care.

### *When is the 2018 open-enrollment period?*

Beasley: It's scheduled to run from mid-November through mid-December. The exact dates will be announced later this year.

### *What happens if someone misses the open-enrollment period?*

Beasley: While MOAA didn't advocate for these changes, we did lobby successfully for a year-long grace period. That means that in 2018, people will still be able to enroll or change their plans throughout the year. MOAA recognized that there will be people out there who don't get the word about these big changes, so it's important to provide that grace period.

Starting in 2019, though, that grace period won't apply. So they'll only be able to choose their TRICARE plan, or unenroll from the plan — and that's during open season. They can also make enroll or make updates within 90 days of a life-changing event.

Once the grace period for missing the enrollment period is over in 2019, what happens if someone forgets to enroll?

Beasley: The fallback is that you become eligible for space-available care at military treatment facilities (MTFs). *However, we know there's not always a capacity to treat everyone on a space-available basis at MTFs, so it's best to pay attention to open-enrollment dates. You've got to be proactive.*

What about those who need to make a change outside of that enrollment period, say if they get married or have a child?

Beasley: They can make a change if they have what is called a qualifying life event. Qualifying life events are such things as marriage, divorce or annulment, birth or adoption of a child, a death, or loss or gain of other health insurance. *When these things occur, they'll have to make a change within 90 days.*

If someone ages into TRICARE For Life once they turn 65, the enrollment process will be the same it is currently.

### *Will TRICARE users have to deal with this new open enrollment process every year going forward?*

Beasley: Only if they want to make a change to their plan or drop their coverage. Otherwise, once the 2018 grace period is over, people will be auto-enrolled in their existing plan.

That means if someone is enrolled in TRICARE Select in 2018, they'll automatically be enrolled in that same plan in 2019. They don't need to take any action during the



open enrollment period unless they want to switch to a different plan or drop that coverage.

#### National Guard Waives Almost All Bonus Debts

MOAA previously reported thousands of National Guard soldiers were being pursued by debt collectors for bonuses they were paid. Some soldiers suffered serious financial distress from the collection activities. The National Guard claimed the bonuses had been paid in error or the soldiers had not fulfilled their obligations to entitle them to the bonuses. This was dubbed the bonus "clawback."

The House Armed Services Committee's Subcommittee on Military Personnel held a hearing in December 2016 and in January 2017 then-Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter publicly announced all the debts would be reviewed for validity by July 2017.

Earlier this week, DoD released an update on its progress. As of July 31, a vast majority of the debts - 17,092 of the 17,485 bonuses reviewed - had been dismissed or waived by the DoD unilaterally. The others did not have enough evidence to support a waiver or dismissal and proceeded through the appeals process. Of those 393 cases, two ultimately were waived or dismissed, 191 are still in the appeals process, and another 200 soldiers have been notified of their right to appear before an appeals board but have failed to respond.

"MOAA is happy to hear DoD has completed their initial review by the July 2017 deadline it proposed. We are certain this has made a difference in the lives of the over 17,000 soldiers whose lives were affected. As the remaining soldiers further appeal the determinations made in their cases, MOAA will continue to seek updates from DoD to ensure no soldier is pursued for an unjust debt.

If you have a concern regarding a National Guard matter, email MOAA at [legis@moaa.org](mailto:legis@moaa.org).

#### The Fight to Loosen the Senate's Squeeze on Military Compensation

In its estimates of the effects of key provisions in the House and Senate defense authorization bills for FY 2018, the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) spotlights the higher out-of-pocket costs servicemembers and veterans and their families would face if certain Senate-devised personnel initiatives make it into the final bill.

On health care, for example, the Senate version of the bill proposes that TRICARE beneficiaries face higher copays for drug prescriptions not filled on base. By removing simple language regarding grandfathering, current retirees and servicemembers who eventually will retire would see higher TRICARE fees and deductibles.

Though the Senate bill would expand other TRICARE options, the net effect of the health benefit changes it proposes would be to lower government costs and raise costs for beneficiaries by \$6.7 billion from 2018 to 2022, according to the CBO.

