



Jayhawk Chapter MOAA Newsletter



This newsletter is published bimonthly by the Jayhawk Chapter of Kansas, Military Officers Association of America, as a service to all members. The Jayhawk emblem is used with the permission of the registered trademark owner, the University of Kansas.

November Program:

Our entertainment will be the Lawrence High School Chamber Choir which will provide seasonal entertainment for us.

☆☆☆☆☆ CHAPTER
awarded for

2002 / 2003 / 2005 / 2008
2009 / 2010 / 2011 / 2012
2013 / 2014 / 2016

☆☆☆☆ CHAPTER
awarded for

2004 / 2006 / 2007 / 2015

President's Comments. . .

Greetings fellow MOAA members and welcome to Fall in Kansas.

Besides the unseasonably warm weather and occasional violent storms through the Lawrence area, everything is normal. Midterms are over and Basketball season will soon be starting for the Jayhawks.



As a reminder the November meeting is one week earlier than our normal schedule to avoid any potential conflict with everyone's Thanksgiving schedule. We all know that family events and the occasional travel involved are extremely important to many of our members as well as the students we are inviting to participate; therefore we are asking you all to get together with us at the Country Club a week earlier, 14 November, for our bimonthly meeting. Coop has some great entertainment lined up for the membership to enjoy. He will also be the MC for the evening as I will be in the Republic of Korea celebrating the freedoms they continue to enjoy by exercising our collective capabilities.

Thanks to all who responded to the MOAA HQs call to address the TriCare issues and other personnel issues in the Defense budget. Mike does a great job getting the word out and we all appreciate your response.

Congratulations are again owed to Mike for his successful Level of Excellence Award annual input and The Jayhawk Chapter being awarded a Five Star LOE Award for 2016. Mike will be posting the Award to the Chapter Colors during the November meeting. As a reminder we are blessed with success in large part by the tremendous level of achievement accomplished by each of our members every year. Please let us know what each of you has accomplished this year again so we can again add yours to the total for our submission for 2017.

To all . . . Happy Thanksgiving, enjoy the holidays and keep serving.

George

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1 November 2017

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



JAYHAWK CHAPTER NEWS



PERSONAL NEWS

New Member: Michael K. Kelly
 US Air Force Colonel Retired
 USAF Academy Class of 1976
 1123 Brynwood Court, Lawrence KS 66049

Phone: 785-727-3329
 Spouse: Georgiana Beverly
(She has no middle name; Beverly is her last name.)

From Dean Bevan: On 07 October, I attended the KU Army ROTC "Wall of Fame" ceremony. On 13 October, I spoke to the Lawrence Brain Injury Support Group on the topic of anger (from my book, *What to Do When You're Angry*), and on 17 October, at the Adams Alumni Center, I played the part of Old Frank Harris in a reading of Paul Lim's play, *Flesh, Flash, and Frank Harris*.

From Herschel Stroud: We were recently in Mexico, Yucatan Peninsula, climbing Mayan ruins. Pyramids that is. Jacque is at the sealed doorway that earlier revealed the Tomb of an ancient King or Lord who lived 603 - 683 AD. Very old for a Mayan person.



Here is the pyramid we were climbing. The Tomb was within.

We were in Mexico for 10 days and did not meet anyone from the States. We stayed in small boutique hotels in the Central Districts on purpose so we could improve our Spanish-speaking skills.

Food was great; had only one Taco and it was nothing like one buys in the States.



From Alan VanLoenen: The Veteran's Day parade is scheduled for Lawrence on Saturday, 11 November 2017. The parade is hoping for as many military veterans as possible to be in the parade, with special interest in Viet Nam era veterans taking part.

Parade Instructions from new member Mike Miller, Parade Coordinator: "Assembly for the parade will vary depending on vet's mode of parade participation. Parade Order of March remains to be finalized. Here is the tentative plan:

- Walking vets will assemble on 7th Street east of Massachusetts between 1200 and 1300 hours local. Lawrence PD will have the two blocks east of Massachusetts Street closed to non-parade vehicles. Uniform is up to the veteran. (I plan to wear my desert tan flight suit with leather jacket, gloves and flight cap with rank insignia.)
- Some vets will be transported in antique vehicles and those vets will be given individual instructions to embark with those vehicles.
- Motor cycle riding vets will be given an assembly point near 7th & New Hampshire.
- Vets riding on trailers will embark from Rhode Island Street north of 7th Street.
- Vets requiring medical support such as wheelchairs will be supported on an individual, case-by-case basis.

Parade will conclude at South Park and no formal post-parade ceremony is planned.

Plans are not firm and remain subject to change."

From Don Sheriff: Jerry Sherman and I were taken for rides in the Ageless Aviation Dreams Foundation Stearman Biplane on October 19th. The Foundation has four Stearmans traveling the country to give veterans rides. Meadowlark Estates was one of the retirement homes chosen this year. Sports Clips Haircuts organization raises funds for the flights. Four veterans and Norma Evans, age 103, were given 20 minute flights over Lawrence. Norma was the oldest lady ever to fly with the Dreams Foundation. Jerry was permitted to pilot the aircraft. Perfect weather for a great flight.

From Mike Devlin: My son Ryan and I traveled to the US Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center at Fort Bragg, N.C. for the induction of my brother, COL Daniel D. Devlin (deceased) as a distinguished member of the Psychological Operations Regiment. COL Devlin's Army career included 31 years of continual active service in both Armor and Special Operations. He had commanded the 5th Psyops Battalion and had been the Commandant of the Defense Language Institute at the Presidio of Monterey, California. His efforts in the First Gulf War were recorded in Tom Clancy's book *Shadow Warriors*.

**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*

[No report from Army ROTC this issue]



Navy News *CAPT Dave Meron, USN*



Greetings from the Jayhawk Navy!

