



Jayhawk Chapter MOAA Newsletter



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January Program:

Our speaker will be Colonel Mark McKnight (US Army, Retired). He is the deputy director of the School for Command Preparation, and he will present Reserve and National Guard involvement in the pre-command program and the spouses program as he has been instrumental in bringing those programs to their current state.

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President's Comments. . .

I sincerely hope that you all had a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year, and that you've recovered from the food, fun, and frivolity. Luckily, and thankfully, we had a mild end to December.

Our speaker for our January meeting will be Colonel Mark McKnight (US Army, Retired). He is the deputy director of the School for Command Preparation, and he will present Reserve and National Guard involvement in the pre-command program and the spouses program as he has been instrumental in bringing those programs to their current state. This will be Air Force Night, so we'll be hosting a contingent from the KU's Air Force ROTC unit.

On December 20th the President signed the 2020 National Defense Authorization Act into law – key provisions include an active duty pay raise of 3.1%, which in and of itself is fantastic, but most importantly is that the "Widows Tax", or the Survivor Benefit Plan-Dependency and Indemnity Compensation offset, has finally been repealed. The new law will phase out the offset over a three-year period. This has been the primary legislative battle that MOAA has been waging in earnest since 2001: all of us have participated in various degrees in this struggle, and we can all be justly proud of the part we played in the ultimate victory.

Our January meeting is on Wednesday evening, January 22nd, in order to deconflict with the KU basketball game with K-State at Allen Field House on Tuesday the 21st - thanks for your flexibility.

That is about it for now – very much look forward to seeing you all on January 22nd!



Coop

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* Reservations should be sent
to Jim Cooper by
15 January 2020



JAYHAWK CHAPTER NEWS



CHAPTER DUES (\$20.00) are due & payable 01/01/2020

PERSONAL NEWS

From Gary Bjorge: Nancy and I took AMTRAK's Southwest Chief and Cardinal trains from Lawrence to Washington, DC, and back to visit my sister for Christmas. While there, we went with my sister by train to New York City where we saw *The Lion King* and the Radio City Christmas Spectacular. We also spent time with two long-time friends who live in the Bronx, former Army 1st Lieutenant Jim Grossman and his wife. I first met Jim when we were assigned to the same table in the dining hall of the Yongsan Army base in Seoul, Korea, in 1965. On the day after Christmas, we went to the Kennedy Performing Arts Center in Washington to listen to the 500-voice community chorus that my sister belongs to sing on the main stage.

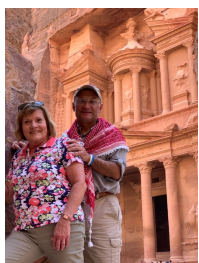
From Dean Bevan: Judy and I will celebrate our 60th wedding anniversary in January.

From Mike Kelly: Georgiana and I enjoyed many Thanksgiving visitors from my side of the family. Multiple travelers from Colorado and Washington state added to the holiday celebration. My niece Rebekah announced her engagement on Thanksgiving evening to fellow Emporia State student Braden! I also planned a future trip to a tropical location in the Pacific AOR with Georgiana's enthusiastic assent. She did not agree to travel to Chicago for the Chiefs game on Sunday night December 22nd!

From Jim Cooper: In October we traveled to Jordan, primarily to "meet the parents" of our daughter Veronica's boyfriend, Amer Kawar. Amer's family are Jordanian Christians and they live in Amman, the capital city.

Since we flew Turkish Airlines, we took the opportunity to stop in Istanbul briefly on route. Istanbul is an exciting, exotic city, straddling the divide between Europe and Asia at the Bosphorus. A one-day walking tour allowed us to see the major sights in Istanbul's old city: the Blue Mosque, the Hagia Sophia, Topkapi Palace, Bosphorus, the Spice Market. We enjoyed Istanbul immensely and we want to return.

Our Jordan sojourn was the major part of our trip – we spent 8 days in Amman, mainly getting to know Amer's family, and they were exceedingly gracious and welcoming. It was extremely interesting to get the Arab view of the state of relations in the Middle East – the wounds of the 1948 partition, or the founding of Israel, still run deep for many on both sides of the issue. We rented a car and together with Veronica and Amer drove to see the mountain valley city of Petra, and then continued on for a couple more days to see Wadi Rum, in the Jordanian Desert – part of the real Lawrence of Arabia's operating area, and the filming location for movies such as Lawrence of Arabia, The Martian, and Star Wars. We finished up our time in Jordan with a stay on the Dead Sea – and yes, it is impossible to sink in the Dead Sea, one is barely able to walk in it.



Jim & Sandy
by the Treasury
Bldg., Petra, Jordan



Veronica & Sandy
in Wadi Rum desert

We rounded out our trip with Egypt – several days each in Luxor (the Valley of the Kings, Temple of Luxor) and Giza (the Great Pyramids, Temple of Karnak). I've always yearned to see the Pyramids and the Great Sphinx, as they are the first things a kid learns about in school in terms of the Wonders of the World. They are very impressive, but deceptively close to the city. I was amazed that folks are actually allowed to climb on the Pyramids. The ruins in Egypt are incredible considering that they date back some 5,000 years or more, and yet there are carvings and murals that appear fresh and crisp.

Our trip was amazing – we never felt ill at ease or unsafe, and the folks we encountered were all friendly. We were told repeatedly, "Please tell your friends and family that we are not all a bunch of 9-11 terrorists over here – we like Westerners." We do intend to return.



