



Jayhawk Chapter MOAA Newsletter



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March Program:

Our speaker will be LtCol Scott Wadle, USMC (Ret), Program Director of MOAA National Council and Chapter Affairs Department

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awarded for

2002 / 2003 / 2005 / 2008
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President's Comments. . .

Greetings fellow Jayhawk Chapter members

We are already more than half-way through winter and Punxsutawney Phil has told us spring will arrive early. Unfortunately the weather man is telling us the meantime the rest of winter will be harsh. So far both have been correct.



I hope this note finds everyone doing well and looking forward to the March 19 meeting. We will be hosting LtCol Scott Wadle, USMC (Ret). He is the program director for Council & Chapter Affairs at our MOAA National HQs in Alexandria VA. He will provide us a legislative update; however, he is prepared to discuss other topics of interest to the Jayhawk Chapter. Please feel free to let myself, Capt Cooper, Col. Halladay, or any of the Jayhawk Chapter Leadership know if you have anything that you would like the speaker to discuss or touch on. Of course we will still follow the format we have used for the past couple of years and you will be welcome to address additional issues during question and answers after his formal presentation.

The Kansas Legislature is in full swing. Mike and I were blessed with the opportunity to again introduce MOAA and with a number of other veterans and Veterans service organizations the 19th of February to the Kansas House Veterans Committee. We are looking forward to another positive legislative session.

We will also be holding our elections and installation of officers at the meeting. LtCol Wadle will be conducting the installation ceremony and I am looking forward to passing the guidon to the next set of Chapter leadership. We have a great lineage of leadership in the Jayhawk Chapter and I am positive that will continue.

We will also be hosting the KU Air Force ROTC color guard at our march meeting. Looking forward to spending time with another great group of KU cadets.

I am looking forward to seeing all of you at the Lawrence Country Club March 19 and at the KU ROTC awards ceremonies and commissioning in April and May.

God Speed,

George

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1 March 2019

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* Reservations should be sent
to Jim Cooper by
13 March 2019



JAYHAWK CHAPTER NEWS



**CHAPTER DUES (\$20.00) were due in January.
If you haven't paid already, please send your check to CAPT (Ret) Jim Cooper
5216 Brown Lane, Lawrence, KS 66049-5112**

**The Jayhawk Chapter Directory is scheduled for distribution at the May Chapter meeting.
If you want a new/different picture or if any information has changed,
PLEASE LET US KNOW no later than the end of April.**

PERSONAL NEWS

From Vic Braden: I will be retiring at the end of March after nearly 39 years of service.

From Mike Kelly: Georgiana and I have been busy shoveling snow and wondering why we didn't take a trip to a warm weather spot this January and February. Mike has also kept busy by replacing the originally installed smoke detectors in his house. According to a discussion with Fire Prevention Division Chief Chris King at Lawrence Fire Department, smoke detectors need to be replaced after 10 years of service. This is due to the age out of the detector component, not battery age or low charge. Chief King's advice is reflected in other fire safety articles found on the internet. Some smoke detectors use a very small amount of the radioactive isotope Americium 241 and these ionizing-type devices should be properly disposed of. *The Lawrence Public Works Hazardous Waste Facility at 2201 Kresge Road, near the K-Mart facility north of the Kansas Turnpike, will NOT take them.*

If your house is older than 10 years, you may need to replace your smoke detectors! Finally, if your house has natural gas appliances, furnace, or water heater you should install a carbon monoxide (CO) detector. There are models that combine the smoke and CO detectors in one device. Some of these newer and pricier devices are able to connect to your smart phone and notify you of a smoke or CO problem even when you are away from home.

From Dean Bevan: In May, I'll be directing at Theatre Lawrence a staged reading of "The Children," a play not really about children, but about what happens when a (fictional) nuclear power reactor is inundated by a tsunami.

From Herschel Stroud: We are terribly inactive just now. Except that after the snow the 26th, I went out and shoveled my sidewalk and driveway. As I was finishing, a friend drove up with his snowblower and finished the job. Afterward, he asked, "Who did your sidewalk and driveway?" I said I did. He said don't do that again, at 88 you are too old to be shoveling snow. I asked for his phone number and will use it when it snows again. With a deal like that, I am a quick learner!!

From Gary Bjorge: Recently Nancy and I departed for Los Angeles on the Southwest Chief from the newly rededicated Santa Fe (AMTRAK) railroad station at Seventh and New Jersey streets. We returned by taking the California Zephyr from San Francisco (Emeryville) to Galesburg, IL, and then transferring there to the Southwest Chief for a short ride back to Lawrence.

From Jim Cooper: In January we took a 7-day cruise on Holland America's 'Eurodam' from San Diego down along the Mexican Riviera with friends. We got a great deal during the Black Friday/Thanksgiving week sales.

We really enjoy Holland America – while all ages are welcome, it seems to cater to the mature traveler. The service is always superb, as is usually the case on cruise ships, and the food on our ship was great. We had no problems. Embarkation and disembarkation were both smooth and quick. Many of you are old pros compared to us – we've done three ocean cruises and a European river cruise – but I do have to say that we thoroughly enjoy cruising.

We had three full at-sea days and three days with shore stops. I admit being a bit apprehensive about going ashore, especially in Mazatlan (which is in Siniloa State), due to the negative stories about Mexico: drug cartels, caravans of illegal immigrants, etc., but, we found all three stops – Cabo San Lucas, Mazatlan, and Puerto Vallarta – pleasant, clean and attractive, and there was a lot of security evident (but not oppressively so) – local, state, federal, and in some cases, military police. Cruise lines did cease stopping at Mazatlan and Puerto Vallarta between 2011 and 2014, and as a result the city governments agreed to increase security and clean up the cities. At any rate, we enjoyed our time ashore.

