



# Jayhawk Chapter MOAA Newsletter

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## November Program:

Our speaker will be KU's Director of the Office of Graduate Military Programs, Mike Denning, Colonel USMC (retired.). He will be speaking on the Intelligence Community Center for Academic Excellence.

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awarded for

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## President's Comments. . .

The end of October is blowing in the winds of Winter, and we're entering the November-December whirlwind of Thanksgiving and Christmas. It always seems that this time of the year speeds by and pretty soon it'll be January. For now, though, we have a great speaker for our next meeting – Col Mike Denning, USMC (Ret), Director of KU's Office of Professional Graduate Military Education, will discuss the development of KU's Intelligence Community Center for Academic Excellence.



November brings some important dates for all of us. On Saturday, November 9<sup>th</sup> at 11 AM the annual Lawrence Veterans Day Parade will kick off – all of us are invited to participate. On Sunday, November 10<sup>th</sup> at 5:30 PM the Dole Institute will host their annual Salute to Veterans Gala - this one is not to be missed! November 30<sup>th</sup> is the annual Salute to Service at the KU-Baylor football game, Memorial Stadium.

I do apologize that we have our November meeting the same night as a KU basketball game – East Tennessee State. I realized this conflict a bit too late to change dates around, but I do want to let you know that **we've moved the date of our January meeting from Tuesday, January 21<sup>st</sup> to Wednesday, January 22<sup>nd</sup>** as K-State will play KU at Allen Field House on Tuesday the 21<sup>st</sup>.

That is about it for now – very much look forward to seeing you all on November 19<sup>th</sup>!

*Coop*

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**\* Reservations should be sent  
to Jim Cooper by  
14 November 2019**



# JAYHAWK CHAPTER NEWS



## PERSONAL NEWS

**From Mike Kelly:** I have been busy with fundraising and parade planning for the Veterans Day Parade. Georgiana and I attended a Royals game on September 3rd that ended on a walk-off home run for the win over the Tigers! Tough season for the Royals but great energy on that night.

I was asked to provide my 9/11 briefing to KU Air Force ROTC seniors on 30 September. None of those cadets are old enough to have personal memories of that terrible day! The USAF ROTC Detachment Commander, Lt Col Nikki Phelan, was a Lieutenant in Navigator Training on 9/11/2001!

**From Dean Bevan:** On Nov. 15 and 16, I'll be busy with Theatre Lawrence's 2nd Annual Short Play Festival. I'll be directing one of the plays, and also a new one of my own plays will be performed. Shows are at 7:30; tickets are \$8 at the door.

**From Mike Devlin:** Georgie and I just returned from spending a week in Branson visiting old friends from our days with the 3rd Inf Division in Scheinfurt Germany 1966 - 1968. Catching up after 53 years takes a least a week! We saw some great shows and took a day trip to "Top of the Rock" that included a golf cart trip through some beautiful scenery including dramatic landscape and a cave. Fun trip!



## Army News

### LTC Tracey Olson, USA

#### Greetings from the Jayhawk Battalion!

The beginning of the semester has been packed full of training events. We conducted our Fall FTX at Fort Leavenworth; sent a team to represent the Jayhawk Battalion to the Army 10-Miler in Washington, DC; competed in the annual Ranger Challenge in Dubuque, IA; and competed in the Kansas Army National Guard sponsored Physical Fitness Competition in Salina, KS.

The Fall FTX was a two-day event at Fort Leavenworth, encompassing squad-level training, a ruck march and weapons qualification. Cadets concurrently finished the final requirements for the German Armed Forces Proficiency Badge (GAFPB). In total, we had 47 Cadets meet the requirements for the GAFPB, 23 Cadets qualify on the M4 rifle and zero Cadets fall out of the 7-mile ruck march.

This year, the program sent eight Cadets to compete in the Army 10-Miler. Cadet Garitz posted the fastest time for the program, clocking in at one hour and eleven minutes. All other Cadets finished the race within one hour and thirty minutes. The trip included time for the Cadets to see the Washington, WWII, Vietnam and Lincoln Monuments. They also had the privilege of witnessing the Changing of Guard at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.

The University of Northern Iowa hosted this year's Ranger Challenge competition in Dubuque, IA. The Jayhawk Battalion sent a nine-person and a five-person Cadet team to compete. Both teams competed hard

and were pushed to their limits. At the end of the day, the five-Cadet team finished second and the nine-Cadet team finished fifth. The same weekend, the Kansas Army National Guard hosted a Physical Fitness Competition and the Jayhawks came out on top. Cadet Vogel won the most Push-Up award (102) and overall top score; CDT Witt won overall second; and, CDT Pal won overall third.

On 26 October, the Jayhawk Battalion Alumni Association inducted four people into the Wall of Fame – COL (Ret) Allen Schmidt (Class of 1975), COL (Ret) William Sheehy (Class of 1988), MAJ (Ret) Larry Burke (Class of 1962), and COL Corwin Lusk (Class of 1991). All reminisced, received the chance to tour the Military Science building and gave invaluable guidance and advice to the Cadets in attendance.

Looking forward to the second half of the semester and next semester. We will be participating in the Joint Service Military Ball, conducting a swearing in ceremony during the K-State Football game and numerous color guards for sporting and local events throughout Lawrence.