Veronica, Sandy & Jim
by the Pyramids

**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*

No report received from the Army Detachment this issue.



Navy News *CAPT Trenton Lennard, USN*



Greeting From the Jayhawk Battalion,

The Jayhawk Battalion has continued the hard work and dedication displayed since the beginning of the year. Following heavy fund raising efforts in October, the Battalion turned their attention to the Joint Services



Our Jayhawk Seniors were recognized at the JSB

Ball (JSB). This event allowed the Naval, Air Force, and Army Battalions to get together for a formal evening of camaraderie and fellowship. Held on November 1st and organized by the USAF battalion, it was also an opportunity to recognize the graduating seniors

from each branch and highlight their upcoming career paths. MIDN 3/C Marilyn Curtis was the liaison for the Naval Battalion and did an outstanding job as our coordinating officer. She expertly handled all the tasks for a successful event and gave the battalion a JSB that will be fondly remembered.

Following the JSB, the Jayhawk Battalion focused on the events and recognition of Veteran's Day. From 08 Nov through 11 Nov, our Jayhawks honored our Veterans by supporting several events including standing 24-hour vigils at different war memorials around campus with fellow Joint ROTC cadets. This allowed time to reflect on the service that they will enter, and for our active duty students, the service they have already given.

On 11 Nov, the Jayhawk Battalion participated in the Veteran's Day 5K and Nick Herren Memorial Run. For many of our seniors, Nick was a friend and mentor, so running in his memory brought special significance. The Jayhawk Battalion celebrated the Marine Corps'

244th Birthday before the 5K with a cake cutting ceremony, passing of cake between the oldest and youngest Marine, and then fell into formation for a highly motivated 5K. Many cadence calls later, the Jayhawk Battalion completed the run and were dismissed to reflect on the meaning of the many events they had completed. The Battalion also played a significant role in the rededication of the KU Memorial Union and the Veteran's Day Gala hosted at the Dole Institute on campus.

I do want to take an opportunity to thank the Jayhawk Chapter of MOAA for sponsoring a Naval night during your 19 November meeting. Seven Midshipmen had the opportunity to attend the event and all enjoyed the night of fellowship with officers from all branches.

As the Jayhawk Battalion finishes their finals this week, they are all anxious for an extended break from class. A break that they certainly deserve. I am in awe of the energy and passion they put into this command. There is no stopping these motivated men and women from achieving their goals. As the members of this unit move forward, there is no obstacle too great, no challenge too hard to not be overcome with the camaraderie and dedication of their shipmates.

Have a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

Rock Chalk and Go Navy!

CAPT Trenton Lennard



The Jayhawk Battalion poses for a photo with the Herren family



Air Force News

LtCol Nichole Phelan, USAF

Happy Holidays from Detachment 280, the Flying Jayhawks!

We just finished a fantastic fall semester with some amazing accomplishments for our cadets. Cadet Ransom Purvis and Dana Sullivan from the University of Kansas were recipients of a Type-II Air Force ROTC scholarship for sophomore cadets. This competitive scholarship covers \$18,000 in tuition per year and includes books and stipend payments. Cadet Chase Charles was selected as the Cadet Wing Commander for the Spring 2020 semester. He, along with his Cadet Vice Wing Commander, Cadet Penka, will plan and run all training and activities for the Flying Jayhawk Cadet Wing during the next 15 weeks.

November was packed with endless opportunities for officer development. The month kicked off with the Air Force detachment's turn to run the annual Joint Service Ball. It was lauded by many, including guest speaker Brig. Gen. David Weishaar, the Kansas Air National Guard Adjutant. This was followed by Veterans Day weekend; they held a 24-hr vigil at the military monuments on campus, ran in KU's Veterans Day 5K, and participated in the Lawrence Veterans Day parade. The same weekend, the cadets ran their first "Crosstown" Leadership Laboratory at Benedictine College in Atchison, KS. This was planned and executed by our sizeable BC cadet contingent, and is something we are making a fixture every semester. The next weekend, the cadets coordinated with Detachment 270 at K-State for a combined Field Leadership Exercise. Finally, the cadets organized a parents' open house lab and tailgate style lunch before the KU K-State football game. One busy month led to another, with the culmination of their 15 week semester ending with a cadet wing change of command and award ceremony held in December the week before finals.

We have to give a shout out to our fall Cadet Wing Leadership, Cadet Tyler Lamport and Cadet Samuel Evans,

who led the Cadet Wing this past semester. The Wing accomplished many amazing feats this semester, most notably the creation of a \$5000 Flight Simulator, complete with VR headset, seat with mounted stick/throttle, and rudder pedals. This showcases how the money the cadets earn by working parking for KU sporting events can be used. More importantly, this will provide exposure to aviation fundamentals for cadets who might otherwise not have the chance. Thank you to Cadet Jacobs and Cadet Schmidt who created and built this simulator in less than 10 days. Think of what Air Force Lieutenants could do if the AF bureaucracies did not hold them down.

Coming Up:

Cadets are on winter break until the Spring Semester starts. The Air Force is late to announce the commissioning cadets' Air Force Specialty Code. Each one of our non-rated cadets is anxiously awaiting that announcement, which should happen right after the first of the year. Looking forward to Spring, we have several events planned including a base visit, dining in, and open house.

We wish each of you and your families a very Happy Holidays and thank you so much for your great support of our program.