These past several months the Jayhawk Battalion has been hard at work. From starting classes in August, our midshipmen have shown tremendous tenacity, teamwork and dedication to the Unit. I am very proud of them!

Our annual color guard duty for football games has kicked off the season and they look sharp! The midshipmen consistently perform well at color guards, and basketball season will be upon us before we know it. These kinds of collateral duties allow for the midshipmen to honor our nation, while also getting valuable experiences marching, and a fun time at the sporting events.

On Saturday, the 23rd of September, KU NROTC conducted the first annual Nicholas Andrew Herren Memorial Run. Midshipmen Herren lost his life in a car accident last year, 27 November 2016. Nick had always voiced to his family a desire to have the unit run from Lawrence to his house in Alma, KS. In light of this idea, a 10-person Marine Corps



Battalion, staff and Herren family - post run

team raced a 10-person Navy team, relay style, from the Military Science Building, to his home, 72 miles away. Despite a close race, with both teams averaging a 6-minute mile pace, the Marine Corps team arrived in Alma first by 6 minutes. Once in Alma, the Battalion held a BBQ with the Herren family and friends. After the BBQ, the Unit ran through the City of Alma to visit Nick's headstone. The event concluded with a hike to Nick's favorite spot atop a hill overlooking Mill Creek,

where his father built a bench for Nick. The unit laid a plaque commemorating the event. This event could not have happened without the tremendous amount of work from the active duty and midshipmen staff.

On 7 Oct we hosted our annual Homecoming Tailgate. This event allowed current midshipmen and their families to interact with Jayhawks of past! We were very fortunate to have several alumni make appearances at this event, as well as excellent weather.



Midshipmen and families at the Alumni tailgate

Also this month, the Jayhawk Battalion was fortunate to be able to honor the hard work and dedication of one of our own, Ms. Tamara Horner! Tamara is our University-appointed Administrative Assistant, [SW1] [KaTH2] and was recognized by the State of Kansas for 10 years of government service. In addition to the State service pin, I presented her a Certificate of Appreciation for the hard work she does for our unit and the Military Science Building. Ms. Tamara is superb, we are very appreciative of everything she does for us.

While we have been busy these past couple of months, we look forward to the upcoming and memorial events in November.

Rock Chalk and Go Navy!

CAPT David J. Meron



Air Force News

LtCol Bill Pastewait, USAF

Hello from Detachment 280, the Flying Jayhawks!

Twenty-two cadets and cadre participated in the Air Force Marathon at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Ohio. Ten cadets and cadre completed the full marathon and 12 completed the half-marathon. All cadets completed the race within the 7-hour time limit. Overall, a great event for our program. In addition to the race, the cadets also got to spend some time at the Air Force Museum. We were extremely proud of the cadets for completing the race which many said was the hardest thing they've ever done. We are planning to run the race next year as well.

In coordination with the KU Veterans Alumni Network, KU Chapter of the Student Veterans of America and all three ROTC programs, the University of Kansas held a 9/11 Remembrance Ceremony. The event included Dr. Douglas Girod, the University of Kansas Chancellor, as the guest speaker, bells being played in the bell tower, bagpipe played by a KU student, a Joint ROTC Honor Guard and the lighting of candles to remember those lost.

The cadets conducted a field leadership exercise on the KU West Campus. This replicated an Air Expeditionary Force-type deployment and focused on the cultural challenges that Air Force officers face when working in a foreign country. The cadets practiced key leader engagements, advising, urban operations and force protection objectives. Our thanks to the KU Navy and Army ROTC programs for supporting us with equipment which made the training more realistic.

Coming Up:

We will host a Career Day on Thursday, 26 October. This provides an opportunity for cadets to interact

with officers from nearby bases and discuss potential jobs as well as life as an Air Force officer.

The Joint Service Ball will be held on Thursday, 9 November at the Jayhawk Club in Lawrence. This is a great event that focuses on the joint relationship between the services and enables the programs to recognize their graduating seniors.

Veterans Day activities are on the horizon. The cadets will continue supporting the 24-hour vigil of military monuments on campus from 11 – 12 November. The Veterans Day Run will begin at KU's Memorial Stadium on 12 November at 0900. All proceeds from the event support the KU Wounded Warrior Scholarship Fund and the KU Student Veterans Association. Cadets will be in attendance at the Salute to Service Football Game on Saturday, 4 November as well.

Senior cadets are anxiously awaiting their career field selections and expect to receive that announcement in November.

We look forward to a strong finish to the Fall Semester and upcoming scholarship boards for our sophomore cadets.

Rock, Chalk!

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, 1 September 2017:

New Law Streamlining VA Claim Appeals Eases Some Protections

Every major veteran service organization - except Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA) - supported legislation, signed into law last week, to reform a woefully clogged process for deciding appeals of veterans' disability claims.

Even VVA concedes the new "three-lane" option for appealing claims, when implemented via regulation a year or more from now, will produce speedier appeal decisions and begin to reverse what continues to be a steadily rising backlog of appeals, soon to surpass a stunning 500,000.

Every veteran appealing a claim knows something is wrong with a system that, on average, takes three years to get a final decision. The VA says some veterans are waiting six years or more.

VA officials had complained for years that the big drag on timely appeals was that case records never closed. Veterans could claim new evidence at any time, and the VA had a "duty to assist" in compiling that evidence, seeking more files from government agencies or private physicians and hospitals while appeals stalled.

MOAA Legislative Update, 08 September 2017:**All Hands on Deck: Prevent Steep TRICARE Fee Increases**

DoD's health care costs continue to decrease, as evidenced by data in the below chart. The decrease can be seen in both purchased care and TRICARE For Life. MOAA's analysis is consistent with DoD's findings. We will continue to leverage cost stability as a positive trend, rather than as an avenue for redistributing funds for other purposes. [Our review](#) of DoD's costs shows how military beneficiaries already are contributing to cost savings.