**Happy Fall to everyone!**

**LTC Tracey Olson  
Professor of Military Science**



# Navy News

## CAPT Trenton Lennard, USN



### Greeting From the Jayhawk Battalion,

The Jayhawk Battalion has been hard at work during the first half of the fall semester. The battalion leadership recognized three Midshipmen as "Motivators of the Month"



The Battalion forms up for an inspection by the Commanding Officer

for the first few months of the semester. Congratulations to MIDN Murray, Gurnett, and Curtis. They are outstanding students and leaders. MIDN Murray was also recognized for his outstanding performance at the NROTC National Conning Officer Virtual Environment (COVE) Competition in August at Naval Station Newport, RI. He finished as a top three competitor from across the country at the annual competition that evaluates Midshipmen on their ability to drive and handle ships in a virtual training simulator. Additionally, MIDN Gurnett was recognized by a Kansas City military organization for his outstanding performance and dedication to both KU and the Jayhawk Battalion.

As always, the midshipmen of the Jayhawk Battalion are extremely busy. On 21 Sept, we hosted an alumni tailgate where the midshipmen were able to interact and talk with the KU NROTC alumni. Congratulations to the Class of '74 who celebrated their 45<sup>th</sup> reunion! It was great to see them at the MSB. We then joined the KU USAF ROTC unit for a successful joint operations lab. The Air Force Commanding Officer encouraged the Midshipmen and Cadets to learn to work together now since they will all operate in a joint environment very soon. These last few weeks have been no exception to the pace that the Battalion sets. After celebrating the Navy's 244<sup>th</sup> birthday on 13 Oct, KU NROTC's Semper Fi Society successfully planned and executed a 3-mile hike with packs in preparation for the many hikes expected of them at Marine Corps OCS. These events, led by our Marine Officer Instructor, helps develop the future officers mentally and physically. The hikes will increase in length and difficulty over the next few months. Finally, the Jayhawk Battalion participated in their biggest fundraiser of the year by

parking cars at the annual NASCAR racing event at the Kansas Motor Speedway in Kansas City. Early mornings and hard work are no strangers to the Jayhawks and they handled themselves with professionalism and tact.

One of the most important and exciting events for the battalion was the service assignment for our 1/C Navy Midshipmen. Due to their hard work and dedication, each of our seniors

received their first choice of warfare areas. The Jayhawk battalion will be sending two graduates to Naval Aviation, four to Surface Warfare, and one to the Submarine Community.



Our Seniors after hearing the good news on their service selection!

Additionally, our Battalion XO not only was given her first choice of SWO, but she was selected for Intelligence Option which gives her the ability to lateral transfer to intel during her first sea tour. She was one of only three Midshipmen from across the nation to receive this assignment. I am extremely proud of these seven Jayhawks who will be joined by four Marine Option midshipmen for graduation in May.

Lastly I want to recognize our Assistant Marine Officer Instructor for his promotion to Gunnery Sergeant. Congratulations GySgt Cobos on your promotion, it is well deserved!

As always, I encourage you to come by the MSB and see the Midshipmen in action whenever you are on campus. They have many upcoming events over the Veteran's Day Weekend and you will see them at KU football and basketball games. You should be very proud of them, I know I am. For those military families, I would like to wish you a Happy Veteran's Day. Thank you for your service. You have set a very high bar for our Midshipmen.

**Go Navy and Rock Chalk!**

**CAPT Trenton Lennard**

*Smile, it's the key that unlocks everyone's heart.*





## **Air Force News**

### **LtCol Nichole Phelan, USAF**

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

It's been a busy start to the 2020 school year. We have the largest group of upper-classmen this detachment has had in over a decade and largest number of inbound freshmen that are high school scholarship recipients. We also have three new active duty cadre members. We welcome KU alumni Maj Todd Rapp, and two new NCOs to our front office, TSgt Mitchell Ciccarelli and SSgt Shawn Lowe. All three of these gentlemen have hit the ground running instituting NCO inspections of our cadet wing and reinvigorating our recruiting efforts.

We had two cadets receive rated slots out of the last supplemental rated board, one air battle manager and one remote piloted aircraft. The rest of the senior cadets are anxiously awaiting their career field selections and expect to receive that announcement in November.

#### *Coming Up:*

November is about to be our busiest month yet. The Joint Service Ball will be held on Friday, 1 November, at the Burge Union on KU. This is a great event that focuses on the joint relationship between the services and enables the programs to recognize their graduating

seniors. On Saturday, 2 Nov, the cadets will host their families with a detachment open house and the K-State football game.

We will conduct our first cross-town leadership lab at Benedictine College. Over 25% of our cadets attend Benedictine so this will give those cadets a larger opportunity to showcase their leadership skills around their campus for a change. There are also a handful of Veterans Day activities we are supporting from the 24-hour vigil of military monuments on campus, to the KU Veterans Day Run and the Lawrence Veterans Day parade.