Rock Chalk, Jayhawk!

Very Respectfully,

LtCol Nikki Phelan

Commander, Air Force ROTC Det 280

BREAKING THE GLASS CEILING

The Air Force announced at the end of October it has lifted the height restriction for pilot applicants. In the past, the AF height restrictions have kept ROTC cadets who do not meet the 5'4 height requirements from applying to be pilots. This restriction has kept 43% of female AFROTC cadets between the age of 21-29 from being able to apply for a pilot training slot. Three of our four female cadets who applied for rated career fields this year were denied to compete for a pilot training slot due to this restriction. One of those cadets, Cadet Mary Tighe, received a Remote Pilot Aircraft slot. Since the restriction lifted, she has since been measured for and received a height waiver. She is one of the first ROTC cadets to receive a height waiver. Her order of merit was high enough that had she been allowed to compete on the pilot board, she would have been awarded a slot. HQ AFROTC offered her a very well-deserved pilot slot this month and she will be off to pilot training after she commissions. This height restriction was one of the biggest barriers to females in aviation and I could not be more proud to see Cadet Tighe break through this barrier.

A friend is the first one to walk in when the world walks out.

NEWS ITEM FROM MIKE KELLY

The Pentagon is advising members of the military not to use consumer DNA kits, saying the information collected by private companies could pose a security risk, according to a memo co-signed by the Defense Department's top intelligence official.

A growing number of companies like [23andMe](#) and [Ancestry](#) sell testing kits that allow buyers to get a DNA profile by sending in a cheek swab or saliva sample. The DNA results provide consumers information on their ancestry, insights into possible medical risks and can even identify previously unknown family members.

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, 7 November 2019:

Another Big Military Pay Raise? This Key Data Point Says Yes

As Thanksgiving approaches, it's time for servicemembers to add another item to the list of things they're grateful for: the Bureau of Labor and Statistics (BLS) report on the Employment Cost Index (ECI).

Why give thanks for this data point? MOAA closely tracks ECI reports because, by statute, they determine the following year's military pay raise, barring intervention from Congress or the President. The ECI for private-sector wages and salaries for the last fiscal quarter of 2019 [is 3.0%](#), which nearly matches last year's 3.1% increase.

Last year's figure set the benchmark for the pay raise included in both the House and Senate versions of the FY 2020 National Defense Authorization Act. A conference committee is working to craft a compromise bill, which will all but certainly include that figure on its way to the president's desk.

The ECI is timely good news and continues a positive trend:

ECI third quarter, 2008: 2.9%, informing a 3.4% military pay raise in the FY 2010 NDAA.
 ECI Q3 2009: 1.4%, FY 2011 raise: 1.4%
 ECI Q3 2010: 1.6%, FY 2012 raise: 1.6%
 ECI Q3 2011: 1.7%, FY 2013 raise: 1.7%
 ECI Q3 2012: 1.8%, FY 2014 raise: 1.0%
 ECI Q3 2013: 1.8%, FY 2015 raise: 1.0%
 ECI Q3 2014: 2.3%, FY 2016 raise: 1.3%
 ECI Q3 2015: 2.1%, FY 2017 raise: 2.1%
 ECI Q3 2016: 2.4%, FY 2018 raise: 2.4%
 ECI Q3 2017: 2.6%, FY 2019 raise: 2.6%
 ECI Q3 2018: 3.1%, FY 2020 raise: 3.1%
 (pending NDAA)
 ECI Q3 2019: 3.0%, FY 2021 raise: ?

MOAA Newsletter Advocacy, 14 November 2019:

Here's How Much More You'll Pay in Medicare Part B Premiums in 2020

The standard Medicare Part B premium will rise about \$9 a month beginning Jan. 1, 2020, but beneficiaries in higher income brackets will see a larger increase.

Individuals whose 2018 modified adjusted gross income (MAGI), as reported on their federal tax return, was \$87,000 or less, or was \$174,000 in a joint return, will pay \$144.60 a month in premium costs, up from \$135.50 in 2019. Beneficiaries in five higher income brackets pay an extra charge, known as an Income Related Monthly Adjustment Amount (IRMAA), which also goes up at the start of the new year:

If your individual tax income was above \$87,000 to \$109,000, or your joint income was above \$174,000 up to \$218,000, you'll **pay \$202.40 per month**.

From \$109,000 to \$136,000 individual or \$218,000 to \$272,000 joint, you'll pay **\$289.20 per month**.

From \$136,000 to \$163,000 individual or \$272,000 to \$326,000 joint, you'll pay **\$376 per month**.

From \$163,000 to \$500,000 individual or \$326,000 to \$750,000 joint, you'll pay **\$462.70 per month**. If you are married but file a separate tax return with income above \$87,000 but less than \$413,000, you'll also pay this rate.

Above \$500,000 individual or above \$750,000 joint, you'll pay **\$491.60 per month**. If you are married but file a separate tax return with income above \$413,000, you'll also pay this rate.

The new figures reflect slight changes to income brackets from 2019. All brackets showed some increase, with the top bracket up more than \$30 a month year over year (\$460.50 to \$491.60).

These premiums are deducted automatically from Social Security, Office of Personnel Management (OPM), and/or Railroad Retirement Board benefits. Those who don't receive benefits from these agencies will receive a bill; regardless of how you file your returns, you and your spouse will have separate Part B premium payments.