We had great weather on the cruise – it was wonderful to be in shorts again! It was a super break from our Kansas winter, but entirely too short. We were lucky enough to return just in time for the "Winter Vortex".



**The newsletter is only as good as the material available,
so each member is requested to forward to the editors news and other items of interest.**



Army News LTC Tracey Olson, USA

Greetings Jayhawk Chapter!

On 15 December 2018, we commissioned two Second Lieutenants – 2LT Jordan Freitag and 2LT Levi Lindsay. Family and friends witnessed this special event during a ceremony held at the Military Science Building on KU campus. 2LT Jordan Freitag commissioned as an Engineer Officer in the North Dakota National Guard; 2LT Levi Lindsay commissioned as a Nurse in the Army Reserve.



This semester, we have three major events taking place. First, our spring field training exercise will be conducted on Fort Riley; we are excited to partner with another ROTC program, University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Our training event will include an M4 qualification range, squad-level building to platoon-level operations training, the confidence course and rappelling, simulator training and a flight for our Cadets, supported by KSARNG aviation unit.

Next, we are hosting the 25th Annual Ranger Buddy Challenge at Rim Rock Farms. Last year, over 450 competitors from 42 different ROTC programs competed; we are expecting a similar turnout this year.

Lastly, our 100th Anniversary “Celebrating 100 Years of Excellence” Military Ball will be held on Friday, April 26 (please see Save the Date attachment). We hope you can join us to celebrate this milestone.

Rock Chalk Jayhawk! ALL IN!

*LTC Tracey Olson
Professor of Military Science*



Navy News Capt Trenton Lennard, USN



Greeting From the Jayhawk Battalion!

The battalion is in full stride as we came sprinting out of the blocks for the Spring Semester. For our seniors, this semester is the final stretch before they are commissioned Ensigns and Second Lieutenants and begin their challenging careers in the Naval Service. We should all be a bit envious of the opportunities facing these Jayhawks.

The Jayhawk Battalion began their semester by welcoming three new midshipmen into their ranks. These students arrived eager to get started and begin their journey of earning a commission in the Navy. After an abbreviated but intense New Student Orientation the new 4/C Midshipmen smoothly integrated into the battalion. They remain motivated and the battalion looks forward to their future successes here at the University of Kansas.

In addition to midshipmen joining our ranks, the Jayhawk Battalion had the opportunity to promote both of our Officer Candidates (OC). The battalion held ceremonial quarters for these two outstanding individuals. OC Gustafson was promoted to Petty Officer First Class, while OC Rodriguez was promoted to Petty Officer Second Class. This

is a testament to the high quality Seaman-to-Admiral nuclear qualified Sailors that are enrolled in the KU ROTC program.



The battalion gathers around the CO after the OC promotion on 30 January 2019.

Although they are referred to as Officer Candidates while onboard, it was great to promote EMN1 Gustafson and MMN2 Rodriguez. The event also provide a rare opportunity for our Midshipmen to take part in an enlisted promotion quarters. BZ!

This semester is a busy time for us as we welcome guest speakers from across the Navy and Marine Corps. We were fortunate to host a submarine officer Commander from Naval Reactors recently and just last week a WWII Marine veteran who fought on Iwo Jima visited with our Midshipmen. In the coming months we look forward to

Sailors visiting our unit from the EOD, Information Warfare, Space, and the Aviation communities. The battalion has also put in many long hours preparing for the University of Colorado-Boulder Drill competition in early March. Thirty-three Jayhawks will compete in seven different events against a dozen other NROTC programs. The Midshipmen are primed and ready for the competition. Wish us luck.



Jerry Ingram, WWII, and two Iwo Jima veterans visited with the Jayhawk Battalion on 20 Feb.

The most excited news this month is the ship selection for our three Surface Warfare bound seniors. Our three seniors were able to select one of their top choice ships and

will be heading to the fleet soon. Congratulations to the USS Preble, USS New Orleans, and USS McCampbell, you will each be receiving a highly motivated Jayhawk to your wardroom.

Graduation and commissioning will be here before we know it. I hope you will put our Awards Ceremony (May 1) and our Commissioning Ceremony (May 20) on your calendars. We hope to see you in Lawrence. As always if you are ever in the area, swing by the Military Science Building and say hello. You should be proud of Jayhawk Battalion Midshipmen. I am honored to work with them.

Rock Chalk!

Capt Trenton Lennard



Air Force News ***LtCol Nichole Phelan, USAF***

Hello from Detachment 280, the Flying Jayhawks!

We've hit the ground running in the Spring Semester with several training events geared towards preparing sophomore cadets to attend Field Training. This includes everything from marching, physical fitness, leadership development, expeditionary Air Force concepts, and hygienic rules for training such as the proper method for making your bunk and folding your clothes. Cadets will spend two-weeks at Maxwell AFB, Alabama this summer. Sophomore cadets are currently competing for enrollment allocations to attend Field Training.

We had 2 staff member selected to hold a field training staff position. Captain Garrett Carson will attend Session 1 as a Squadron Training Officer. And I will attend Session 2 as the Vice Commander. Cadets Mary Tighe and Chase Charles were selected for the very competitive position of Cadet Training Assistant.

Coming Up:

We are anxiously awaiting the results of the rated board for this. Those results should come out in the next week or two.

We are hosting a joint ROTC Open House on Saturday, 30 March from 0900 – 1200. This is an opportunity for local area high schools, JROTC units or current college students to check out Air Force ROTC. Parents are also encouraged to attend and lunch will be provided for the attendees.