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

***Rock Chalk, Jayhawk!***

*Very Respectfully,*

***LtCol Nikki Phelan***

*Commander, Air Force ROTC Det 280*

### ***A SUMMER SUNDAY MORNING***

*He was just a little boy, on a week's first day.  
 He was wandering home from Sunday School, and dawdling on the way.  
 He scuffed his shoes into the grass; he found a caterpillar.  
 He found a fluffy milkweed pod, and blew out all the "filler."  
 A bird's next in a tree overhead, so wisely placed on high,  
 Was just another wonder that caught his eager eye.  
 A neighbor watched his zig zag course, and hailed him from the lawn,  
 Asked him where he'd been that day and what was going on.  
 "I've been to Bible School," he said and turned a piece of sod.  
 He picked up a wiggly worm replying, "I've learned a lot of God."  
 "M'm very fine way, the neighbor said, "for a boy to spend his time."  
 "If you can tell me where God is, I'll give you a brand new dime."  
 Quick as a flash the answer came! Nor were his accents faint.  
 I'll give you a dollar, Mister, if you can tell me where God ain't."*

*Author Unknown*

## 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, 30 August 2019:

#### TRICARE Survey Confirms Cost, Access Contribute to Satisfaction

MOAA recently completed the latest in a yearly series of health care surveys. With changes beneficiaries continue to experience, MOAA intends to maintain a close, ear-to-the-ground perspective and will survey beneficiaries annually.

The surveys collectively reveal respondents are satisfied overall with their health care benefit. Some groups much more so than others: For example, the respondents over age 65 who use TRICARE For Life (TFL) continue to express greater satisfaction with their benefit. However, when it comes to what they have to pay for their medications, they are increasingly dissatisfied.

#### Military Pharmacies May Change List of Free Over-the-Counter Drugs Offered

This article by Amy Bushatz originally appeared on [Military.com](http://Military.com), the premier resource for the military and veteran community.

On-base military pharmacies worldwide may soon change or reduce their offerings of free over-the-counter (OTC) medications as [Tricare](http://Tricare) administrators standardize the list of what's available.

Currently, military retirees and other beneficiaries can receive certain medications for free and without a prescription through a long-standing OTC medication program. How the program is administered and how many medications each user can get per month varies by location. Typically, users must fill out a request form, and medications are often capped at four or five per beneficiary.

Which medications are offered can also differ widely by pharmacy or service branch. For example, a list of medications available at [Fort Gordon](http://Fort Gordon), Georgia includes anti-diarrheal drug loperamide and condoms, while a list from the [Navy](http://Navy)'s health clinic in Annapolis, Maryland does not include either option, but does offer Chloraseptic throat drops.

Now, as the military medical system undergoes a shift in [administration of the military hospitals](http://administration of the military hospitals) from the services to the Defense Health Agency (DHA), many of the systems' processes and offerings are being standardized, including the OTC program.

#### Military.com Related Content:

[Questions Remain as DoD Gets Ready to Cut 18,000 Medical Personnel](#)

[Services Turn Focus to Warfighters as DHA Takes Over Military Hospitals](#)

[More Than 17,000 Uniformed Medical Jobs Eyed for Elimination](#)

The Pentagon does not plan to order facilities to discontinue the program outright, said Kevin Dwyer, a DHA spokesman. Instead, officials on the agency's Pharmacy and Therapeutics Committee are working to create a standardized list of what's offered and will leave the decision of which medications, if any, to stock from that refitted catalog to pharmacy administrators.

### MOAA Newsletter Advocacy, 05 September 2019:

#### Some Military Retirees Could Receive a TRICARE Refund Check

This article by Amy Bushatz originally appeared on [Military.com](http://Military.com), the premier resource for the military and veteran community.

Military retirees who paid annual Tricare Prime enrollment fees in 2018 or 2019 could soon see a refund check in the mail, thanks to a new change to how the system calculates their annual out-of-pocket maximum payment.

The annual maximum out-of-pocket payment, or "catastrophic cap," for any retiree family with a service member who joined the military before Jan. 1, 2018, is set at \$3,000. For those who joined after Jan. 1, 2018, the annual retiree cap is about \$3,600. Those users pay about \$600 per year for plan enrollment, while future retirees will pay close to \$1,000.

After a set of sweeping Tricare reforms went into effect in 2018, the annual fee paid by retirees to use Tricare Prime no longer counted toward the yearly out-of-pocket max. That meant some families were faced with an increase of about \$600 in their yearly Tricare spending.

#### Rushed Commissary and Exchange Merger Could Hurt Troops and Their Families

Major changes to the commissary and exchange system are closer than ever. Without action by Congress, a four-way merger will occur between the Defense Commissary Agency (DeCA) and the three military exchanges: the Army and Air Force Exchange Service (AAFES), the Navy Exchange (NEX), and the Marine Corps Exchange (MCX).

If the commissaries and exchanges are merged without the necessary protections for patrons and Morale, Welfare, and Recreation (MWR) funds, the results could be devastating for these programs and the businesses that are a core part of the military base community.

### MOAA Newsletter Advocacy, 12 September 2019:

#### Same-Day Services in VA Medical Facilities: Who Knew?

In 2016, then-VA Under Secretary of Health Dr. David Shulkin envisioned MyVA Access as a means for Veterans Health Administration (VHA) employees to declare their commitment to the veterans they care for. "It is a call to action and the reaffirmation of the core mission to provide quality care to veterans, and to offer that care as soon as possible to veterans how and where they desire to receive that care," Shulkin said during an April 2016 briefing on the changes.