A plan to curb housing allowances for dual-service couples with children would save \$221 million through 2022, and the *Senate bill's embrace of the Trump administration's plan to cap next January's basic pay raise at 2.1 percent (instead of at 2.4 percent to match private sector wage growth as the House voted) would save the department another \$1.4 billion through 2022.*

Some of the money senators hope to save on compensation would be used to fund other programs to benefit segments of the military. *Higher pharmacy copays at TRICARE retail outlets and mail order, for example, would go toward making the Special Survivor Indemnity Allowance (SSIA) permanent and protect it from inflation. (The SSIA is set to expire next May for 69,000 survivors of*

*servicemembers who died on active duty or from service-connected health conditions in retirement.)*

The Senate bill also would open TRICARE Reserve Select (TRS) health insurance to drilling Guard and Reserve members who are full-time federal employees. Guardmembers and reservists now are barred from TRS because they are eligible for the federal civilian health insurance program, which can charge higher premiums.

The Military Coalition, a league of 32 associations and veteran groups, criticizes the practice of funding new benefits through budget offsets created by lowering the value of existing benefits. In the case of the Senate bill, the coalition argues the trophies don't match the drags planned for compensation packages.

Member groups of the Military Coalition have lined up against the Senate bill, trying to pressure the full Senate - or, if need be, House-Senate conferees tasked with shaping a final defense bill - to reject the most significant changes for housing allowances, TRICARE plans, and the next pay raise.

Retired Air Force Col. Dan Merry, vice president of government relations for the Military Officers Association of America and cochair of the coalition, said one worry this year is Congress has so many pressing issues to tackle when it returns, including raising the national debt ceiling and advancing tax reform legislation, that a rush job on finalizing the defense bill might be inevitable.

Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.), chair of the Senate committee, had hoped to see the full Senate debate and amend his committee's bill before the summer recess so he could floor manage before beginning treatment for brain cancer. That didn't happen.

If the Senate's fall schedule gets too tight, Merry said, the defense bill might not be debated on the floor but referred directly to a conference committee. That has happened before, he said, with the conferees, all of them members of the armed services committees, working out compromises behind closed doors.

Merry also said both the House and Senate bills exceed arbitrary budget ceilings established by the 2011 Budget Control Act. This will keep the threat of sequestration alive unless Congress also votes to suspend the law's effect. That could leave personnel accounts even more vulnerable, because higher priority would be given to protecting short-term readiness by fully funding training and war supplies and perhaps adding force structure without disrupting major procurement contracts.

As deadline pressures build, upsetting legislative routines, the coalition fears its lobbying efforts could be blunted, raising the prospect that some compensation curbs in the Senate bill will survive late-hour horse trading with House conferees.

To reduce that possibility, the coalition is preparing a letter for conferees, listing the key personnel provisions it supports in authorization bills and warning against other provisions that break faith with the current force or retiree populations.

Overall, the Senate committee's bill would authorize \$692.6 billion for DoD in the fiscal year beginning Oct. 1. That's \$3.6 billion more than the House-passed bill, H.R. 2810, would authorize. But the Senate would spend \$2.9 billion more than the House on the procurement of weapons systems.

Here is one of the most worrisome personnel provisions highlighted by Merry, with the CBO's new cost estimates:

Retiree health costs. Last year Congress voted to raise TRICARE copays and enrollment fees for retirees but only for retirees who first join the military in 2018, delaying most savings from higher cost-shares until 2038. The



Senate bill would remove that grandfathering protection so hikes in enrollment fees and copayments would apply to new and existing retirees beginning in 2019. Those who retire due to disability as well as certain survivors would not be affected.

The change would affect 600,000 retiree households enrolled in TRICARE Prime, raising out-of-pocket costs for retirees who use TRICARE Prime only for themselves from \$530 a year to \$670 and for those with family coverage from \$1,270 to \$1,615.