Rock Chalk, Jayhawk!

Very Respectfully,

LtCol Nikki Phelan

Commander, Air Force ROTC Det 280

Entering the VA System

Jim Cooper

As I was retiring from the Navy, I followed some sound advice: I had a physical by the VA to determine if I had any disabilities that qualified for a VA rating. Based on knee, back, hearing, and stomach ulcer histories that had developed during my time in the service, I was rated as 30 percent disabled.

I've not up until just recently done anything with this rating, partly because I didn't even know where to begin. Then I heard that we actually have a VA clinic in town, at 2200 Harvard Road, just a bit South/Southwest of the Commerce Bank on Iowa Street. In January I went over to the clinic and the receptionist confirmed that I am currently in the system, and then she directed me to report to an eligibility office to officially activate my VA status and obtain a VA medical ID card.

The nearest VA eligibility office is at the Colmery-O'Neil VA Medical Center, 2200 SW Gage Blvd, in Topeka, about a 35 minute drive.

The eligibility office is located In Building One, the main hospital building in the complex. One enters the building and proceeds through the lobby area, and then turns right at the first hallway. The eligibility office is about three doors down on the left, Room A143, and it is open 0800-1630 daily. The office uses a "take-a-number and sit down" system, but the times I've been there I haven't seen any waiting lines, and they have two eligibility clerks. My time there was about 30 minutes total, and the clerk informed me that my VA card would arrive in the mail within 10 days, but that in the interim, and actually

anytime if I didn't have my card with me, I could use my drivers license to check in at appointments. I found it interesting that they really don't seem to want to use my retired military ID card for check in. My next step was to get my "entry" appointment in Lawrence. They want you to have labs drawn about a week prior, so there are actually two appointments. The Doc at the Lawrence clinic is Dr Robert Frayser, an Air Force vet, and a real nice guy. He explained that I need to have a check-up appointment at least once a year to maintain my currency in the system. It was also explained to me that with VA care, there are no co-pays for appointments or for care, and no co-pays for any meds related to my disability, but that there may be co-pays for any meds not related to my disabilities. If one has a 100% disability, VA dental care is included.

Dr Frayser entered requests for a couple of consults into the VA system. If the system cannot get you a consult appointment in the VA system within 30 days, they will get you a consult or appointment in the civilian community at their cost.

I've already had a follow up consult at Colmery-O'Neil in Topeka, and the process went smoothly and quickly. If you have a VA disability rating, I urge you to activate your VA care. It provides a ready resource that you've earned and may be a great alternative or supplement to the care you are already receiving. I will periodically update you on VA care in the newsletter as I gather more experience and knowledge about the system.

MOAA NEWSLETTER ADVOCACY

This is a summary of the many items MOAA produces each week on legislative activities. Those who have e-mail receive the full MOAA Newsletter each week upon completing application.

MOAA Newsletter Advocacy, 03 January 2019: Tell Congress Not to Shrink the Deficit by Shorting Troops and Veterans

A new report outlines 121 options to reduce our nation's deficit - could you be affected?

Most likely you would be, if Congress implemented any variation of the options provided by the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) [in a December report](#). There are many suggestions on the list that would affect servicemembers, military retirees and their families. Among the options are the introduction of TRICARE for Life fees and reductions in basic allowance for housing.

While ideas like these have been pitched before, elected leaders had deemed them untenable as many were based on significant reductions to benefits most Americans and their families value. But Congress is increasingly running out of options.

[ACT NOW: While the CBO report covers the next 10 years, it is important for you to connect with your members of Congress now. [Please visit our Legislative Action Center to send a message](#), and be ready for recurring updates; enter your information and click "submit" to see the letter and a list of your legislators.]

The national debt is reaching critical mass and climbing, fueled by continued deficit spending. The CBO report cites the FY 2018 federal budget deficit totaled \$779 billion, raising our nation's debt to 78 percent of our Gross Domestic Product.

Nearly every legislative engagement on Capitol Hill now prompts, "How do you propose to pay for this new spending required in the bill?" Congress has to answer this same question for bills they support. The inherent expectation is for the funding to come from the same department or program the bill supports.

MOAA has not supported funding strategies that pit one group of military and veterans against another as a means to pay for service earned benefits - rather we support funding from the treasury so costs could be shared by all.

MOAA's President wrote about the pay-for challenge in his [2018 review](#) and we acknowledge this to be a continuing problem for 2019. This leads to three focus points:

CBO options to reduce the deficit may gain traction as the administration and Congress wrestle with a pay-for mandate.

Military pay, benefits, and healthcare are often seen as funding sources for other programs.

MOAA will continue to oppose putting the pay-for burden on the backs of beneficiaries.

With these points in mind, we draw your attention to seven of the 121 options. These are areas previously eyed for funding, and since they are in the CBO report, we want to address them now. We will provide a more detailed analysis on each of these and others over the coming months leading up to April when we storm Capitol Hill. We will also call on your help to ensure specific benefits do not become targets in the new Congress. The seven options if implemented would:

Cap increases in basic military pay for military service members

Reduce the Basic Allowance for Housing to 80 percent of average housing costs

Introduce enrollment fees under TRICARE For Life

Introduce minimum out-of-pocket requirement under TRICARE For Life

Increase premiums for Medicare Part B

Modify TRICARE enrollment fees and cost sharing for working-age military retirees

End VA's Individual Unemployability payments to disabled veterans at the full retirement age for Social Security

As you can see, servicemembers, veterans and their families would be affected. [Please act now. Click here and send a message](#) to Congress. These benefits must be protected.