Since the initial declaration and commitment to same-day care, VA grew from implementing same-day services in primary and mental health care in 34 of its 172 medical centers to doing so in all its medical facilities by January 2018.

Today, some facilities allow veterans to make their own appointments directly at a VA clinic without a referral from their primary care provider for such services as dermatology, optometry, audiology, and a number of other types of care.

So, what does same-day service mean to veterans in need of such care?

VA defines same-day care as follows:

**Same-day services in primary care:** When a veteran requires primary care services right away, during regular business hours, he or she will receive services the same day at VA medical center. If a veteran calls after normal working hours, he or she will receive care the next business day.

**Same-day services in mental health:** If a veteran is in crisis or has another need for mental health care right away, he or she will receive immediate attention from a health care professional at a VA medical center.

Since becoming VA secretary in July 2018, Robert Wilkie has made mental health care the top clinical priority for VHA.

"It's important that all veterans, their family and friends know that help is easily available," Wilkie said in an April 2019 news release reminding veterans of the same-day availability. "Now, all [172 VAMCs provide same-day mental health care services](#)."

#### *Types of Same-Day Services*

VHA providers may address a veteran's health care need by providing:

- a face-to-face visit,
- returning a phone call,
- arranging a telehealth or video care visit,
- responding by secure mail, or
- scheduling a future appointment.

When contacting a VA medical facility and requesting care right away, the veterans' situation will be evaluated for the level of urgency. Depending on the urgency, the VA either will provide that care the same day or schedule the necessary follow-up appointment for care.

For more information on same-day services, click [here](#). Veterans who would like to share their experiences with same-day VA services can send comments to [msc@moaa.org](mailto:msc@moaa.org).

#### **MOAA Newsletter Advocacy, 18 September 2019:** Military Coalition's NDAA Priorities Include Ending Widows Tax, Stopping Medical Billet Cuts

A letter sent to key legislators last week by a group of more than 30 military and veterans organizations stressed the importance of repealing the "widows tax" and protecting military medicine from planned staff cuts – issues at the heart of MOAA's Summer Storm advocacy efforts – among priorities for this year's defense bill.

The Military Coalition, which includes MOAA among its member groups representing 5.5 million constituents, listed the two items among 10 areas of concern in the Sept. 13 letter to the chairmen and ranking members of the House and Senate Armed Services Committee. Regarding [the widows tax](#) – also known as the Survivor Benefit Plan-Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (SBP-DIC) offset – the coalition noted it had "never ... seen such [support for eliminating the offset](#). Congress should end this injustice."

The group praised passage of the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2019, which was designed to raise budget limits and prevent talk of another government shutdown until at least 2021. However, the broad deal left plenty of room for debate on specific budget items, leading to the possibility of a continuing resolution, sequestration, and [even more budget uncertainty](#) for servicemembers past and present, and their families.

The letter also addressed another kind of uncertainty facing servicemembers, retirees, and their families: One that comes as 20% of existing military medical billets face potential elimination. Such a move "presents significant risk to service member medical readiness, uniformed medical provider readiness, beneficiary care, and the military medical education training pipeline," per the letter.

Other issues championed in the letter (read it [here](#)) – which can be addressed by the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA):

Continued support of the planned 3.1% FY 2020 military pay raise, with plans to address restoring the 2.6% "in accumulated losses from pay raises that lagged [the Employee Cost Index] between 2014 and 2016.

Backing efforts to combat sexual assault in the military.

Ensuring grad parity among leaders of the reserve components.

Creating a Basic Needs Allowance (BNA) for servicemembers whose families fall below 130% of federal poverty guidelines.

The coalition also expressed disappointment that neither the House nor the Senate version of the NDAA included expansion of concurrent receipt, which has been among MOAA's [top legislative priorities](#). Learn more about concurrent receipt [here](#).

#### VA May Be Forced to Pay Billions in Veterans' ER Bills After Court Ruling

A federal court has ruled that the Department of Veterans Affairs wrongly denied reimbursements to veterans who received emergency medical care at non-VA facilities, a decision that could result in payouts to veterans totaling billions.

U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims judges wrote Sept. 9 that VA's reimbursement regulations, which were instituted in 2018, violated a law that requires VA to approve veterans' claims for emergency room expenses not covered by private insurance.

The case, [Wolfe v. Wilkie](#), marked the second time VA has been overruled on its interpretation of its reimbursement policies. In 2015, the court ruled that a previous version of the VA regulation on emergency claims violated a 2010 law.

According to the appeals court judges, the 2015 ruling was intended to require VA to act as a secondary payer for expenses not covered by an individual's primary private health insurance.

But VA has not been doing that, they said in the Wolfe v. Wilkie decision.

"VA was ... informing veterans that they were not entitled to reimbursement for non-VA emergency medical care if they had any insurance covering the service at issue," wrote the judges. "In other words, the agency was telling veterans that the law was exactly opposite to what a federal court had held the law to be."

According to VA, the department can pay for emergency medical care if the condition is service-related or caused by a service-related condition and services aren't available at a VA facility.