Income Adjustment

The income figures used to determine your Part B premium payment may not reflect your current financial situation, especially in the event of a retirement, a divorce, or other life-changing events. If you've undergone one of these events, you can file Form SSA-44, Medicare Income-Related Monthly Adjustment Amount – Life Changing Event, or visit your local Social Security office to request an adjustment.

Qualifying events include:

Marriage, divorce/annulment, or death of a spouse.

Work stoppage or reduction.

Loss of income-producing property.

Loss of pension income.

Employer settlement payment.

The form is available [here](#). You can find your local office online [here](#). You can also call the Social Security Administration (SSA) at 1-800-772-1213 for more information.

MOAA members can [email questions about Medicare or other benefits programs](#) to our benefits counselors.

More information on Medicare is available [here](#); for more details on Medicare rules for higher-income beneficiaries, including how the premium amounts are calculated, check out a 2019 SSA publication (which does not reflect the premium increases) [here](#).

MOAA Continues Push for a Better DFAS Experience

Do you have a DFAS issue? Use these numbers to contact the right DFAS department:

Military Pay: 1-888-332-7411

Army Military Pay: 1-888-729-2769

Civilian Pay: 1-800-538-9043 or 1-800-729-3277

Retired Military: 1-800-321-1080

Retired Civilian: 1-888-767-6738

Contract/Vendor Pay: 1-800-756-4571

MOAA Member Service Representative [Brenden McMahon](#) contributed to this article.

MOAA Newsletter Advocacy, 21 November 2019:

Countdown to a Shutdown? The Latest on the Ongoing Budget Negotiations

The President on Thursday evening signed a measure to keep the government funded until Dec. 20, executing on legislation that passed the Senate in the afternoon and the House on Tuesday. Absent the measure, the government would have shut down at midnight Nov. 21. The move gives lawmakers an additional month to finish their work on FY 2020 spending bills.

Earlier this summer, lawmakers [agreed to a two-year budget deal](#) to raise discretionary limits for defense and non-defense programs. But partisan disagreements over spending priorities stymied work allocating funds to individual agencies. As a result, the government has operated under a continuing resolution since the Oct. 1 start of the fiscal year.

One of the challenges appropriators faced was how to deal with the costs of providing private-sector medical care for veterans who have trouble accessing services at VA facilities. Appropriators said the additional money required to pay for expanded veterans' services crowded out funding for other non-defense priorities.

To help expedite the budget talks, House lawmakers proposed using emergency funding to cover new costs for private veterans' health care. In previous budget discussions, the administration opposed spending above budget cap levels to pay for the expanded services.

[RELATED: ['Skinny' NDAA Leaves Out Critical Protections for Troops, Veterans and Widows](#)]

Lawmakers from both parties and defense leaders all agree that continuing resolutions are disruptive to servicemembers and military readiness, but they also agree that the resolutions are preferable to a government shutdown. Disagreements over funding priorities last year resulted in a 35-day partial government shutdown that ran from Dec. 22 to Jan. 25.

The partial shutdown was the longest in American history and resulted in members of the Coast Guard, U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps, and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Commissioned Corps working without pay.

According to Coast Guard Commandant Adm. Karl Schultz, the shutdown was the first time in American history that members of the armed forces were not paid during a lapse in appropriations.

The 35-day shutdown disrupted more than 800,000 federal workers and contractors and cost the government

\$3 billion in lost economic activity, according to the Congressional Budget Office.

[RELATED: [Senate Votes 94-0 to Recommend Repeal of Widows Tax in Final NDAA](#)]

While a continuing resolution ensures servicemembers will have a happy Thanksgiving, another potential shutdown right before the holidays means troops may get a lump of coal in their Christmas stockings.

MOAA fought to ensure the pay and benefits of all servicemembers, active and retired, continued throughout the last shutdown. Those efforts will resume if a fix isn't found, but for now, the push continues to pass a long-term solution that includes much-needed reforms to various military and veteran programs.

Earlier this year, Rep. Jeff Van Drew (D-N.J.) and Sen. John Thune (R-S.D.) introduced the Pay Our Coast Guard Act. The legislation would ensure members of the Coast Guard continued to receive pay during a lapse in appropriations. MOAA supported the bill, but also urged lawmakers to include language to expand protections to USPHS and NOAA Commissioned Corps members.

A Key Senator Offered Promising Remarks on Widows Tax Repeal

A recent statement from a powerful Senate leader indicates Congress may be moving toward repealing the "widows tax," ending an unjust policy that costs 65,000 military widows and widowers thousands of dollars a year in survivor benefits.

But the brief remarks from Sen. Jim Inhofe (R-Okla.) also show why MOAA members and others who've fought to remove [this unfair offset](#) for years must continue to pressure their lawmakers to ensure the repeal remains a part of the final National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), which is now being crafted in bipartisan, bicameral conference negotiations.

Bipartisan Senate Bill Would Close Critical Veterans' Education Loophole

[A Senate bill introduced Nov. 14](#) proposes a compromise to close the "90/10 loophole" and provide additional protections to military-connected students using the [GI Bill](#).

Introduced by Sens. Tom Carper (D-Del.), James Lankford (R-Okla.), Bill Cassidy (R-La.), and Jon Tester (D-Mont.), the Protect Veterans Education and Taxpayer Spending Act of 2019 is the first bipartisan bill in the Senate that would close the loophole.