MOAA Newsletter Advocacy, 17 January 2019: VA Renews Pledge Vets' Health Care Won't Be Privatized

The Department of Veterans Affairs pushed back Monday at a [New York Times report](#) suggesting that expanded community-care options under the VA MISSION Act would lead to the "privatization" of VA health care and the eventual shutdown of some VA medical centers.

"Privatization is a myth and to suggest otherwise is completely false and a red herring designed to distract and avoid honest debate on the real issues surrounding veterans' health care," Curt Cashour, a VA spokesman, said in a statement.

The MISSION Act, passed last year by Congress and signed into law by President Donald Trump with the support of veterans service organizations (VSOs), was intended to overhaul and continue funding for the VA Choice program on private-care options. That program was riddled with

inefficiencies, both for veterans and the community-care providers.

Under the act, about \$5.2 billion in mandatory funding was appropriated for the Veterans Choice Fund. The new Veterans Community Care Program was designed to include new standards for access to care.

[RELATED: [MOAA's Interview With VA Secretary Robert Wilkie](#)]

Rep. Julia Brownley, D-California, a member of the House Veterans Affairs Committee, said, "Congress provided clear guidance to the VA when it passed the bipartisan Mission Act" to protect the VA's existing health care system while making it "simpler for veterans to access the care they need."

In a statement to Military.com, Brownley said she is concerned about "White House insistence that private medical care be 'paid for' through cuts to VA programs."

"The administration should know that I will hold them accountable to pursue the best care for our veterans, not inferior care driven by political ideology," Brownley said.

Major veterans service organizations said they expect Wilkie to honor his pledge against privatization, but also said they are waiting on the new access standards before making a final judgment.

"There are no indications that the VA is going to be privatized," said Chanin Nuntavong, director of the American Legion's National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Division, but "we're waiting for the president to decide what the access standards are going to look like."

"We don't believe privatization is the intent here" under the reforms of the Mission Act, said Carlos Fuentes, director of National Legislative Services for the Veterans of Foreign Wars. But "specifically, we want to see the access standards."

In a statement, Randy Reese, executive director of the Washington headquarters of Disabled American Veterans, said the organization remains "optimistic that Secretary Wilkie will honor his commitment to improve care for our nation's veterans not just by expanding access, but also by focusing on long overdue modernization of the VA health care system, filling employee vacancies and rebuilding infrastructure."

Late last month, the VA began awarding the first of several regional contracts under the Mission Act for the new Community Care Network that will replace various private-sector care programs for veterans. The contracts [could cost a total of \\$55.2 billion through 2026](#), if all the options are exercised, the department said.

Bipartisan House Bill Would End 'Widows Tax'

Legislation introduced by Reps. Joe Wilson (R-S.C.) and John Yarmuth (D-Ky.) would end the deduction of Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) annuities from Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) paid to survivors of fallen service members, also known as the "widows tax."

[TAKE ACTION: [Tell Your Representative to Support H.R. 553](#)]

About 67,000 military survivors would benefit from this legislation, with the current offset costing them about \$12,000 annually.

"The SBP-DIC offset remains grossly unfair to the members of the military community who deserve our support the most," said Lt. Gen. Dana T. Atkins, USAF (Ret), President and CEO of MOAA. "We thank Reps. Wilson and Yarmuth for their bipartisan leadership on this issue, and we encourage their fellow legislators to join the fight."

"This is uniformly agreed-upon throughout Congress, but they haven't found the political will to resolve it," Atkins said. "The 116th Congress has an opportunity to be known for getting this done."

[RELATED: [Surviving Spouse Pens Powerful Message to Eliminate 'Widows Tax'](#)]

"It is unconscionable to think there is a 'Widows Tax' on the surviving family members of our fallen heroes," Wilson said in a release announcing the bill. "We owe it to them to secure stable benefits in the event of their retirement or death."

MOAA Newsletter Advocacy, 24 January 2019:

Ways President Trump Can Support Vets and Troops at This Year's State of the Union

Below are six issues MOAA hopes President Trump will put forward during the address. What military topics would you like the President to cover during the SOTU? Email us: editor@moaa.org. And check out the [Legislative Action Center](#) for how you can engage your representatives on these topics and others.

- 1. Protect pay for all uniformed servicemembers and retirees.** While the government may be fully funded when the speech is delivered, there's far from any guarantee that a long-term solution will be in place. As of now, [Coast Guard, NOAA, and USPHS members](#) haven't been getting paid, and while retirees from these services have been protected to this point, some could begin missing checks in the coming days. If the speech comes during a temporary government opening, a move [that has been proposed by some legislators](#) in the past, the President must offer plans to protect these servicemembers from any future closures.

MOAA, a nonpartisan association, will not take a stand on the plans in play. If full government funding is not in the immediate future, legislation such as the [Pay Our Coast Guard Act](#) should be passed, not only for Coast Guard members, but similarly in support of commissioned officers in the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Commissioned Officer Corps and the U.S. Public Health Service.

- 2. Pass fiscal year 2020 federal appropriations on time.**
- 3. Repeal the 'widows tax.'** With 271 co-sponsors from the House and 51 from the Senate on bills supporting this repeal in the previous Congress, gaining early support from the president will be seen as a welcome sign of support early in this Congressional session. Military survivors whose sponsors die of service-connected issues are eligible for two federal benefits: a sponsor-purchased Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) from DoD and Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) from the VA. But current law requires money paid from SBP to be reduced dollar-for-dollar by the amount paid by the VA's DIC. MOAA strongly believes the widows tax should be eliminated. These programs are paid for two separate reasons: SBP is a servicemember-purchased plan to ensure a continued financial benefit for a servicemember's survivor. DIC is a monetary benefit paid to eligible survivors whose sponsors die from a service-connected injury.