For conditions not considered service-connected, VA can also pay for emergency medical care, but only under certain conditions: care must be provided in a hospital emergency department; care must be given to treat life or health-threatening conditions; the required care must not be

available to the veteran at a VA; the veteran must have received care at a VA facility within the past two years.

By law, VA cannot provide coverage for copayments, coinsurance or deductibles, according to its own fact sheet on emergency medical care.

It was for those reasons that VA denied reimbursement to [Coast Guard](#) veteran Amanda Wolfe, who experienced appendicitis in September 2016 and sought care at a civilian hospital, since the VA facility was more than three hours away.

She filed a claim for \$2,558.54 of the \$22,348.25 bill -- the amount not covered by her employer-sponsored health insurance.

She paid the bill in fall 2016 as it went to collections. And in February 2018, VA denied the claim, saying the \$2,558.54 was for copayments, deductibles and coinsurance.

Similarly, another plaintiff in the case, [Navy](#) veteran Peter Boerschinger, went to a non-VA emergency room with pneumonia and congestive heart failure. While he was hospitalized, physicians made several attempts to transfer him to a VA facility, but no beds were available.

He submitted a claim for \$1,340 that was not covered by his health insurance and was denied.

Two of the three judges on the Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims said VA's interpretation of the law was incorrect, and they ordered VA to reimburse veterans for all past and future out-of-pocket emergency medical bills not covered by private insurance, other than copayments.

"It's difficult to conceive how an agency could believe that adopting a regulation that mimics the result a federal court held to be unlawful is somehow appropriate when the statute at issue has not changed," the judges wrote.

#### Lawmakers Prepare to Finalize Defense Authorization Bill

Congress will meet in the coming days to select conferees for the fiscal 2020 defense authorization bill.

Conferees – selected lawmakers from each chamber tasked with ironing out the differences between the House and Senate versions of the bill – will resolve a number of issues critical to MOAA members, including:

- preventing the elimination of up to 18,000 medical billets
- ending the widows tax
- fixing unsafe military housing conditions
- improving early Guard and Reserve retirement

Lawmakers initially set an ambitious timeline for completing the defense bill before Oct. 1, the start of the new fiscal year. However, disagreements between the House and Senate now mean the bill won't receive a final vote until mid-October.

The news means it's increasingly likely DoD will have to begin the new fiscal year under a stopgap spending measure [known as a continuing resolution](#).

With time running out, this may be your last chance to help influence what makes it into the bill. Act now to send your elected officials a [MOAA-suggested message](#).

#### **MOAA Newsletter Advocacy, 26 September 2019:**

##### Army Recommends Changes to Arlington Cemetery Burial Eligibility

The Army on Wednesday announced its recommendations for eligibility changes at Arlington National Cemetery – changes which would reduce those eligible for below-ground burials but still offer above-ground inurnment of cremated remains for many veterans.

In addition to preserving 1,000 gravesites for current and future Medal of Honor recipients, the proposed revised

criteria for those who honorably serve the nation are as follows:

For below-ground interment:

- Killed in Action, to include repatriated remains of service members
- Award recipients of the Silver Star and above who also served in combat
- Recipients of the Purple Heart
- Combat-related service deaths while conducting uniquely military activities
- Former Prisoners of War
- Presidents and Vice Presidents of the United States
- Veterans with combat service who also served out of uniform as a government official and made significant contributions to the nation's security at the highest levels of public service.

For above-ground inurnment:

- World War II-era veterans, to include legislated active duty designees
- Retirees from the armed forces who are eligible to receive retired pay but are not otherwise eligible for interment
- Veterans who have served a minimum of two years on active duty and who have served in combat
- Veterans without combat service who also served out of uniform as a government official and made significant contributions to the nation's security at the highest levels of public service

These proposals follow months of deliberation and input from veteran service organizations like MOAA and two independent surveys with over 250,000 responses.

"The nation's premiere military cemetery is at a critical crossroads in its history," Army officials state in a released statement. "Nearly all of the 22 million living armed forces members and veterans are eligible for less than 95,000 remaining burial spaces within these hallowed grounds."

"The Army's decision to restrict retirees from in-ground interment may be a concern for those whose end-of-life plans included this traditional burial at Arlington," Atkins said. "While the changes do accommodate above-ground inurnment, we will need to assess the impact to all previously eligible servicemembers and take advantage of the public comment period under the Federal Registry to share the results of that assessment."

According to Arlington officials, a federal rule can take up to nine months before being enacted and will include a public comment period, in which any concerns and questions would be addressed. Once the final rule, with any potential changes, is published in the Federal Registry, there will be an "as of" effective date. This will not affect any planned burials which are in the queue at that time.

In May 2016, Congress passed [PL 114-158](#) requiring the Secretary of the Army to submit to both chambers' Committees on Veterans' Affairs and Armed Services a report on the interment and inurnment capacity of Arlington National Cemetery

The Army's proposed changes differ notably from the Advisory Committee on Arlington National Cemetery (ACANC) [report](#) submitted in December of 2018 with their independent assessment on how to extend active burials and capacity into the future. The ACANC recommended future inurnments be altered to reflect selected "levels of service and sacrifice" as follows:

- killed in action, recipients of MOH, recipients of Purple Heart, Silver Star and above, died on active duty, or former POW



above ground inurnment remain available to WWII and Korean War veterans  
 Recipients of Distinguished Service Medals (DSM).