MOAA Legislative Update, 15 September 2017:**Anxious Uncertainty: Capitol Hill's New Norm**

With many political imperatives coming to a head over the next few months and little indication as to how anything will shake out, it is important to keep an eye on foundational values. This is hard to do when there are so many competing priorities to focus on.

The big picture of foundational values is a blur because of competing priorities such as our nation's ability to respond to multiple natural disasters and their fiscal aftermath, government funding beyond December, tax reform and immigration, more troops in Afghanistan, and other defense concerns following two deadly accidents at sea.

We also must consider the emerging nuclear threat from Kim Jong Un and Vladimir Putin's overt actions to restore Russia back to its glory as a Soviet superpower.

We must keep failed or failing states on the radar, not only from a humanitarian perspective but for security reasons as well - terrorists exploit these weakened states as safe havens.

At a recent luncheon on Capitol Hill, hosted by MOAA's Maryland Council of Chapters, we heard from nine of ten delegates, including two senators - a fantastic turnout. The collective theme of the delegates' comments were clear: These are dangerous and fiscally challenging times. Rep. Steny Hoyer pointed out, with regard to the military, "We have the capacity, no one doubts that ... but not everyone was convinced we had the will to use our military." He believes this is changing and that we have both the capacity and the will.

He might be right, but do we have the capacity for the long haul? Are we ensuring an all-volunteer force of the size and quality needed to maintain a strong national defense? Our national budget woes inform the answers to those questions.

The recent continuing resolution only brings us through the first week of December. Once again, DoD is running on borrowed money and time. It hasn't had a stable budget in seven years, which has negatively affected all of the services.

The nation's defense capabilities and the people who serve in uniform have been marginalized, but their missions are more important than ever. The U.S. continues to send its sons and daughters into harm's way. And in response to those orders, these selfless servicemembers salute smartly and carry on the mission, some of them never to see their families again.

Congress Can't Be Shamed Into Stabilizing Military Budgets

"And get a grip on reality," Defense Secretary Jim Mattis scolded the Senate Armed Services Committee last June after some senators said they wouldn't be able to pass a defense authorization bill on time this year. "It's like we're all walking around as if we're victims."

It appeared the target of his ire were lawmakers who routinely praise the military and habitually lament deteriorating readiness, yet lack the political courage year after year to reach a budget compromise with opponents so DoD can return to on time, predictable, and less wasteful budget cycles.

The predictions from June came true Sept. 5 when congressional leaders ignored warnings of armed services

committee chairs and cut a deal with President Donald Trump that ensures for a ninth straight year DoD spending will be frozen for at least a quarter of the new fiscal year, which starts Oct. 1.

McCain and Sen. Jack Reed (R.I.), ranking Democrat on the armed services committee, sent a letter two weeks ago to Mattis requesting details on readiness impacts of starting another fiscal year under a CR, which blocks new programs from starting and freezes spending at previous year levels.

Mattis responded Sept. 8, three days after Trump already had cut a high-profile deal with Democrats and reluctant Republican leaders to raise the debt ceiling and keep the government funded through Dec. 8 under a CR. The same legislation provided billions of dollars in hurricane relief to Texas and Florida.

Maryland Congressional Delegation Shows Up to Support MOAA

Washington - "We must fulfill the national promise to adequately resource programs supporting those who serve," retired Air Force Lt. Gen. Dana Atkins, president and CEO of the [Military Officers Association of America \(MOAA\)](#), told the MOAA Maryland Council of Chapters (MCOC) during their annual congressional luncheon Wednesday on Capitol Hill.

MOAA leaders representing nine Maryland chapters hosted the luncheon to express their gratitude to Sens. Benjamin Cardin, D-Md., and Chris Van Hollen, D-Md., along with seven representatives, for their leadership and support of issues facing veterans, military retirees and those currently serving and their families.

The MOAA Maryland council, led by its president, retired Army COL Harvey T. Kaplan, stressed three key legislative priorities:

- * Repealing sequestration.
- * Ending the Survivor Benefit Plan/Dependency and Indemnity Compensation offset or "widows tax."
- * Rejecting disproportional TRICARE fees.

MOAA Legislative Update, 22 September 2017:**Supply and Demand: The challenge of maintaining an all-volunteer force.**

Quality recruits come at a cost. Are we willing to pay it? The Senate defense authorization bill doesn't look promising.

Why the alarm? Because our nation has relied on the all-volunteer force since 1973, and all that time we have taken the volunteer pool for granted. That's about to change — because the pool has changed.

Maj. Gen. Jeffrey Snow, commanding general of the Army's Recruiting Command, identified the crux of the problem in [a November 2016 interview with the Arizona Republic](#): "The problem that we are facing is that so few actually can meet the qualification requirements to join the military. ... Only three in 10 of today's youth can actually meet the requirements." That number gets even smaller, around 20 percent, when you take college-bound young people out of the equation.

This problem stems from a bigger picture:

- * There are approximately 20 million 17-21 year olds in America.
- * Of those, 11.3 million meet academic requirements.
- * Only about 4.4 million of those are even eligible to join.
- * Assessing propensity to join, we are left with about 465,000 truly potential recruits
- * From that pool, DoD needs 250,000 a year.

Meanwhile, a similar problem might loom in the near future: the 13th Quadrennial Review of Military Compensation (QRMC) and the [President's charge to the Secretary of Defense](#) to assess the adequacy of military compensation

and, essentially, decide if a salary system would be more effective for recruiting and retention.

This government study of military compensation is required by law and must take place no less than every four years. The findings of this study will result in a report to Congress. The focus on the potential for a salary system is of concern to MOAA if it is used to continue reducing military compensation in any way.