[ACT NOW: [Send your own message to Congress to end the widows tax.](#)]

- 4. Authorize a full military pay raise.** The forecasted pay raise, which is based on the Employment Cost Index (ECI), [is 3.1 percent](#). The

ECI is the legislated benchmark from which the military pay raise is to be based. Approving the ECI-based pay raise this year will continue to recognize our national commitment to ensuring military pay raises keep up with increases to salaries and wages of workers from private industry.

- 5. Stabilize TRICARE.** The Congressional Budget Office's recent report sounds familiar, but still alarming, warning about the potential of [raising or creating new TRICARE fees](#) to fight the federal deficit.

[READ MORE: [Don't Let TRICARE For Life Become a Target.](#)]

MOAA Newsletter Advocacy, 31 January 2019:
Changes Coming to TRICARE's Pharmacy Benefit

TRICARE is planning to add a new tier of drugs to its three-tier medication formulary - one that's made up of drugs *excluded from coverage* by TRICARE.

Medications now fall into one of the existing tiers: Generic (Tier 1), Brand Name (Tier 2), and Generic and Brand Name (Tier 3, also known as "non-formulary"). The addition of a fourth tier (to be referred to as "Excluded" or "Not Covered"), according to officials who recently briefed MOAA on the development, "aligns TRICARE's pharmacy benefit with current industry standards among commercial health care plans."

[RELATED: [Tell Congress not to raise TRICARE fees](#)]

The new tier will require beneficiaries to pay the full out-of-pocket cost for the drug.

So, where did this idea come from? Last year's National Defense Authorization Act included a provision allowing the DoD Pharmacy and Therapeutics (P&T) Committee, which resides in the Defense Health Agency (DHA), to identify the drugs to be excluded from TRICARE coverage. The P&T Committee may recommend, and the head of the DHA may approve, partial or full exclusion of a drug. The Beneficiary Advisory Panel, an appointed group of stakeholders to include one member from MOAA and one from [The Military Coalition](#) who represent TRICARE beneficiaries, will also have the opportunity to provide recommendation and comments in this process.

Specific criteria for placing any drug in the fourth tier will focus on the drug's efficacy, safety, and outcome characteristics. Tier 4 drugs would include those that:

- Offer little to no relative clinical benefit from an effectiveness perspective;
- Pose a significant safety risk that may outweigh any potential clinical benefit;
- Have available alternatives; and/or
- Are considerably more expensive compared with covered alternatives.

TRICARE is developing plans to minimize the impact on beneficiaries by:

- Evaluating only a limited number of drugs per quarter for possible exclusion status;
- Identifying available alternatives;
- Creating an extended implementation period (to allow for beneficiaries to discuss alternatives with their provider); and
- Provide affected beneficiaries with a mailed letter from Express Scripts which will notify them of the change 30 to 60 days prior to the implementation, and of what steps they need to take.

Are there specific drugs ready to be slated for this change? Not at this time: The review process will determine which drugs meet the criteria outlined above. That process,

which begins in February for the first drugs under consideration, can take up to six months from the time a recommendation is made before changes are implemented and beneficiaries are affected, officials said.

Beneficiaries can find out all drugs TRICARE currently covers by searching the [TRICARE Formulary](#) or calling Express Scripts at (877) 363-1303.

While we understand the rationale for establishing a fourth tier as an approach to formulary management, MOAA will remain vigilant and closely examine the drugs recommended for exclusion. This commitment, and your feedback, will be key to ensuring the leaders of the Defense Health Agency are aware of the impact these changes have on their beneficiaries.

New House Armed Services Chairman Pledges to Keep 'Bipartisan Tradition'

The House Armed Services Committee held its first meeting of the new 116th Congress on Jan. 24, while much of Washington remained in the shadow of the federal shutdown.

The committee is responsible for funding and oversight of the Department of Defense, including personnel policies and services to support the health and well-being of servicemembers and their families.

Rep. Adam Smith (D-Wash.), the new chairman, convened an "organizational meeting" to layout priorities and procedural rules for governing in the session Smith thanked the former chairman - and now ranking member -- Rep. Mac Thornberry (R-Texas) for his leadership and staunch support of "one of the most bipartisan committees in Congress," having shepherded passage of a National Defense Authorization (NDAA) for the past four years.

"Working issues with both sides of the isle is the best model for this committee which has endless number of important and complicated issues it must work," said Smith.

Smith said his two priorities as committee chair are "to maintain its bipartisan tradition and to produce an NDAA."

Thornberry supported the new chairman's priorities, saying, "It doesn't matter if you are in the majority or minority you can meaningfully contribute to this committee." He also emphasized how important it was "for the committee to do everything it can to not go backwards and to make sure progress is made."

Both Smith and Thornberry took time to introduce the committee's 18 new members and welcome back returning members.

While individual subcommittee membership has yet to be announced, the following [leadership](#) positions have been made public:

Military Personnel

Chair, Rep. Jackie Speier (D-Calif.)

Ranking Member and [currently serving in the Army National Guard](#), Rep. Trent Kelly (R-Miss.)

Readiness

Chair, Rep. John Garamendi (D-Calif.)

Ranking Member, Rep. Doug Lamborn @-Colo.)

Seapower and Projection Forces

Chair, Rep. Joe Courtney (D-Conn.)

Ranking Member, Rep. Rob Wittman @-Va.)

Intelligence, Emerging Threats and Capabilities

Chair, Rep. Jim Langevin (D-R.I.)

Ranking Member, Rep. Elise Stefanik @-N.Y.)

Strategic Forces

Chair, Rep. Jim Cooper (D-Tenn.)