**Commentary: Why Can't Retirement Fund Surplus Cover Widows Tax Repeal**

[UPDATE From MOAA: On Wednesday, the Senate voted 94-0 to recommend the final version of the NDAA includes language repealing the widows tax.

[Click here to read the latest.](#)

**MOAA Newsletter Advocacy, 02 October 2019: TRICARE Pharmacy Fees Set to Increase in 2020**

MOAA makes it a priority to prepare our membership well ahead of changes that will impact their earned benefits. In that regard, please consider this an advance notice for your planning purposes.

The cost shares for your medications, if you do not receive them at a DoD military treatment facility, will increase on Jan. 1. Recall back in the 2017 NDAA, TRICARE's pharmacy cost shares changed across all medication tiers, and a new fee table was introduced. Beneficiaries saw their prescription fees start to rise in 2018 and 2019. As we published at the time, these fees will accumulate and continue to rise annually until 2027.

According to a large percentage of respondents who have taken MOAA's health care surveys, many still recall the "sticker shock" they experienced when their mail order generic medication went from \$0 to \$7 – it was not so bad if you only had to take one, but most people take several so it added up very quickly.

Here are the new FY 2020 fees for all TRICARE pharmacy medication tiers and the year over year annual increases:

**Pharmacy Increases Phased Increases Over 10 Years**

	Current Rate	FY 2020 Rate	FY 2027 Rate	Annual % Increase 2019-2020
MTF Pharmacy (90 days)	0	0	0	0%
Retail (30 days)				
Generic	\$11	\$13	\$16	18%
Brand	\$28	\$33	\$48	17%
Non-Formulary	\$53	\$60	\$85	13%
Mail Order (90 days)				
Generic	\$7	\$10	\$14	42%
Brand	\$24	\$29	\$44	20%
Non-Formulary	\$53	\$60	\$85	13%

**MOAA Newsletter Advocacy, 10 October 2019: 2020 FEDVIP Dental and Vision Plan Prices Released**

In preparation for the upcoming open season, the Office of Personnel Management has released calendar year 2020 Federal Employee Dental and Vision Insurance Program (FEDVIP) pricing. Plan comparisons and pricing are now available on the [www.benefeds.com](http://www.benefeds.com) website using the [FEDVIP comparison tool](#).

Overall, FEDVIP dental rates will rise by an average of 5.6% for 2020; vision premiums will increase an average of 1.5%. The change in dental premiums range from a decrease of -5.9% to an increase of 9.5% depending upon your location. OPM states that the two primary factors drove increases this year; the health care insurance providers fee, which had been suspended in 2019 but reinstated in 2020, and an increase in utilization of services in a number of dental plans.

The average monthly Dental Premiums:

- Self \$39.29
- Self Plus One \$77.00
- Self and Family \$112.88

The average monthly Vision Premiums:

- Self \$11.09
- Self Plus One \$22.13
- Self Plus Family \$31.99

The 2020 TRICARE and FEDVIP open season will run from Nov. 11 to Dec. 9.

**RELATED CONTENT**

**TRICARE Pharmacy Fees Set to Increase in 2020 - Sep 26, 2019**

The cost shares for your medications, if you do not receive them at a DoD military treatment facility, will

**increase on Jan. TRICARE Survey Confirms Cost, Access Contribute to Satisfaction - Aug 28, 2019**

Increased pharmacy costs are a major concern, respondents say.

[Support these important defense bill provision](#)

**Contact Your Representatives**

**Do Not Raise TRICARE Fees**

Think your health care already costs enough? So do we. But jacking up your TRICARE fees and out-of-pocket costs is on the list of budget options for lawmakers to consider. That would ignore the price military retirees and their families have paid up front with their service and sacrifice.

**Support full concurrent receipt for disabled military retirees**

Act now to support H.R. 333, the Disabled Veterans Tax Termination Act. This bill provides full concurrent receipt for disabled military retirees, including Chapter 61 retirees.

**Act Now to End the Widows Tax**

Current federal law requires survivors of deceased military members to forfeit part or all of their purchased Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) annuity when they are awarded the VA's Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC). This loss of any portion of the SBP annuity is known as the widows tax. For approximately 66,000 military survivors, the widows tax makes SBP the only insurance that you pay into but are legally prohibited from collecting.



### [Protect Gold Star spouses during future shutdowns](#)

Under current law, Gold Star spouses receiving benefits from the Department of Defense are protected from interruptions in payments during a government shutdown. But because Coast Guard paychecks come from the Department of Homeland Security, these survivors are still at risk.

## Key Bills

### Federal - HR 333

A bill to amend title 10, United States Code, to permit retired members of the Armed Forces who have a service-connected disability rated less than 50 percent to receive concurrent payment of both retired pay and veterans' disability compensation, to extend eligibility for concurrent receipt to chapter 61 disability retirees with less than 20 years of service, and for other purposes.

### Federal - HR 553

A bill to amend title 10, United States Code, to repeal the requirement for reduction of survivor annuities under the Survivor Benefit Plan for military surviving spouses to offset the receipt of veterans dependency and indemnity compensation, and for other purposes.