The "90/10 loophole" refers to the proportion of funding that can come from federal education dollars at a for-profit educational institution – a 90% limit on these sources, with at least 10% from nonfederal funds. Initially modeled after a VA rule that capped the proportion of income an institution could take from the GI Bill, the 90/10 rule was created to extend the same protection to other Title IV education programs in the 1996 reauthorization of the Higher Education Act.

An oversight in that language, however, excluded DoD and VA programs from the 90% federal funding limit. That allows some institutions to aggressively recruit military connected students in order to fulfill the 10% side of the equation.

Closing the loophole and ensuring that DoD and VA educational funds are protected by the same rules as other federal education funds is [one of MOAA's longtime education goals](#). Earlier this year, MOAA and 36 other military and veteran service organizations wrote to the

leadership of the Housing, Education, Labor, and Pension committees in the House and Senate to ask them to include closing the loophole in any reauthorization of the Higher Education Act.

"It is important to protect the interests of military-connected students with commonsense policy, and MOAA is committed to defending the GI Bill from any attempt to diminish the promise it offers to our servicemembers and their families using the program to advance their education," MOAA President and CEO Lt. Gen. Dana T. Atkins said. "Closing the 90-10 loophole is an important and necessary step in keeping the promise. MOAA thanks Senators Carper, Lankford, Cassidy, and Tester for addressing this issue in a bipartisan fashion."

Critics who oppose the move have said it unfairly impacts for-profit institutions, and closing the loophole would mean these institutions would have to admit fewer veterans to their programs.

Giving Schools Time to Adjust

Carper, a veteran who has spoken about using the GI Bill to attend the University of Delaware, considers protecting the program one of his priorities; he has introduced bills to close the 90/10 loophole in every Congress since 2012. The 2019 bill language goes further than previous versions have.

The bill will still close the loophole and count VA and DoD educational funds toward the 90% side of the formula. But it also provides a roadmap for implementing the rule in a way that gives institutions time to make changes: The current rule will remain in place for three years to allow schools in violation to come into compliance before implementing tiered penalties over three more years before an institution could lose federal funds entirely.

In the meantime, the bill requires a caution flag on the [GI Bill Comparison Tool](#) for schools in violation of the rule to ensure that student veterans are aware when making decisions about their education.

MOAA Newsletter Advocacy, 28 November 2019: MOAA Asks Congress to Support Coast Guard Authorization Act

MOAA addressed a letter of support to House and Senate leadership on Nov. 21 for S. 2297, the Coast Guard Authorization Act of 2019. The bill, which passed the Senate's Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation, authorizes appropriations for the Coast Guard through fiscal year 2021.

Section 221 of the legislation contains a provision protecting Coast Guard servicemembers' pay in the event of a lapse in appropriations or shutdown. In addition to compensation for active duty members, the language covers basic housing allowance (BAH), funding for the reserve component, and authorized travel for funerals. The bill also ensures retired members and their families receive uninterrupted retirement pay, survivor benefits, combat-related disability pay ([CRSC](#)), VA compensation for disability ([CRDP](#)), and medical care.

MOAA, Other Groups Ask VA to Expand List of Diseases Linked to Agent Orange Exposure

MOAA is among 20 veteran and military service organizations asking the VA to add four diseases to the Agent Orange presumption list in an effort to help thousands of affected veterans receive benefits.

In a Nov. 15 letter to VA Secretary Robert Wilkie, leaders of the groups requested the immediate addition of hypertension, bladder cancer, hypothyroidism, and Parkinson's-like symptoms to the list. Each of the diseases has been linked to exposure to Agent Orange by researchers from the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine.

"However, VA has yet to take any actions on these four presumptive diseases, leaving thousands of veterans waiting," according to the letter (Read it [here](#)).

An estimated 900,000 veterans have been exposed to Agent Orange, an herbicide sprayed from the air to destroy the vegetation enemy fighters used as cover during the Vietnam War.

There are [14 diseases](#) on the VA's current Agent Orange presumptive exposure list. The designation offers veterans an easier path to qualify for disability benefits.

During congressional hearings earlier this year, top VA leaders said they were considering adding four diseases, with a decision to be released by summer. No decision was announced.

MOAA Newsletter Advocacy, 5 December 2019: How Your TRICARE Costs Will Change in 2020

This article by Jim Absher first appeared on *Military.com*, the premier resource for the military and veteran community.

With a new year on the horizon, Tricare costs will be changing in 2020. By law Tricare fees go up slightly every year. For retirees the cost bump is tied to the annual cost of living increase (COLA), while other fee increases are set ahead of time by Congress.

While the changes are small, the costs do go up for many Tricare recipients. Here's a breakdown.

TRICARE Prime

While active duty family members pay no enrollment fee for Tricare Prime, the annual fee for retirees who entered the service before 2018 and their dependents will increase from \$297 annually to \$300 for individual coverage while family coverage will go from \$594 to \$600.

For those retirees who entered the service after Jan. 1, 2018 and their beneficiaries the annual premium for individual coverage will go from \$360 to \$366 while the family plan will increase from \$720 to \$732.

[RELATED: [MOAA's TRICARE and Health Care Resource Page](#)]

Some copayments will increase as well; specialty and urgent care visits will cost \$1 more in 2020.

Tricare Prime users who are medically retired or survivors do not see an increase.

[Read more about 2020 Tricare Prime costs.](#)

TRICARE Select

Just like Tricare Prime, active duty family members enrolled in Tricare Select pay no enrollment fees. All others will see a slight fee increase in 2020.