Our nation's ability to field the most effective armed forces, of the size and quality needed, is in jeopardy, and there are two key aspects of this problem: First, the supply is dwindling. This is a national problem, which Congress cannot fix. Second, the compensation and benefits that help motivate people to join and stay are eroding. This is a problem Congress can — and must — fix.

Share your concerns with your members of Congress [here](#).

Trading Set to Begin On Key TRICARE Issues

As the House and Senate Armed Service Committees prepare to meet to hash out their respective positions on the FY2018 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), it is more urgent than ever for you to [alert your legislators](#) to these key issues of importance to every TRICARE beneficiary:

TRICARE enrollment fees, as well as other fees, would be hit with significant increases according to the Senate's proposed bill. The Senate is looking for ways to plow savings back into readiness and other unspecified projects, and it wants to do this by repealing the grandfathering clause for TRICARE fees contained in last year's law, which shielded current TRICARE beneficiaries from new fees. The proposed fee structure, which could start immediately depending on the negotiations, would result in the doubling of fees for many beneficiaries.

Raising TRICARE pharmacy cost shares, as proposed in the Senate's NDAA version, would impact TRICARE For Life beneficiaries the most. These increases are especially appealing to the Senate because the pharmacy benefit consists of mandatory spending for beneficiaries over the age of 65. The Senate's plan proposes that the savings resulting from these fee hikes could then be used to fund other accounts and programs- programs like the Special Survivor Indemnity Allowance (SSIA) to remedy the Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP)/Dependency Indemnity Compensation (DIC) offset, also known as the "[widows' tax](#)," which offsets a military survivor's monthly SBP annuity by any DIC they receive. MOAA has a longstanding record of advocating for a permanent fix for the widows' tax/SSIA situation. However, taxing beneficiaries' earned benefits is not the way to do it. Keep in mind, too, that many of those affected by the widows' tax use the pharmacy benefit as well.

The Senate's proposal to tie all TRICARE fees to a national health care index would increase the cost of your health insurance. Premiums, copayments, deductibles, and catastrophic caps would rise annually based on increases in health care costs as measured by per capita growth in the National Health Expenditures (NHE). Currently, TRICARE fees and applicable cost shares are tied to the annual rise in COLA. Swapping this index for an arbitrarily selected index, the NHE, would result in beneficiaries paying substantially more for health care over time. A beneficiary's fees would have increased more than 48 percent over the past 10 years if fee increases were linked to the NHE. Compare this to only 18 percent for the same period as currently indexed to COLA.

"We do not think raising TRICARE fees through the repeal of last year's grandfathering, using the pharmacy program as a money source, and tying fees to anything but COLA is in any way fair to beneficiaries," says Capt. Kathy Beasley, USN (Ret), MOAA's Government Relations Director for Health Affairs. "The House saw fit to keep what is in the

current law, to include the existing grandfathered fee structure, and to maintain focus on the implementation of the current TRICARE reform efforts. MOAA strongly agrees with the House."

Family Focus in Defense Bill

With Senate passage of the FY 2018 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), we have some idea of what we can expect in the finished product; the House passed its version earlier in the summer.

Between the two drafts and their various amendments, we can expect the following provisions to stay in through the conference, which reconciles the differences:

- * *Commissaries and Exchanges* - a report to show the cost-benefit analysis of saving \$2 billion between 2018-22 without any effect on patron savings.
- * *Flexibility for permanent change of station (PCS)* - advanced or delayed PCS (up to 180 days) for dependents in some cases where the family can benefit because of school, employment, or medical needs.
- * *DoD Impact Aid* - money to assist local education agencies benefitting dependents of the armed services (\$25 million in the Senate and \$50 million in the House).

Many provisions differ between the versions. MOAA hopes the following provisions related specifically to families remain in place:

- * Senate provision of \$10 million for Impact Aid for children with severe disabilities,
- * House codification of authority to conduct family support programs for immediate family members of those assigned to forces under U.S. Special Operations Command,
- * House language authorizing reimbursement of up to \$500 for military spouse licensure and certification costs incurred as a result of a PCS across state lines,
- * Senate pilot program for public-private partnerships for telework facilities on military installations outside of the U.S., and
- * Senate provision allowing for concurrent coverage of curative treatments and hospice care for terminally ill military children.

MOAA believes these issues are critically important to ensuring military families are ready to face the challenges military service requires of them. You can help by [sending this message](#) to your representative and senators.

MOAA Legislative Update, 29 September 2017:

Veteran Suicides: a National Public Health Issue

20: the average number of veterans a day who died in this country from suicide

14: the number of veterans who are not under VA care

65: the percentage of all veterans who died by suicide who were age 50 or older

67: the percent of all veteran deaths by suicide as a result of firearm injuries

Find out what the VA and Congress are doing to fight this national crisis.

This week, the VA winds down its suicide prevention awareness month campaign and outreach efforts.

"These findings are deeply concerning, which is why I made suicide prevention my top clinical priority," said VA Secretary Dr. David Shulkin in a press release earlier this month.

"I am committed to reducing Veteran suicides through support and education." Shulkin said. "We know that of the 20 suicides a day that we reported last year, 14 are not under VA

care. This is a national public health issue that requires a concerted, national approach.”

Closing out the month, Congress held a hearing this week to consider several bills to address mental health services in the VA and veteran suicides, as well as a hearing on Wednesday, Sept. 27, where Shulkin offered testimony to the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs regarding how he is addressing suicide prevention in his department.

“Our goal is to eliminate suicide,” said Shulkin. “As stated earlier, six Americans will die during the course of this hearing - I think about this every day - I think about how many veterans are dying every day because we aren't effective at addressing this problem.”

Additionally, the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs held a hearing the day prior to consider several bills aimed at preventing suicide and providing enhanced care for veterans suffering from mental health conditions. Some of these bills include:

H.R. 1063, Veteran Prescription Continuity Act-ensures transitioning servicemembers receiving medical treatment from DoD receive the medications required when they transfer to a VA medical facility.