Ranking Member, Mike Turner (R-Ohio)

Tactical Air and Land Forces

Chair, Rep. Donald Norcross (D-N.J.)

Ranking Member, Rep. Vicky Hartzler (R--Mo.)

MOAA is pleased to see the committee's continued commitment to serving our brave men and women. We look forward to working with the committee throughout the 116th Congress.

MOAA Newsletter Advocacy, 07 February 2019: From VA to Afghanistan, 5 Key Takeaways from the State of the Union Address

While many of these proposals received applause from lawmakers and others in attendance, the warmest response of the night may have come for three D-Day veterans - Pfc. Joseph Reilly, Staff Sgt. Irving Locker, and Sgt. Herman Zeitchik - who were among the honored guests at the speech.

Key takeaways for the military community from the address:

1. VA accountability: Reflecting on bipartisan accomplishments, Pres. Trump highlighted the VA Accountability Act, which was introduced in 2017 and was [among MOAA's legislative victories](#) that year. The law gives VA Secretary Robert Wilkie increased flexibility to remove, demote, or suspend any VA employee, including leaders, for misconduct or poor performance. "We passed a VA accountability, so we can finally terminate those who mistreat our wonderful veterans!"
2. An end in Afghanistan? The President said he has "accelerated our negotiations to reach a political settlement" that would end the 19-year war, crediting the "unmatched valor" of American servicemembers with putting such a solution within reach. "We do not know whether we will achieve an agreement -- but we do know that after two decades of war, the hour has come to at least try for peace."
3. Leaving Syria. "When I took office, ISIS controlled more than 20,000 square miles in Iraq and Syria," President Trump said. "Today, we have liberated virtually all of that territory from the grip of these bloodthirsty monsters." The president pledged a "warm welcome home" for servicemembers deployed to Syria, though work will continue with allies to "destroy the remnants of ISIS."
4. Protecting American security. President Trump said the final part of his agenda is to protect America's national security, including defense budgets of \$700 billion last year and \$716 billion this year. Trump said other nations, which are part of NATO, are also paying their fair share for security. "For years, the United States was being treated very unfairly by friends of ours - members of NATO - but now we have secured a \$100 billion increase in defense spending from NATO allies," he said.

Related to national security, President Trump continued to call for the construction of a wall along the U.S.-Mexico border. "This is a smart, strategic, see-through steel barrier -- not just a simple concrete wall. It will be deployed in the areas identified by border agents as having the greatest need, and as these agents will tell you, where walls go up, illegal crossings go way down," Trump said.

5. Targeting health care costs. While not mentioning TRICARE or military health care specifically, he did pledge to work to "lower the cost of health care and prescription drugs," including a proposal that would require health care companies to "disclose real prices to foster competition and bring costs down."

Pentagon Postpones Budget Rollout to March

The Pentagon is set to release its FY 2020 budget on March 12, six weeks later than expected.

The delay technically violates a 1990 law requiring the president's budget to be submitted no later than the first Monday in February, but there's no penalty for being late. Previous administrations of both parties have delivered budgets late.

The delay increases the likelihood of a continuing resolution, a stopgap spending measure, later this year, as lawmakers will have less time to work on the legislation.

[RELATED: [New Report Sheds Light on Costs of Shutdown](#)]

The 35-day government shutdown was cited as one of the reasons for the delay. That means the March 12 release could be moved again if another shutdown occurs once temporary funding for about a quarter of the federal workforce expires on Feb. 15.

Such a funding lapse would mean Coast Guard and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Commissioned Corps members, as well as some U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps members working with unfunded agencies, again would report for duty without pay.

[TAKE ACTION: [Tell Your Representative to Back a Bill Protecting Coast Guard Gold Star Spouses From Shutdowns](#)]

Reports of what to expect in the administration's defense budget request have varied anywhere between \$700 billion and \$750 billion, although the administration has signaled it will be closer to the latter figure.

A six-week delay in submitting the budget adds to an already full plate for Congress. Lawmakers will have to strike a new budget deal by the end of the year to avoid returning to sequester spending levels. Those levels were first established in a 2011 deficit reduction law. Absent a new agreement, the Defense Department would face automatic cuts of almost \$54 billion in 2020.

MOAA Newsletter Advocacy, 14 February 2019: What Would Major Cuts to Military Medical Personnel Mean to Your Care?

In July, MOAA first identified four key and rather worrisome trends we've been closely tracking that are taking place in the military health care system. Now, we can add the [planned reduction in the number of military medical personnel](#) to the list.

If the numbers are as large as we have been led to believe (approximately 17,000 positions), this will exceed and intensify the impact of the other trends, and may have considerable effect on military beneficiaries in significant ways.

We will not be able to assess the impact of these large cuts in the number of practicing military physicians, nurses, medics, and other allied medical personnel until the fiscal year 2020 defense budget request is approved by the White House and sent to Congress in mid-March. If Congress approves the cuts, to be presented by bill, they would start to take effect quickly in FY 2021.

[RELATED: [Your TRICARE Benefits Are in the Crosshairs - Again](#)]

Proposed personnel reductions of such magnitude surely will affect military medical training platforms. It takes years to educate physicians, and there are projections of physician shortages: A [recent study](#) released by the Association of American Medical Colleges predicts that by 2030, the United States will face a shortage of between 42,600 and 121,300 physicians. This leads us to our first

question: How this will affect the military mission and medical care, and how can leaders expect to have a medically ready force without a ready medical force?

Our second question: What would these cuts mean for beneficiaries? If the plan is just to replace these health care providers with civilians, that's not a reliable strategy. Getting private-sector medical professionals to take jobs near rural bases may not be realistic or feasible.