While retirees who entered service before 2018 pay no enrollment fee, retirees who joined the service in 2018 or later will see an increase from \$462 to \$471 for individual coverage and \$924 to \$942 for family coverage.

[RELATED: [Here's How Much More You'll Pay in Medicare Part B Premiums in 2020](#)]

Some copayments will see slight increases as well. Active duty family members of those who entered before 2018 as well as all Tricare Reserve Select participants will see primary care visits go up by \$1 - from \$21 to \$22, and

specialist visits will increase \$2 each, from \$31 to \$33. Those who entered in 2018 or later will see a \$1 increase in specialist visits.

[Full details on 2020 Tricare Select costs.](#)

TRICARE Reserve Select

Reservists enrolled in [Tricare Reserve Select](#) will see their monthly payments increase from \$42.83 to \$44.17 for individual coverage and from \$218.01 to \$228.27 for family coverage.

TRICARE Retired Reserve

Retired reservists who haven't turned 60 and are covered under the [Tricare Retired Reserve](#) program will benefit from a rate decrease in 2020. The monthly premium for an individual retiree will decrease from \$451.51 to \$444.37, and those with family coverage will see a monthly decrease from \$1,083.40 to \$1,066.26.

TRICARE Young Adult

College-age dependents enrolled in the [Tricare Young Adult](#) program will see an increase in their monthly premiums; however, the amounts vary depending on which option they are covered under. For those using Tricare Young Adult Select, the monthly payment will go from \$214 to \$228, and those using Tricare Young Adult Prime will see the monthly payment increase from \$358 to \$376.

Continued Health Care Benefit Program (CHCBP)

Recently discharged members with temporary health insurance under the [Continued Health Care Benefit Program \(CHCBP\)](#) will see their premiums increase by the largest amount. Those who have single coverage will be hit with a premium increase from \$484.33 to \$517.67 each month, and those electing family coverage will pay an additional \$75.67 each month, increasing their premiums from \$1,091 to \$1,166.67.

TRICARE Pharmacy Costs

Prescription drug costs for Tricare users are also set to rise Jan. 1, some by as much as 42%. The pharmacy fee increases impact all Tricare users who utilize off-base pharmacies, including those on Tricare for Life.

Effective Jan. 1, 2020, a 90-day supply of generic drugs received through the program's Express Scripts mail-order pharmacy will increase from \$7 to \$10. Co-pays on brand-name drugs received through the mail will go from \$24 to \$29; the price rises from \$53 to \$60 for non-formulary drugs.

Generic drug prescriptions filled at retail pharmacies will see the cost rise from \$11 to \$13 for a 30-day supply, while the same supply of brand-name medications will increase from \$28 to \$33. Non-formulary drugs -- those not on Tricare's list of fully covered medications -- will go up from \$53 to \$60.

Prescriptions filled on base will continue to be free.

More Privatized Housing Problems Revealed in GAO Report

[RELATED: [Visit MOAA's Spouse and Family Advocacy Page](#)]

Air Force Secretary Barbara Barrett said the service is cracking down on the private companies that should be performing maintenance in homes. For example, homes at Tinker AFB, Okla.; Keelser AFB, Miss.; and MacDill AFB, Fla., are particularly vulnerable to mold because of

the high humidity and defects in water lines. The Air Force has required housing company Balfour Beatty to submit an improvement plan for those homes or face formal dispute action.

"While we have made significant progress over the past year to improve housing, we frankly have a long way to go as we still have some privatized housing project owners who are not meeting expectations," Barrett said in her testimony.

MOAA Newsletter Advocacy, 12 December 2019: Here's What's In, What's Out of the Finalized Defense Bill

After months of deliberations between House and Senate lawmakers, Congress unveiled its conference report of the FY 2020 defense authorization bill Dec. 10. The \$738 billion defense bill authorizes everything from pay and benefits for servicemembers and families to the size of the force.

MOAA secured many important provisions for servicemembers and their families in this year's conference report, which passed the House of Representatives on Dec. 11 by a vote of 377-48.

Here's a look at some of the measures included in the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA).

[TAKE ACTION: [Ask Your Senator to Vote for the NDAA](#)]

WHAT'S IN

TRICARE

Congress approved no new fees or pharmacy increases in 2020. Previously agreed upon [increases for medical and pharmacy copays](#) will take effect in January 2020.

Medical Billets

MOAA's extensive efforts on the medical billet reduction issue paid off with a provision that addresses concerns regarding both medical readiness and beneficiary access to high quality care. The provision prohibits DoD and the services from reducing medical end strength authorizations until they complete a series of steps:

A review of medical manpower requirements of each military department under all national defense strategy scenarios

An analysis of affected billets together with mitigation plans to address potential gaps in health care services

The creation of metrics to determine TRICARE network adequacy;

The establishment of outreach plans for affected beneficiaries, including transition plans for continuity of health care services.

Medical Malpractice

The NDAA contains significant improvements to addressing non-combat related military medical malpractice by directing DoD to develop a regulation for negligent malpractice to be addressed through the military legal system. Although this is not a repeal of the 1950s era "[Feres Doctrine](#)," it provides a form of redress for servicemembers who have suffered from medical malpractice to address negligence. The NDAA conference report will authorize a payment up to \$100,000 by DoD judges.