Out-of-pocket costs for the 450,000 retirees using TRICARE Select plans would climb from an average of \$580 a year for individual coverage to \$1,105 a year, and from an average of \$1,685 for family coverage to \$2,655, the CBO estimates.

If the Senate committee plan takes effect, the CBO estimates that by 2021 about 30,000 retiree households would stop using TRICARE, opting instead for health insurance from civilian employers or through their spouses' employment.

*Send comments to Military Update, PO Box 231111, Centreville, VA, 20120; emailmilupdate@aol.com; or Twitter, Tom Philpott @Military\_Update*

### **MOAA Legislative Update, 18 August 2017:**

#### The Military's Money Malaise

Imagine if 90 percent of federal spending went to defense. Could the military satisfy all of its readiness and wartime needs with nearly 3 trillion *more* dollars than it currently gets in a fiscal year?

At one point in time, that level of defense spending was a reality. While the example of World War II is not an appropriate benchmark for defense spending today, it demonstrates a stark contrast in fiscal realities during wartime, then and now.

Defense spending is being choked by entitlement spending while we're in the midst of a 15-year-long conflict in the Middle East. Just 3.1 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) goes towards defense, a continuation of the unnerving trend of historically low defense spending by that measurement. Even at that relatively low amount, defense spending takes up about half of all discretionary spending.

Further, total discretionary spending equates to only half of total mandatory spending. Mandatory spending, meaning entitlement programs such as Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid, continues to take funds away from discretionary spending accounts. Little has been done to reverse the trajectory, as shown in the table below.

"Do more with less" is a familiar phrase for many, but it's a fallacy. Paying for the world's finest fighting force is an expensive endeavor. Don't expect more from the men and women in uniform if you can't compensate and equip them properly.

There is a lot of talk about increasing the defense budget lately, and indeed, this year's defense bill is poised to do just that. But it is only incremental, and the long-term trends are still troubling.

Mandatory spending consumes a larger piece of the budget pie every year, and it's leaving less and less room for defense spending. It's increasingly clear national security is at risk if entitlement spending isn't reined in.

DoD already feels the pain from recent sequestration spending cuts, which Defense Secretary Jim Mattis said "[did] more to harm the combat readiness of our military" than any enemy in the field. The defense budget is shrinking as a portion of federal spending, having fallen in every decade since the 1940s.

Reaching financial stability is going to be painful. Something has to give, but how much more can we really

ask of the military? It's likely Congress will have to make uncomfortable decisions on cutting spending or increasing taxes, or some combination of both.

It's time to find a long-term budget plan that starts chipping away at the national debt. The Congressional Budget Office estimates federal debt held by the public will near 90 percent of GDP in about a decade.

Federal Debt held by the Public (as a percentage of Gross Domestic Product): 1940 - about 42%; 1945 - 103%; 1975 - 32%; 1992-95 - 41%; 2000 - 37%; 2016 - 79% and predicted up to 94% by 2075.

The future of America's financial stability and therefore global security footing is at stake.

Senate Armed Services Committee Chair John McCain (R-Ariz.) acknowledged, "With the present operational tempo and drastic reductions to defense spending, we will continue the downward spiral of military capacity and readiness that will compromise each service's ability to execute our Defense Strategic Guidance at a time of accumulating danger to our national security."

MOAA is determined to prevent the terrible past mistakes, such as cutting critical career-service incentives, from reappearing for the sake of balancing the budget. Those short-term gains inevitably result in unacceptable costs in the form of retention and readiness problems.

#### Tippling The Scales: The Cost of Sacrifice vs. The Value of Democracy

We hear many words and phrases to describe military service such as *honor, patriotism, duty, commitment, and courage*.

These words represent the values reflected in the voluntary act of military service. Every servicemember, upon taking their oath of enlistment or commission, sets aside "something of value" for the sake of "something greater." They sacrifice a degree of personal freedom because they believe the ideals of our nation (life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness) hold a greater value. An all-volunteer force based on this premise can continue as long as there is "something greater" on the other end of sacrificing "something of value."