H.R. 2225, Veterans Dog Training Therapy Act-allows the VA to conduct a pilot program on dog training therapy by entering into agreement with certified non-government entities at a minimum of three but not more than five VA medical centers.

H.R. 2327, Puppies Assisting Wounded Servicemembers (PAWS) Act of 2017-directs the secretary to give grants to eligible organizations to provide service dogs to veterans suffering from severe mental disorders such as post-traumatic stress disorder.

H.R. 2147, Veterans Treatment Court Improvement Act of 2017-requires the secretary to hire additional veterans justice outreach specialists to provide treatment court services for veterans in the criminal justice system.

MOAA members can help too. Learn more about the VA's suicide prevention program and how you can [Be There to Save a Life](#) .

New Legislative Action Center Tutorial

As many of you may have already noticed, MOAA's [Legislative Action Center](#) has gone through a significant redesign. This is in response to upgrades to the system we use to connect members with their elected representatives so they can exercise their influence as a voter and citizen. Your use of this platform is key to MOAA's successes and strong voice on Capitol Hill, so we want to give you a brief review of some of the features you'll see. Note the appearance and configuration will vary depending on which browser you're using and whether you access the information on a desktop computer, laptop, tablet, or phone.

As you scroll further down the main page of the Legislative Action Center you will find a red bar titled “Contact Your Representatives.” In this area, we've collected all of MOAA's Take Action alerts with suggested messages for you to send to your representatives.

To send a message, simply click on the Take Action alert that you would like to send. From there, fill out the necessary contact information. If you check the “Remember Me” box at the bottom of the form, your contact information will be saved automatically for future uses. (Note: Security settings on certain web browsers can prevent the Remember Me function from saving your information.) If you check the “Email Opt-in” box, you will start receiving MOAA's email newsletters, if you aren't already getting them.

After you click submit, you will have a chance to review MOAA's suggested message before it is sent. Click submit again to send your message to your elected officials. Please

note that most, but not all, congressional offices send confirmation they have received your email message.

Finally, at the bottom of the Legislative Action Center, you will find a list of key bills that MOAA is currently tracking and supports. Clicking on a specific bill brings up a description of the bill, as well as sponsor and cosponsor information (see example below):

We encourage you to spend some time exploring the new layout.

MOAA Legislative Update, 13 October 2017:

COLA

The September CPI is 240.939, 2.5 percent above the FY 2016 COLA baseline.

The CPI for October 2017, the first month of the fiscal year, is scheduled to be released on November 15, 2017.

The number that matters most for you: 2.0 percent. Our prediction of 1.8 percent fell just short because of an unexpected sharp rise in oil prices in September.

That is the final COLA for the 2017 fiscal year, meaning retired pay will be increased by 2 percent starting in January of 2018. In other words, you will see a \$20 increase for every \$1000 of retired pay received. The final COLA is determined by comparing the average CPI of the final three months of the fiscal year to the same quarter of the prior year.

Veterans Online Shopping Benefits to Get a Boost Starting November 11

Last year, Congress allowed DoD to make two changes in defense resale MOAA has supported: expansion of exchange privileges online and expansion of the use of the MILITARY STAR card.

Veteran Online Shopping Benefit

Beginning Veterans Day, Nov. 11, 2017, all veterans with an honorable discharge will be eligible to shop at the service exchanges online. Each service exchange - [NEX](#), [AAFES](#), [MCX](#), and [CGX](#) - will have a portal to access the benefit.

First, however, veterans who could be eligible must visit [VetVerify.org](#) to gain access. The process may require several steps for some, so it is recommended you begin the process as soon as possible. Proof of honorable or general under honorable conditions discharge requires, at least, submission of your full name and Social Security number and some type of discharge form, such as a DD Form 214, DD Form 215, DD Form 256, DD Form 257, or NGB-22. [VetVerify has an FAQ](#) with answers to common questions regarding eligibility.

The benefit does not include purchase of uniforms, alcohol, or tobacco products.

Use of your MILITARY STAR card at commissaries

The commissary soon will accept the standard [MILITARY STAR card](#) (not to be confused with the Chase MILITARY STAR card) as a form of payment. Previously, patrons could only use the standard MILITARY STAR card at military exchanges or at exchange-connected gas stations. Its acceptance at commissaries will help contribute more dollars to local morale, welfare, and recreation programs as well as save DoD money in processing. Additionally, patrons will be able to earn MILITARY STAR rewards for their commissary purchases (though rewards cannot be redeemed at commissaries).

The rollout of acceptance began Oct. 2 at Fort Lee, Va., and will expand to all commissaries by Nov. 9. Find out [when your commissary](#) will begin accepting the MILITARY STAR card.

New VA Advisory Committee for Families, Caregivers, and Survivors

Efforts continue within the VA to help improve and extend caregiver services to those who selflessly and quietly sacrifice to care for our nation's veterans.

On Monday, VA Secretary Dr. David Shulkin announced a [new advisory committee](#) to focus awareness and action on the needs of military families, caregivers and the veterans they love and support.

Since taking office in February of this year, Shulkin and his leadership team have been working actively with MOAA, The Military Coalition, other veteran and military service organizations, and a number of other stakeholders to look at VA's current [caregiver support programs](#) and future requirements, including its comprehensive assistance program for post-9/11 caregivers. Their goal is to find ways to expand access to services for veterans of all eras, including the growing population of elderly veterans.

"Military families, caregivers, and survivors are truly our nation's hidden heroes and make great sacrifices each and every day on behalf of their loved ones, so we must do more to support them on their journey," said Dole, herself a caregiver to her husband, former Senate Majority Leader Robert J. Dole, a World War II veteran injured in combat.