[RELATED: [MOAA Supports Bill That Would Allow Servicemembers to Sue Over Military Medical Malpractice](#)]

Spouse and Family

Military families can expect to see expansions to spouse employment resources such as an increase to \$1,000 for licensure reimbursement as well as expansions to the My Career Advancement Account (MyCAA) program for Coast Guard spouses and those who rank out of eligibility during their degree program.

In the most comprehensive military housing reform since 1996, the bill includes a robust tenant bill of rights and responsibilities, ensures medical costs and relocation expenses are covered by landlords, formalizes a dispute resolution process, and ensures a proper work order system and complaint database are in place along with a number of other provisions correcting gaps and negligence in the MHPI system. Additionally, Congress is asking for a closer look at the capacity of childcare centers on post and streamlined hiring to ensure they are properly staffed.

WHAT'S OUT

Concurrent Receipt

Ensuring concurrent payment of retirement and disability benefits to medical retirees with less than 20 years of service has been a longtime MOAA priority. Colloquially known as "Chapter 61" retirees, this group of veterans see their retirement pay offset by the disability benefits they receive through the VA, an injustice that sets up a fight for MOAA in the coming year.

[RELATED: [Understanding Concurrent Receipt](#)]

The Border Wall

Rather than authorize funds for constructing a barrier at the southern border, conferees opted to shift the question of border wall funds to appropriators rather than set up a long fight to get the NDAA passed. Without this provision removed, the path to passage is likely to be smoother.

"Overall, this defense bill is a big win for servicemembers and their families. We thank Congress for its bipartisan work and for continuing its 58-year streak of producing a final defense bill for the president," said Col. Dan Merry, USAF (Ret), MOAA vice president of Government Relations.

After passing the house, the conference report must now be approved by the Senate before it is sent to the president's desk for signature.

Things You Need to Know About the Widows Tax Repeal Included in the NDAA

The finish line in the fight to repeal the "widows tax" is within sight, and while there are still critical hurdles to clear, the final product of this extensive effort on behalf of military survivors is taking shape.

- 1. The logistics.** The phased-in approach to repeal is really a three-year rollout with a delayed start. No changes will be made to the benefit in calendar year 2020, but the offset will be reduced partially over 2021 and 2022, with full elimination starting on Jan. 1, 2023.
- 2. The limitations.** The benefit will not be extended retroactively. The bill states specifically that "no benefits may be paid to any person for any period

before the effective date provided ... by reasons made of the amendments made" by the NDAA.

- 3. The "pay-for."** We confirmed with staff leadership on the House Armed Services Committee that no benefits have been or will be reduced to pay for this repeal.

MOAA Newsletter Advocacy, 19 December 2019:

'We Did It': Military Widows, Supporters Celebrate After Senate NDAA Vote

Military widows hugged and shared thumbs-up gestures as they embraced each other, celebrating a surreal moment nearly two decades in the making.

Just hours after the Senate approved the FY 20 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) on Dec. 17, military widows gathered in Washington, D.C., to mark the expected repeal of the "widows tax" with federal lawmakers and representatives of veterans service organizations.

Efforts to repeal the Survivor Benefit Plan-Dependency and Indemnity Compensation offset, commonly called the widows tax, had been rejected at various points in the legislative process at least a dozen times, so widows were used to disappointing news. MOAA has been engaged with this offset since the inception of the Survivor Benefit Plan in 1972 – picking up support along the way and making incremental gains while Rep. Joe Wilson (R-S.C.) continued to support legislation for total repeal since his arrival in Congress in 2001.

But this year is different.

"We did it," said **Capt. Kathy Thorp, USN (Ret)**, embracing fellow military widow Kristy DiDomenico. Year after year, military widows have met with lawmakers to share their deeply personal stories of being penalized by the government's SBP-DIC offset after the loss of their spouse. But this week, Congress took a historic step to repeal the offset by including a provision in ending it in the NDAA, which is headed to President Donald Trump for his expected signature.

"Today is a banner day," Thorp said. "I do believe all of our husbands are up there saluting us. I think all of our husbands and wives that have gone before us and served our country - this is a wonderful way that we have honored them and I know they're proud of us."

Repealing the offset has been a top priority for MOAA for several years. More than 150 members of the association pushed for passage of the repeal during its annual Storming the Hill event, when members meet with federal lawmakers on Capitol Hill to discuss advocacy missions.

Lt. Gen. Dana Atkins, USAF (Ret), President and CEO of MOAA, said it was imperative to get the repeal passed to take care of servicemembers and their families. The offset became personal to Atkins in 2011, when he was serving in the Air Force and Maj. David Brodeur, his executive officer, was killed in Afghanistan, leaving behind a wife and two young children.

The devotion of the widows inspired MOAA to stay on top of the legislation, pushing Congress for the repeal, he said.

"The inclusion of the widows tax repeal in the NDAA was only possible through a persistent, unified voice," Atkins said. "MOAA's 350,000 members have advocated aggressively in support of repeal, and we have worked in sync with fellow veteran service organizations."

The measure passed through the House of Representatives by a large majority, but advocates knew the Senate would be trickier since there was concern over the cost of the repeal.

Sen. Doug Jones (D-Ala.), who co-sponsored legislation to repeal the offset with Sen. Susan Collins (R-Maine), led an effort for a [motion to instruct](#) vote in September, asking the NDAA conferees to include the provision in its final draft. That vote [passed 94-0](#), the provision made the final cut, and Jones said he was pleased when Senators approved the NDAA this week. [RELATED: [MOAA Named One of The Hill's Top Lobbyists for 2019](#)]

The achievement would not have been reached without the help of military widows and veterans service organizations, he said.