### Federal - S 622

A bill to amend title 10, United States Code, to repeal the requirement for reduction of survivor annuities under the Survivor Benefit Plan by veterans' dependency and indemnity compensation, and for other purposes.

### [The End of the Commissary System? What Merger Plans Could Mean for Your Shopping Benefit](#) [Why Merge?](#)

Does DoD want to merge the systems purely to improve the benefit, or do the cost savings, possibly on the backs of military families past and present, play the larger role?

[RELATED: [What You Need to Know About Beer and Wine in Commissaries, and Curbside Pickup](#)]

### **MOAA Newsletter Advocacy, 17 October 2019:**

#### [Here Is Your 2020 Military Retiree, VA, and Social Security Pay Bump](#)

Military retirees, those who receive disability or other benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs, federal retirees and social security recipients will see a 1.6% increase in their monthly checks for 2020.

The annual [Cost Of Living Allowance](#) (COLA) is smaller than the 2.8% increase from last year but in line with the historical increases seen over the last ten years.

Each year [military retirement pay](#), [Survivor Benefit Plan Annuities](#), [VA Compensation and Pensions](#), and Social Security benefits are adjusted for the rate of inflation.  
Retirement Pay Increase

As a result of the increase, the average [military retirement](#) check for an E-7 with 20 years of service will go up by \$38 a month, while an O-5 with the same time in uniform will see a \$72 monthly increase.

Retirees who entered military service on or after Aug. 1, 1986 and opted-in for the [Career Status Bonus \(CSB/Redux retirement plan\)](#), have any COLA increases reduced by 1 percent, so they will see a smaller increase in 2020.

The 1.6% increase means that you will get an additional \$16 for every \$1,000 in government benefits you receive.

Related at Military.com:

[Military Retirement & Survivor Pay Dates](#)  
[Get the Military.com Pay App](#)

VA Disability Increase

Disabled veterans will also get a bump. The average [VA disability check](#) will go up about \$2 per month for those with a 10 percent rating, and \$49 for those rated at 100 percent.

Other Federal Retirees and Beneficiaries

[RELATED: [MOAA's COLA Watch](#)]

How the COLA Is Determined

The Department of Labor determines the annual COLA by measuring the Consumer Price Index (CPI), which is a measurement of a broad sampling of the cost of consumer goods and expenses. The CPI is compared to the previous year, if there is an increase there is a COLA. If there is no increase, there is no COLA.

The COLA affects about one in every five Americans, including Social Security recipients, disabled veterans, federal retirees, and retired military members.

Last year, the COLA increase was 2.8%; in 2018, retirees saw a 2.0% increase.

### [Congress Is Back to Work: Ask Your Lawmaker to Support These Critical NDAA Provisions](#)

Regardless of where you get your news, it's likely the lead story hasn't focused on a key bill that should be top of mind for all members of the military community.

This week, as lawmakers return from recess, conferees will shape the FY20 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). In so doing, they have the chance to work toward enacting meaningful reforms for servicemembers past and present, and their families.

MOAA continues its efforts to ensure critical language reaches the final version of this bill. If you haven't joined these efforts, [do so now](#); if you have, share this story and the previous link with others in your network to help spread the word.

MOAA is working toward a bipartisan NDAA that would:

Delay [a proposed reduction of up to 18,000 military medical billets](#) until Congress conducts a full and transparent assessment of how this proposal would affect military health care.

Eliminate the "[widows tax](#)," a \$12,000-a-year financial penalty faced by more than 65,000 military survivors.

Improve early Guard and Reserve retirement credit for troops activated under certain orders.

Call for the Government Accounting Office to conduct an independent review of the business case analysis supportive of [merging the military's commissary and exchange systems](#).

Establish essential rights for [military families in privatized base housing](#).

Language supporting these positions already has cleared a major hurdle – reaching the conferee stage of the NDAA process. However, while many of the above proposals have [overwhelming bipartisan support](#), their inclusion in the final bill is far from a sure thing. That's why MOAA continues to push, and why your voice remains necessary.

So [send a letter](#) and spread the word. Need more details? Visit MOAA's [advocacy news page](#) for the latest on these issues and others.

### MOAA Addresses Military Housing Issues at Readiness Summit

[RELATED: [Ask Your Lawmaker to Support NDAA Provisions That Will Help Military Families](#)]

Experts also identified gaps in special education in school districts and said DoD has not provided parents with adequate resources, despite existing legal requirements.

McMorris Rodgers, herself the parent of a special needs child, was struck by the disparities in the state-to-state continuity of resources for special needs students. She committed to addressing these issues alongside subject matter experts like Michelle Norman, Military Spouse magazine's [2019 Navy Military Spouse of the Year](#) and special needs advocate.

As members of the [TRICARE for Kids Coalition](#), MOAA will continue to support not just the health care, but also the educational and resource requirements of military families with special needs.

### **MOAA Newsletter Advocacy, 24 October 2019:**

Here Is Your 2020 Military Retiree, VA, and Social Security Pay Bump

Military retirees, those who receive disability or other benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs, federal retirees and social security recipients will see a 1.6% increase in their monthly checks for 2020.