Other members on the committee include Vice Chair Sherman Gillums; Mary Buckler; Bonnie Carroll; Melissa Comeau; Harriet Dominique; Jennifer Dorn; Ellyn Dunford; Dr. Robert Koffman; Lt. Gen. Mike Linnington, USA (Ret); Joe Robinson; Elaine Rogers; Brig. Gen. Dr. Loree Sutton, USA (Ret); Francisco Urena; Shirley White; Lee Woodruff; and Lolita Zinke.

MOAA appreciates the secretary's creation of the committee and selection of an esteemed group of individuals for this important work. More information will follow, once the committee begins its work.

VA, Congress Crawl Toward Ending Abuse Of Veteran Pensioners

In 2012, the Government Accountability Office found more than 200 financial planning firms and estate law offices enticing veterans or their survivors into costly annuities or irrevocable trusts intended to hide or reallocate their assets so they would qualify for VA pensions the claimants wouldn't be eligible for otherwise.

Since then, the VA and Congress have been crawling toward actions to stop the abusive practices, which twist the intent of the pension benefit in ways to help some veterans, put others in financial binds, and generate fees or profits or streams of residents for the schemers.

The crawl toward reform continues. The VA is still working on a draft rule first released for public comment in January 2015. Final publication of the "Net Worth, Asset Transfers and Income Exclusions for Needs-Based Benefits" rule was expected this past summer. However, it remains "in VA's internal concurrence process," said a VA spokesperson Wednesday.

Meanwhile, the House Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs held a first-ever hearing last month on legislation to address financial abuses of the pension program. The Veterans Care Financial Protection Act (now HR 3122) first was introduced in 2014.

They can qualify for more VA financial help, however, if they are disabled and unable to leave their homes unassisted, or they have unmet daily living needs or they face exorbitant medical, assisted care, or nursing home costs. The additional financial help is called the VA Aid and Attendance benefit.

About 303,000 wartime veterans and 220,000 survivors draw VA pension benefits. Veteran advocates believe thousands more would qualify if they knew the program existed. What has raised the profile of pensions recently,

however, have been the reports of abuse and target marketing by unscrupulous financial planners, lawyers, or even care facilities seeking ill or elderly veterans.

The pension is a needs-based benefit with need determined using thresholds on annual incomes and assets or net worth. For example, a wartime veteran with no dependents can qualify for all or a portion of the basic pension benefit if they have income, including Social Security, less than \$12,907 annually. If income is \$10,000, for example, the benefit would be calculated by the maximum annual pension rate of \$12,907 minus \$10,000, for a total of \$2,907 annually.

However, the pension benefit is unique in that it allows veterans to apply medical expenses to offset income calculations and raise the benefit. Even higher amounts are payable if the veteran or surviving spouse is housebound, and more aid and attendance dollars are available if claimants need help with daily activities.

A married veteran needing aid and attendance can qualify for at least some pension monthly if their income doesn't exceed \$25,525. A survivor's pension is smaller but also based on need with consideration of medical expenses.

The other threshold to determine eligibility is net worth. If assets other than primary residence and vehicle exceed \$80,000, then the VA can't assume eligibility without a closer determination. Again, medical-related expenses can be critical. For example, if a veteran with assets totaling \$100,000 moves into an assisted living facility that costs \$5,000 a month, a VA service officer could determine the asset threshold would be reached quickly and find the veteran eligible for pension.

Veterans and survivors who believe they might qualify should contact the veterans service office for their county to fill out required forms. More program information can be found [here](#).

A key purpose of regulatory reforms aimed at VA pension benefits is to ensure they are used by low-income veterans or those facing exorbitant medical expenses they can't pay, rather than be used as a tool to preserve family wealth.

One provision in the VA's draft rule would impose a three-year look-back provision on assets to discourage new claimants from hiding assets. Other changes would reset the asset ceiling to the higher and "brighter line" used by Medicaid, and more clearly define medical expenses that can reduce income calculations. The new rule would not leave the threshold on assets open to interpretation as it is now.

Legislative reforms, which show signs of life, take a different approach. As Rep. Matthew Cartwright (D-Pa.) testified last month on behalf of his bill, HR 3122, it would direct the VA and other federal agencies to work with state officials and outside experts to establish state and federal standards to end "dishonest, predatory, or otherwise unlawful practices" targeting VA aid and attendance dollars.

Some charge veterans "a nonexistent application fee to obtain the benefit," he added. Others collect "consultation fees" with "promises to expedite the application process. Yet another scam is an offer to help veterans qualify for the benefit even when their net worth is too high to qualify." In this way, Cartwright explained, financial planners gain control of the veteran's assets and "move them into an irrevocable trust or annuity, which the elderly veterans often cannot access for many years."

Increasingly, he said, retirement homes are recruiting veteran residents with promises they will qualify for VA aid and attendance to cover cost of the home.

"If the [Aid and Attendance pension] claim is later denied, however, the nursing home then demands back payment from the veteran. This is a practice that leaves vulnerable elderly veterans with the undesirable choice of draining their own aining assets or giving up their new home," Cartwright said.

He first introduced his bill on learning of companion legislation in the Senate (now S. 1198) from Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.). The bill now has bipartisan support in the subcommittee. Witnesses for the VA and veterans service organizations expressed support. Cartwright promised some changes to reflect concerns from the GAO that it shouldn't be given a role in establishing the new protection standards given its existing responsibilities for reviewing how the standards are implemented.

With no costs attached, the bill is expected to clear the subcommittee this fall. Full committee action and passage by the House isn't expected this year.

MOAA Legislative Update, 20 October 2017: **DoD Wants More Predictable TRICARE Fees: Predictably Higher**

It's hard to distinguish fact from fiction these days. But one thing military personnel, their families, retirees who've served a career, and all other eligible TRICARE beneficiaries know is, their earned health care benefit is under siege.