"They never gave up," Jones said. "MOAA members are just like they were in the military: You never give up until the mission is complete. That's the bottom line and that's what they did. That has been so important. They pushed and we pushed. Without their messages getting to the members of the Senate and the House of Representatives, we couldn't have gotten that done."

MOAA Named One of The Hill's Top Lobbyists for 2019

For the 13th year in a row, the Military Officers Association of America (MOAA) was named one of the top lobbyists for 2019 by The Hill, a news outlet based in Washington, D.C., covering federal policy, defense, finance, and technology.

MOAA is the only military or veteran service organization honored among the 100 winners in the association category of [The Hill's Top Lobbyists for 2019 list](#).

"We are grateful to receive this recognition. Our staff and MOAA members, along with our Board of Directors and the nearly 400 chapters across our nation, take pride in our advocacy for those who serve or have ever served in our seven uniformed services, their families and survivors," said MOAA's president and CEO, Lt. Gen. Dana Atkins, USAF (Ret). "To be included among the other 99 accomplished associations adds to this honor and highlights the diversity of effort it takes to make a difference in Washington D.C."

Below are some highlights of MOAA's successful advocacy efforts in 2019, many of which are included in the [Conference Report of the FY2020 National Defense Authorization Act](#) passed overwhelmingly by the [House](#) and [Senate](#) and now en route to President Donald Trump for his [expected signature](#):

Helped secure [repeal of the widows tax](#) to eliminate the loss of up to \$12,000 per year for nearly 67,000 surviving spouses of servicemembers killed in service or through service-caused illnesses. This rights a wrong that has existed for over four decades.

Partnered with other Veteran Service Organizations to pass the [Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act of 2019](#) – increasing access to benefits and healthcare for those impacted by Agent Orange at sea further from the mainland.

Ensured a 3.1 percent active duty pay raise, and protected housing allowances from arbitrary cuts.

Successfully lobbied Congress to [delay DoD's plan to eliminate 18,000 military medical billets](#) and call for an assessment on military medical readiness and support to beneficiaries, including many military caregivers and their families.

Engaged Congress to legislate significant improvements to accountability for the quality and safety of military family housing provided by public-private partnerships.

Ensured no new healthcare access fees for currently serving and retirees.

This honor really speaks to the hard work of MOAA's staff and its members, and it validates the value of relationships we forged with members of Congress and their staffs. Our work with The Military Coalition and other organizations must also be recognized as a force multiplier for all of us who lobby on behalf of those who selflessly serve our nation.

Frustrated With DFAS? Here's How to Tell Your Story

After engaging with senior MOAA leadership, officials with the Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS) have dedicated a customer service mapping team to investigate and analyze their systems, with a goal of reducing backlog and improving customer service.

This move shows the impact of dedicated MOAA member feedback regarding long wait times and poor service. A [November article at MOAA.org addressing these](#) complaints led to the recent, positive engagement between MOAA and DFAS leaders.

If you have detailed notes and phone logs of a *resolved challenge*, your story is important. You can send these materials to dfas.customer.mapping@mail.mil for inclusion in the DFAS investigation.

The customer service mapping team will use a Lean Six Sigma-type approach, where they take an already resolved problem and map the system from start to finish to determine what went wrong and how to make systems faster and more responsive.

DFAS is especially looking for Reserve and Guard members who experienced delayed retirement processing and now have begun to receive their retirement payments. Anyone in this group who wants to participate should send an email to the above address with the following information:

Name
Service branch
Phone number
Email address
Mailing Address
Retirement Date

DFAS will identify a representative sample of servicemembers and contact them to arrange interviews. Those with positive DFAS experiences are also welcome to submit feedback as part of the analysis.

[RELATED: [MOAA's Financial Resources](#)]

Some backlog (and frustration) stems from service-specific personnel processing centers. DFAS will continue to work with customers and partners across DoD to map the system. When the study is complete, DFAS will work with service personnel centers to develop solutions to offer quality products and services to active duty and reserve servicemembers, retirees, and civilian employees.

MOAA will continue to advocate for improved customer service across the spectrum of financial and personnel processing action. Advocacy for a "no closed door" policy will continue as some members face hourlong waits on the phone, only to reach an unhelpful representative.

If you have an ongoing challenge with DFAS, please inform our Member Service Center by calling (800) 234-6622 or emailing MSC@moaa.org.



JAYHAWK CHAPTER MOAA



A membership meeting will be held **Wednesday, 22 January 2020**
at Lawrence Country Club

Dinner cost is \$24.00/meal.

The Program: Our speaker will be Colonel Mark McKnight (US Army, Retired).
He is the deputy director of the School for Command Preparation,
and he will present Reserve and National Guard involvement in the pre-command program and the spouses
program
as he has been instrumental in bringing those programs to their current state.

Social Hour: 1800 hours Dinner: 1840 hours

The Menu: Waldorf salad, sirloin steak w/Bordelaise sauce, potatoes, seasonal vegetables, tiramisu

Send your reservation and check payable to Jayhawk Chapter MOAA
to arrive no later than **Wednesday, 15 January 2020**, 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).

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

Annual Chapter Dues (\$20.00) are due and payable 01/01/20 \$_____

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 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