Beneficiaries, including active duty families who receive care at military treatment facilities, may be forced to seek it in the TRICARE networks. Pediatric and obstetric care - which are now available to these beneficiaries - may vanish from the MTFs. Lab and pharmacy services, along with radiology, may be greatly reduced. We already are starting to see TRICARE Prime retirees being re-enrolled from MTFs into the civilian networks, resulting in them being charged with new, and higher, co-payments.

These are major shifts in military medicine. MOAA will watch DoD's proposed FY 2020 budget closely and will assess the impact on military beneficiaries.

Military Family Survey Shows How Pay, Benefit Cuts May Harm Retention

As the services struggle to find money in their budgets to increase lethality, they often resort to slashing pay and benefits for existing servicemembers - even as they are missing recruiting goals. A new survey validates MOAA's concerns about the effects of short-sighted compensation cuts on recruiting and retention efforts.

Blue Star Families released the results of its annual [Military Family Lifestyle Survey](#) on Feb. 6. Survey respondents zeroed in on the practical consequences of sequestration cuts: They have concerns about their care in the military health care system, financial stress for active duty families, and complications related to abrupt and frequent moves.

With more than 10,000 respondents, the Military Family Lifestyle Survey is the largest annual survey of active duty servicemembers and their family. It offers a valuable overview of the challenges and views of servicemembers and veterans and their families today.

[RELATED: [Pentagon Weighs Privatizing Military PCS Moves](#)]

Health care benefits were cited by two-thirds of respondents as one of their top reasons for remaining with the military. While respondents are generally satisfied with their health care costs and the quality of providers and care, they are not as satisfied with their ability to access care in a timely manner. Families reported long waits and rushed care. ([With the services weighing the elimination of 17,000 billets for medical providers](#), there's no sign this logjam in the military health care system will improve any time soon.)

Servicemembers also cited better access to alternative health care and improvements to mental health care as ways to improve their health care experience.

For the first time, survey respondents cited finances as the greatest source of stress for active duty families, with 62 percent of active duty families saying they experience financial stress and 37 percent reporting feeling "moderately or very insecure about their financial future."

And it's no wonder why: Only 10 percent of families say they could subsist on their servicemember's salary alone. According to the survey, 30 percent of active duty spouses were unemployed and 56 percent were underemployed, with the likelihood of unemployment and underemployment increasing for spouses with each subsequent relocation.

Relocation also brought other stresses: 31 percent of respondents said they spent over \$1,000 on relocation expenses that could not be reimbursed, and 78 percent need childcare, but identified difficulty finding childcare as a major concern, especially when changing duty stations. And when families PCS, their overall wellbeing is affected by housing allowances whether they live on- or off-base.

Access the full results of the Military Family Lifestyle Survey at bluestarfam.org/survey.

House Passes Bill to Provide Free Child Care During VA Health Appointments

A bill passed Friday by the House would make permanent an ongoing pilot program that provides no-cost child care for veterans so they can attend medical appointments at VA facilities.

The existing program, which was created by Congress in 2011, will expire Oct. 1 without new funding. The [Veterans' Access to Child Care Act](#), H.R. 840, would expand the benefit to include all veterans who travel to a VA facility and receive care. The bill, which passed the House 400 to 9, includes amendments that would expand the program further, allowing stipends for child care while the parent has an appointment at any VA facility or veterans center for a variety of VA-covered services, including physical therapy and mental health counseling. The bill next moves to the Senate.

[RELATED: [Some Military Families to Get More Cash for Child Care](#)]

More than 10,000 children of veterans have used the pilot program, according to a news release from Rep. Julia Brownley (D-Calif.), newly elected chairwoman of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee's health panel, who introduced the legislation.

Women veterans used the service at a rate four times their population among the veteran community. Without the program, many women said they would have brought their children to their appointment or had been forced to cancel their appointment, according to the VA.

The program was reauthorized by Congress four times.

"Keeping our promise to our nation's veterans means not only providing the care our veterans need, but breaking down barriers to accessing that care," Brownley said. "The lack of child care shouldn't prevent veterans from receiving VA health care services. Ensuring veterans have access to child care is especially important for our growing population of women veterans, who are more likely to be taking care of young children. I am extremely pleased that the House passed this important legislation today."

MOAA Newsletter Advocacy, 21 February 2019:

Here's How the New VA Appeals Process Works

In a Tuesday ceremony at VA Headquarters in Washington, D.C., Department of Veterans Affairs Secretary Robert Wilkie officially implemented the VA's new appeals process, which is commonly called the Appeals Modernization Act (AMA).

Signed into law Aug. 23, 2017, this overhaul of the cumbersome legacy appeals process was no small undertaking. Led by Cheryl Mason (chair, Board of Veterans' Appeals) and David McLenachen (director, Appeals Management Office), the VA devised a three-tiered approach to tackling appeals, with a goal of completing supplemental claims and higher-level reviews [within 125 days](#). Direct appeals to the board are expected to average 365 days.

Horror Stories From Military Families in Privatized Housing Shock, Outrage Lawmakers

Military families staying in privately managed homes on military installations told lawmakers Feb. 13 of vermin infestations and mold problems that led to hospital visits - conditions that House and Senate members described as “disgusting” and “outrageous.”

MOAA has heard from and worked with several of these families, who have cited not just serious and unsanitary living conditions, but also unresponsive housing companies and a fear of reprisal if complaints are taken up the servicemembers' chain of command.

[RELATED: [Here's why you should join MOAA](#)]

“MOAA is looking forward to Congress' response to the varying perspectives of the issue by DoD, public-private partners and military families,” said Eryn Wagon, director of military spouse and family advocacy for MOAA's government relations team. “Our goal is to ensure DoD increases oversight and accountability of their private partners and to eliminate substandard housing and significantly improve maintenance services.”