The simple facts as we know them: First, DoD's health care costs have remained the same - or even declined - for decades and take up no more of the budget than they have in years past. And second, DoD has been relentless in its attempts to have beneficiaries pay disproportional amounts for something they earned with their service and sacrifice.

What Is Happening Right Now:

DoD is making an end run late in the budgetary game. This is a manipulative attempt to get more of your money to fund its readiness accounts and other, unspecified programs. As directed in last year's National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), which grandfathered current beneficiaries from increased fees, DoD used its authority as an agency to publish new rules pertaining to upcoming TRICARE program changes, set to take effect on Jan. 1.

But, surprisingly, they took this as an opportunity to change the cost shares, effectively bypassing the legislated grandfathering.

TRICARE officials have said the motivation behind these cost share changes in the new TRICARE Select option is to make costs more predictable for beneficiaries. They plan to accomplish this by changing the percent cost share applied to TRICARE in the beneficiary's bill (usually 15 percent for active duty families and 25 percent for retirees) to a fixed amount - hence, the claimed predictability. (The head of the Defense Health Agency also will have discretion to change these fees on an annual basis, among other program authorities.)

Mattis weighs in on NDAA

Secretary of Defense Jim Mattis outlined DoD's positions and made clear his concerns and key objections regarding the 2018 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) in letters submitted to the leadership of the House and Senate Armed Services committees.

The committees are currently in conference, working to reconcile the two different versions of the defense authorization bill that passed their respective chambers, so a final version can be passed by both houses of Congress and sent to President Donald Trump for his signature.

As it stands now, the House - which passed its version in July - is recommending \$621.5 billion in the base budget and \$75 billion to fund Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO). The Senate passed its version last month and proposes \$640 billion in the base budget and \$60 billion in OCO funding.

Mattis' letter was up-front with his concerns about spending caps mandated under the Budget Control Act (BCA), reiterating his much-quoted sentiment, "No enemy in the field has done more to harm the war fighting readiness of our military than sequestration." The current caps, he went on

to write, "unnecessarily defer critical maintenance, limit aviation ability, delay modernization, and strain our men and women in uniform." MOAA could not agree more.

Mattis also stated his support for an additional Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) round as a significant opportunity to find savings through the reduction of excess capacity-almost \$2 billion annually, by the Pentagon's calculations.

Regarding military health care, Mattis stated his opposition to the language currently in NDAA legislation regarding military health system reform, "in order to allow time to implement reforms required by previous NDAA's."

Mattis' letter did indicate his support for the inclusion of "reasonable" pharmacy copayments and the removal of grandfathering provisions on certain fees, looking to gain a projected \$6 billion in savings over the Future Years Defense Program (FYDP) - a position MOAA is clearly at odds with.

Congressional defense leadership intend to have the conference negotiations completed by the end of October, in order to have a final version of the FY18 NDAA brought up for a vote before the Thanksgiving break.

While the exact methodology DoD used is not apparent, MOAA understands the new fixed costs were derived from an average of what beneficiaries actually spend in a variety of outpatient settings.

MOAA assessed the impact these new TRICARE fees will have on beneficiaries, using basic assumptions and very conservative health care utilization patterns for an E5 family of four.

These tables do not include ancillary services, like lab tests, radiology, or diagnostic testing. The results (shown in the tables below) are hardly surprising: The costs to the beneficiary went up.

MOAA is concerned the introduction of this new fee structure:

- * raises fees above COLA across most categories of beneficiaries, to support department readiness costs;
- * takes control of setting and then adjusting these fees on an annual basis without regard to an index or other supporting data; and
- * ignores the 2017 NDAA's grandfathering of beneficiaries, as evidenced in the way DoD has set up the fee structure between active duty and retired service families.

Conferees Announced For Defense Bill

The annual defense authorization bill enters one of its final phases, as lawmakers this week announced the list of conferees who will iron out differences between the House and Senate versions.

They will have their work cut out for them, as the two chambers had different opinions on several issues of interest to MOAA.

Despite numerous tweets to the contrary, the administration already has signaled its intent to cap next year's military pay below private sector wage growth, citing concerns about "serious economic conditions."

Regardless of the outcome, Congress first will need to come up with a budget agreement. Raising defense spending levels above current statutory limits will trigger sequestration, an arbitrary budget-cutting mechanism.

2017 Colonel Steve Strobbridge Award Winner

The field of candidates for the 2017 Colonel Steve Strobbridge Legislative Liaison Award included a number of MOAA chapter members whose dedication to MOAA's mission and active support of our issues merited significant commendation. This year's winner has gone above and

beyond the call of duty to make a positive impact on both state and federal legislation related to MOAA priorities.

This year's winner: Col. Lorna Griess, USA (Ret), legislative liaison for MOAA's California Council of Chapters.

Griess, a Life Member of MOAA, is the four-year chair of the legislative committee for the California Council of Chapters (CALMOAA). She has shown exemplary leadership and initiative through her communication efforts with all 41 California chapters in. She tracks all legislation at the state level, disseminates Take Action requests from MOAA national, and shows a strong dedication to MOAA's legislative goals.

MOAA is grateful for the vigorous grassroots support we receive through our nationwide chapter network. Without dedicated individuals like Colonel Griess and the other Strobridge award nominees, our advocacy efforts on Capitol Hill would be much more challenging.

Griess received her award Sept. 16 at Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, Calif.

About the Col. Steve Strobridge Legislative Liaison Award:

The award is given to one legislative chair or liaison nationally who has demonstrated superior service as a council or chapter legislative chair or liaison, working on issues of importance to the military community. The Strobridge Award will be provided to a chapter member who has demonstrated excellence in one or more of the following legislative mission areas: National MOAA Legislative Agenda, State Legislative Agenda, and Council or Chapter Responsibilities.

The award honors MOAA's former director of Government Relations, Col. Steve Strobridge, USAF (Ret), a leading advocate on behalf of the veteran and military community for decades.