Only 1 percent of the U.S. population volunteers to serve. And of those who do, nearly one-third has parents who also served. This makes military families a significant part of the history and future of national defense.

But do we really understand what servicemembers and their families are giving up to protect our democracy and way of life? Do those who do not or cannot join the military view our "something greater" as worthy of personal sacrifice? How do Congress, the president, and our fellow citizens interpret this notion of sacrifice vis-à-vis democracy?

We commonly accept servicemembers will sacrifice holidays at home, living where they would like, facing physically/emotionally difficult training and deployments to hostile environments. But they do this repeatedly, and sometimes without breaks or recovery. They do this without taking time to prepare for life after the military, or even time to develop relationships with friends, family, and neighbors who might support them through normal life challenges. They also do this at the cost of consistent and predictable routines for themselves, their children, and their spouses. The light at the end of the tunnel, when the commitment of sacrifice finally ends, remains dim or nonexistent for many who are currently serving.

Spouses and children sacrifice, too. They struggle when the military assigns them to a location that lacks useful resources for success. It's less likely they can rely on being a two-income family because of high spousal unemployment and limited child care options. Children with

learning disabilities struggle with extraordinary challenges if they live in states that have fewer resources to meet special needs. The same goes for access to quality health care for those families who need more than routine care. These sacrifices are often beyond a servicemember's control and are the result of reassignments to places ill-equipped or poorly resourced to deal with the influx of military families with any level of special needs. Such sacrifices are also a distraction, and servicemembers recognize the lack of control they have to resolve these issues while serving.

The level of sacrifice of the 1 percent of the population who raised their hand to serve is increasing. At best, the value of military service to our country remains the same. At some point, however — and history reflects this through recruiting and retention problems — the balance will tip, and even fewer than the 1 percent will join because it is just not worth it.

But we are not at that tipping point — yet.

However, consistent attempts to reduce benefits, services, and support to servicemembers and their families are accelerating the rate at which we will get to that tipping point. The topics of reduced pay raises, reduced housing allowances, and increased TRICARE enrollment fees and pharmacy copays are frequently brought up in discussions on Capitol Hill because some believe we are paying our military too much and those who serve should pay more for their health care.

If the very government you serve is consistently devaluing your sacrifice, what impact does that have on your willingness to join or stay? If the general public does not share your values, either by volunteering themselves or by lobbying their legislators to support servicemembers, does that also devalue your sacrifice? Do these factors foretell retention problems and reduced states of readiness? Will a continued degradation of support to military families negatively sway one of the most valuable recruiting pools — military children? If history is a predictor, the answer to these last two questions is, "Yes." And if we cannot correct this trajectory, we will tip the scales where sacrifice becomes too great for the lesser gain, and that answer will have unfortunately been correct.

Those in uniform need your voice, and by you, we don't mean just MOAA members — we mean everyone who holds freedom in high regard. Our elected officials must demonstrate to our men and women in uniform, in budget and law, an understanding of the true cost of sending them in harm's way and maintaining their readiness. Congress must stop finding the money to pay for war and readiness in the pockets of servicemembers and veterans and their families. Act now by writing your congressman or senator with your concerns.

#### Vets Get the Full Attention of Lawmakers

While it has been difficult to get major legislation through Congress, that hasn't been the case with some important veterans' bills that have found their way to Pennsylvania Avenue for the president to sign.

In fact, it has been a banner year for veterans as Congress quickly moved legislation through the process in an unusually bipartisan and bicameral way while other important legislation, like the defense bill and other federal measures, stalled.

Here's a brief recap of the year and what's in play today.

**Oct. 1, 2016.** The VA starts the fiscal year with its full 2017 budget, including advance appropriations for FY 2018, while other federal agencies were forced to operate under a continuing resolution.

**Jan. through March 2017.** Lawmakers hit the ground running in the new Congress, introducing more than 200 bills to help veterans in the first quarter of the 115th session—a trend that has continued to inch up every year since 2001.