[RELATED: [News Reports Reveal Lead Paint, Mold, and Bad Air in Military Housing](#)]

Nearly all of the homes on military installations are privately managed, as part of a 1996 deal that was meant to address concerns with run-down housing owned by DoD. The Military Housing Privatization Initiative leases homes to privately owned companies to manage and maintain.

MOAA has heard from families in recent months complaining of serious housing issues, including mice infestations and mold outbreaks. Families said they feel housing companies are dismissive when they attempt to resolve issues.

“It is clear the intended purpose is not being fulfilled in all homes, and it is unacceptable that military families have to fight to get basic health and safety hazards addressed in a timely and effective manner,” Wagon said.

[DOWNLOAD: [MOAA's Statement to the Senate Armed Services Joint Subcommittee \(PDF\)](#)]

Members of Congress said they were shocked to learn conditions of military homes are worse than anyone realized.

“I'm infuriated by what I'm hearing today,” said [Sen. Martha McSally](#) (R-Ariz.) who served 26 years as an Air Force officer. “This is disgusting. When your spouse raised their right hand to make the sacrifices and serve for our freedoms and our way of life, you also stood up to sacrifice. And you knew there were going to be sacrifices - to your careers, to moving around and all that comes with it, but not this.”

“They were maybe going to live in austere circumstances when they deploy, but this is in America.”

Also testifying before Congress members were top leaders from the five largest private housing management companies - Balfour Beatty Communities, Corvias Group, Hunt Military Communities, Lendlease Corp., and Lincoln Military Housing. They acknowledged there were issues with some homes and pledged to fix shoddy conditions.

Military leaders who testified included Robert McMahon, assistant secretary of defense for sustainment; as well as assistant secretaries of Installations, Energy and Environment for the Army, Navy, and Air Force.

[MOAA's 2019 GOALS: [Protect Military Quality-of-Life Benefits](#)]

Alex Beehler, assistant secretary for the Army office, said Army leaders are “deeply troubled” by the reports.

“It is unacceptable for families to endure hardships in their own homes,” he said, noting that the Army has launched an Inspector General investigation.

'I Was Poisoning Myself'

For one military family, sickness began shortly after moving into their home on Laughlin AFB, about 150 miles west of San Antonio, on the U.S.-Mexico border.

Megan Konzen, wife of an Air Force second lieutenant, was in and out of the hospital with severe nosebleeds, vertigo, and other respiratory issues for months. It was difficult on the newlywed, whose husband was out of town for training.

When he returned, Konzen said they visited the hospital once more, where a nurse stopped them on the way out to tell them to check the vents in their on-post home. The couple went home and pried the painted-over vents from the walls.

“It was the most horrific thing I've ever seen in my life,” Konzen said. “I was poisoning myself.”

[RELATED: [Coalition Seeks Answers from DHA on Health Concerns in Military Housing](#)]

Konzen said she called maintenance. A maintenance staffer told her the home's heating, ventilation, and air-conditioning system (HVAC) was in its original packaging, meaning it hadn't been opened for cleaning since its installation at least 20 years ago, she said.

Previous tenants likely weren't aware of the issue, Konzen said, because when they move out, a company wipes off the outside of the vents and paints over them, so the home appears clean from the outside. It was the couple's first home, and Konzen said she didn't know she should've checked the vents before moving in.

“Had anyone taken off the vent at any point over the past 20 years, they would have seen how bad it was,” Konzen said. “You can not understand my frustration with housing when I've been sick for so long.”

A team was sent to the Konzen's home to clean it. But Konzen is pushing Congress for stricter oversight because she knows there are servicemembers living in homes with serious concerns, scared to speak up for fear of retaliation.

For Konzen, and many other military families, on-post housing is the only option. Many posts are in remote locations, with alternative housing options too far away to make a reasonable commute. Housing can also be competitive, depending on whether local civilians gobble up private housing in town and if a large number of servicemembers are stationed at the installation.

“I feel stuck,” Konzen said. “Base housing is not a luxury - it's a necessity. I think really Congress needs to readdress privatized housing. It's really just a flawed system.”

A THORN OF EXPERIENCE IS WORTH A WHOLE WILDERNESS OF WARNING.



JAYHAWK CHAPTER MOAA

A membership meeting will be held **Tuesday, 19 March 2019**
at Lawrence Country Club

Dinner cost is \$24.00/meal.

The Program: Our speaker will be LtCol Scott Wadle, USMC (Ret),
Program Director of MOAA National Council and Chapter Affairs Department

Social Hour: 1800 hours **Dinner:** 1840 hours

The Menu: Chef's choice on salad, Rustic rolls with olive oil & Parmesan
Chicken Marsala over pasta with vegetables, Chef's choice on dessert
Vegetarian entree: Butternut squash ravioli

Send your reservation and check payable to Jayhawk Chapter MOAA
to arrive no later than Wednesday, **13 March 2019, to:**
CAPT Jim Cooper, 5216 Brown Lane, Lawrence, KS 66049-5112

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).

Annual Chapter Dues (\$20.00) \$_____

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, 5216 Brown Lane, Lawrence, KS 66049-5112

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 2019 Meeting Schedule:

Tuesday 19 March
Tuesday 21 May
Tuesday 16 July

Tuesday 17 September
Tuesday 19 November

2019 Kansas Council of Chapters Dates/Locations:

27 April Flint Hills Chapter (Kansas National Guard annual meeting)
10 August Jayhawk Chapter
26 October Santa Fe Trail Chapter



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