The annual [Cost Of Living Allowance](#) (COLA) is smaller than the 2.8% increase from last year but in line with the historical increases seen over the last ten years.

Each year [military retirement pay](#), [Survivor Benefit Plan Annuities](#), [VA Compensation and Pensions](#), and Social Security benefits are adjusted for the rate of inflation.

#### Retirement Pay Increase

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The 1.6% increase means that you will get an additional \$16 for every \$1,000 in government benefits you receive.

Related at Military.com:

[Military Retirement & Survivor Pay Dates](#)

[Get the Military.com Pay App](#)

[Active Duty Members On Track For 3.1% Pay Raise In 2020](#)

#### VA Disability Increase

Disabled veterans will also get a bump. The average [VA disability check](#) will go up about \$2 per month for those with a 10 percent rating, and \$49 for those rated at 100 percent.

### Bill Would Require American-Made Medicines for Troops and More Oversight of Foreign-Made Drugs

MOAA continues to engage heavily in any and all issues associated with the access and safety of

medications. In that regard, MOAA was a primary force behind a House bill introduced Oct. 17 that would require DoD to acquire and purchase only American-made medicines and vaccines — including only U.S.-produced raw materials — for use by our military.

[TAKE ACTION: [Tell your members of Congress to support more oversight on foreign-made drugs](#)]

The Pharmaceutical Independence Long-Term Readiness Reform Act ([H.R. 4710](#)) also will require DoD to identify the national security vulnerabilities caused by our current dependence on pharmaceuticals from China.

[READ MORE: [Made in China: How U.S. Dependence on Chinese Medicines and Components Could Pose a Security Threat](#)]

MOAA commends Rep. John Garamendi (D-Calif.) and cosponsor Rep. Vicky Hartzler (R-Mo.) for introducing H.R. 4710 (read the bill text [here](#)). MOAA's awareness of the issue was heightened well over a year ago, when the blood pressure medication [valsartan was pulled off the market](#) by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). MOAA members called and voiced their worries, too, especially because a probable cancer-causing chemical was identified in the active pharmaceutical ingredient ... and traced back to its manufacturer in China.

### Senate Scrambles to Stop Government Shutdown

The Senate plans to take up two spending packages, including one on defense spending, this week in an effort to prevent a government shutdown.

Appropriators plan to pass a bill funding several federal domestic agencies before moving on to defense spending.

The government is currently operating under a stopgap spending measure, known as a continuing resolution, until Nov. 21. Congress has only 14 legislative working days until then to reach a spending agreement.

It will be the first appropriations bill the full Senate will vote on this year. While several spending bills advanced through committee, no spending bill has received a floor vote. The House passed 10 of its 12 spending bills earlier this year.

Senate lawmakers waited until President Donald Trump signed a two-year budget agreement that raised spending levels for domestic and non-domestic programs. Without an agreement to lift spending levels, Congress faced stiff budget caps on the amount of money it could appropriate.

But with a laundry list of must-pass items for Congress, it remains unclear how lawmakers will be able to address everything. In addition to passing defense policy and spending bills, Congress has to agree on funding levels for other federal agencies and address a series of tax cuts which expire at the end of the year.

It's possible Congress may throw its collective hands up and pass a year-long continuing resolution.

The alternative would be another government shutdown. Unlike the previous government shutdown in January, where only a handful of federal agencies lacked funding, a full shutdown would be significantly more damaging.

The [January 2019 shutdown](#) lasted 35 days. It was the longest shutdown in American history and saw the Coast Guard, Public Health Service, and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration go without pay. According to [Coast Guard Commandant Adm. Karl Schultz](#), it was the first time in American history where a branch of the military did not receive pay during a lapse in appropriations.



# JAYHAWK CHAPTER MOAA



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

Dinner cost is \$24.00/meal.

**The Program:** Our speaker will be KU's Director of the Office of Graduate Military Programs,  
Mike Denning, Colonel USMC (retired.).  
He will be speaking on the Intelligence Community Center for Academic Excellence.

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

**The Menu:** Brussel sprout salad, Pork cutlets with Applejack Brandy sauce, Chef's choice dessert

Send your reservation and check payable to Jayhawk Chapter MOAA  
to arrive no later than Wednesday, **14 November 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.**

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

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

The cost is \$24.00 per meal. I am enclosing a check for \$\_\_\_\_\_ for meal(s).

Clayton L. Comfort Award program contribution \$\_\_\_\_\_  
(Separate check made out to "KU Endowment")

TOTAL: \$\_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

IF YOU NEED A RIDE TO MEETINGS, PLEASE LET US KNOW HERE \_\_\_\_\_  
AND GIVE US YOUR TELEPHONE NUMBER \_\_\_\_\_

**TEAR OFF AND RETURN THIS FORM WITH A CHECK PAYABLE TO:**  
**JAYHAWK CHAPTER MOAA**  
*CAPT Jim Cooper, 5216 Brown Lane, Lawrence, KS 66049-5112*



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*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 November

**Tentative 2020 Meeting Schedule:**

*Wednesday 22 January*  
Tuesday 17 March  
Tuesday 19 May

Tuesday 21 July  
Tuesday 15 September  
Tuesday 17 November



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

***NEVER STOP SERVING!***

***IN GOD WE TRUST***