**April.** The president extends the Veterans Choice program, commonly known as "Choice," before it was due to expire in August, giving the VA time to expend remaining funds in the program and develop a better replacement program for veterans receiving care through private providers.

**June.** The president signs the VA Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act of 2017, which provides the secretary of the VA additional authorities to expedite the removal of employees when warranted.

**Aug. 7.** Congress sends a bill to the president to establish a national memorial in honor of servicemembers who served in support of the global war on terrorism.

**Aug. 11.** Congress sends the Veterans Appeals Improvement and Modernization Act of 2017 to the president to sign. The current claims appeals system is inefficient and plagued with archaic procedures that prevent the VA from taking quick action on appeals and providing timely decisions and benefits to veterans while ensuring transparency and a veteran-centric process. MOAA and other veteran groups have worked for two years with the secretary, the Board of Veterans Appeals, and Congress to put together this bill to modernize the VA's appeals process and provide more rights and transparency in the system for veterans seeking benefits.

**Aug. 12.** The president signs an emergency funding bill to provide \$2.1 billion to fund Choice for an additional six months, giving Congress and the administration time to come up with a long-term plan for reforming the community care program—a hugely popular program with veterans and one Secretary Shulkin told Congress in June would run out of money earlier than he expected.

**Aug. 16.** The president signs the "Forever GI Bill," [making the Post-9/11 GI bill permanent](#) for servicemembers entering the military beginning Jan. 1, 2018, and including other improvements like the "Shauna Hill" transferability provision, which authorizes unused benefits to be transferred to additional dependents if the originally designated dependent dies.

MOAA worked with several military and veterans organizations to successfully defeat other congressional actions that would have been detrimental to our members. When the VA proposed eliminating individual unemployability benefits for veterans after they reached Social Security retirement age, MOAA pushed back and the VA decided to not pursue the cuts. When Congress proposed requiring servicemembers to buy into the Post-9/11 GI Bill, MOAA spoke out in opposition and Congress found the needed funds elsewhere.

"We have been very encouraged and pleased with the collaborative and supportive efforts on behalf of the VA, Congress, and the administration to get these important bills through the process," said Cmdr. René Campos, USN (Ret), MOAA's director of government relations for veterans health care.



# JAYHAWK CHAPTER MOAA

A membership meeting will be held **Tuesday, 19 September 2017**,  
at Lawrence Country Club.



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

**The Program:** Walt Frederick, the Kansas Chair of the Employee Support of the Guard and Reserve,  
from Topeka, who will speak on the ESGR program in Kansas

**Social Hour:** 1800 hours      **Dinner:** 1845 hours

**The Menu:** Baby arugula salad with local peaches & feta with mustard vinaigrette,  
rustic rolls, char-grilled chicken with white wine mushroom cream sauce,  
seasonal vegetables, wild rice and Chef's choice on dessert

**Send your reservation and check payable to Jayhawk Chapter MOAA  
to arrive no later than **Wednesday, 13 September** to:  
CAPT Jim Cooper, 1115 Stone Meadows Drive, Lawrence, KS 66049**

***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.***

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*If you have any questions, you may contact Jim Cooper at 842-7037 or John Halladay at 843-6184  
cut here*

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

*The cost is \$24.00 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 Jim Cooper, 1115 Stone Meadows Drive, Lawrence, KS 66049***

MOAA WEBSITE: [www.moaa.org](http://www.moaa.org)  
KANSAS COUNCIL WEBSITE: [www.kansasmooa.net](http://www.kansasmooa.net)  
JAYHAWK CHAPTER WEBSITE:  
[www.jayhawkmoaa.org](http://www.jayhawkmoaa.org)

***HAVE A SAFE AND  
ENJOYABLE  
LABOR DAY!***

**Tentative 2017 Meeting Schedule:**

Tuesday 19 September

Tuesday 21 November

**Kansas Council of Chapters Dates/Locations:**

4 November hosted by Flint Hills Chapter in Manhattan



*Newsletter Editor  
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***IN GOD WE TRUST***