Through his years of service in the legislative arena, Strobridge has been recognized as one of the top 100 most influential people in U.S. defense. The annual Colonel Steve Strobridge Legislative Liaison Award attempts to encapsulate his legacy of tirelessly advocating for those who serve.

Plan To Replace 'Choice' Also Will Modernize VA Health System

Congress, the VA, and veterans service organizations will begin to spar this month over the final details of a plan that not only will replace the much-maligned Veterans Choice program but empower the VA to modernize large parts of its health care system.

The plan, which the VA titled the Veterans CARE (Coordinated Access & Rewarding Experiences) Act, was unveiled last week and has an overall structure that major veteran groups applaud, in part because they helped shape it.

They don't like everything, however. And the House and Senate veterans' affairs committees are expected to offer their own replacement plans for Choice this fall, perhaps to include more statutory safeguards and details to improve access to care that veteran advocates worry aren't spelled out yet in the VA plan.

The idea behind Choice remains a primary goal for CARE: to ensure greater access to care for veterans in their communities when timely, quality care isn't available at a nearby VA medical facilities. But CARE directs that clinicians, consulting with patients, decide when outside care is needed, rejecting Choice's reliance on driving distance and wait times to set eligibility and hold down costs.

CARE also seeks authorities for the VA to build out high-performing provider networks, relying on private sector partners and other federal agencies, and to ensure closer integration of VA health services with those in nearby communities.

Choice was meant as a temporary solution to the wait-time scandal and is funded through December. But community care grew from 20 percent to more than 30 percent of veterans' health care in the last three years. CARE would consolidate non-VA care programs but still spend \$4 billion on private sector health care.

At one time, veterans service organizations saw Choice as a threat, a tool that critics of big government could use to dismantle VA care by sending more and more patients to the private sector.

"There are some in Congress who want unfettered Choice," said Garry Augustine, executive director of Disabled American Veterans (DAV). "Give everybody a card and let them go wherever they want. We're against that and believe it would lead to a dismantling of the VA system as needed resources are drained away and VA [health care] withers on the vine."

But CARE is seen as striking the right balance, with initiatives to strengthen VA health care with more VA providers, improved support systems, and streamlined processes, but with a commitment to build high-performing and integrated provider networks by partnering with the private sector or at other federal agencies.

Though the COLA provision would expire in 10 years, Augustine said, "for my generation of Vietnam veterans, we are at that part of our lifecycle where 10 years mean we probably won't see it again. And anytime you have a 10-year suspension of something you usually don't see it come back."

On this point, the Legion also is adamant. By definition, rounding down costs a veteran no more than \$12 a year, but "it's not about the money," Celli said. "As Americans, if we choose to use that money, especially for veterans' health care, what we're saying is that it is now all right to ask service-disabled veterans to give up a portion of their check each month to pay for their own health care or for somebody else's services."

A feature of CARE getting mixed reviews, for lack of detail, would allow access commercial walk-in clinics for minor illnesses or injuries. VA Secretary David Shulkin previously said the VA would charge a \$50 copayment and the first few visits a year would be free. Those details aren't in the plan now. Nor is there word on whether service-connected disabled veterans would face a full copayment or any added cost.

CARE would have the VA adopt prompt payment standards common in the health industry: doctor reimbursement within 45 days of receiving of a "clean" paper claim and 30 days for an electronic claim. Augustine said DAV wants to ensure private sector care providers also are barred from billing veterans if the VA doesn't pay on time, a practice that has marred Choice for many users.

Veterans also should have private sector appointments in hand when they leave VA clinicians after a determination that community care is necessary. How the VA will ensure that is another detail not yet clear, Augustine said.

Some groups, including the American Federation of Government Employees, oppose CARE, saying the ultimate goal is to dismantle the VA health system and to privatize all medical care for veterans. Major veterans groups support the reforms but vow to challenge every line that might weaken the VA's ability to deliver care.

"It's big-picture advocacy and not a myopic view," Celli said of the Legion's support. "The Department of Veterans Affairs has a \$165 billion budget; that's not going away anytime soon. If a new secretary were to come and try to change a stable-based VA, we would advocate against [that], and the American people would either support us or wouldn't. We have to have faith and trust in the Department until they prove to us they no longer have earned that trust."



JAYHAWK CHAPTER MOAA



A membership meeting will be held **Tuesday, 14 November 2017**,
at Lawrence Country Club

Please note change of meeting date to avoid conflict with Thanksgiving!!

Dinner cost is \$24.00/meal.

The Program: The Lawrence High School Chamber Choir will provide seasonal entertainment for us.
(Program will start at 1930)

Social Hour: 1800 hours Dinner: 1840 hours

The Menu: Chef's choice on salad, rustic rolls with olive oil & Parmesan, herb roasted pork loin,
house apple sauce, wild rice, vegetarian option of our dinner menu, Chef's choice on dessert

**Send your reservation and check payable to Jayhawk Chapter MOAA
to arrive no later than Wednesday, 8 November 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.*

*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
KANSAS COUNCIL WEBSITE: www.kansasmooa.net
JAYHAWK CHAPTER WEBSITE:
www.jayhawkmoaa.org

*If you can receive this by
e-mail, please let us know.
Printing and postage costs
the Chapter close to \$3 for
each copy we have to mail.*

Tentative 2018 Meeting Schedule:

Tuesday 16 January
Tuesday 20 March
Tuesday 15 May

Tuesday 17 July
Tuesday 18 September
Tuesday 13 November

2018 Kansas Council of Chapters Dates/Locations:

20 January	Santa Fe Trail - Leavenworth
24 March	Jayhawk - Lawrence (with NGAKS Convention at Double Tree)
11 August	Kaw Valley - Topeka
3 November	Sunflower - Overland Park



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IN GOD WE TRUST